

Annual Conference 2025

'Back to the Future: University Design: Past Present and Future'

@30
University
Design
Forum



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Getting to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Tuesday 24 June

Pre-conference Drinks Reception
London College of Fashion,
University of the Arts London
18:00 - 20:00.

Wednesday 25 June

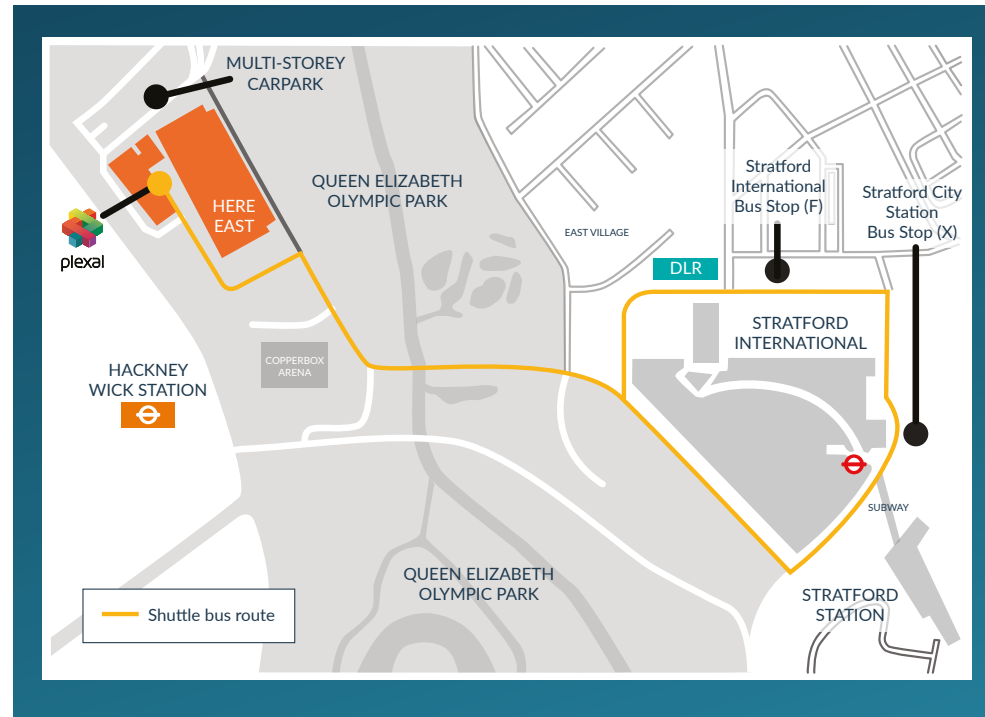
Conference
Plexal – registration from 08:30 until
building tours 16:00.

Building Tours – Sadler's Wells East,
London College of Fashion and
UCL Marshgate from 16:00 - 18:00.

UCL Marshgate – drinks reception
and buffet dinner from 18:00 - 22:00.

Thursday 26 June

Conference
Plexal – building tours start at 08:30
and conference starts at 09:30 and
closes at 16:20.



BY TRAIN

The free shuttle bus takes five minutes and runs every five minutes from Stratford train, bus and underground stations.

Stratford International –
Bus stop F on International Way.

Stratford Station – Bus stop X
Stratford City bus station.

Hackney Wick Overground –
five minute walk.



BY CAR

You can pay for a space in the on campus carpark, which you can access on Eastway next to Here East.



BY BIKE

Bike parking can be found outside Plexal and all over the Here East campus.

Introduction

This year's conference celebrates 30 years since the founding of the Forum, previously HEDQF. Based at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, London, the conference will explore university building design, past, present and into the changing future.

It will include visits to recent buildings on the Olympic Park, contributing to the new cultural and educational quarter, and include a drinks reception and buffet dinner in UCL Marshgate.



Tuesday 24 June

18:00 - 20:00

Pre-Conference Drinks Reception at the London College of Fashion (UAL). With an overview by Gavin Jenkins, Executive Lead for Stratford Transition University of the Arts London and the results of the UDF Student Prize at the Bartlett School of Architecture by Andy Macfee, AMA.

Wednesday 25 June *(all refreshments will be in The Park and all sessions will be in the Centre Stage)*

08:30

Registration with Refreshments

09:45

Welcome and Introduction to the Conference by Trevor Wills, Chair of the University Design Forum and Julie Whetton, Executive Director of Estates Development, UCL.

10:00

Keynote: How to build for the future, by Professor Peter Madden OBE, Professor of Practice in Future Cities, Cardiff University; Founder Vivid Futures. Facilitator by Ian Goodfellow, Perkins & Will and UDF Deputy Chair.

10:45

Session 1: Looking to the future: The technological future: Interactive Session by Craig Chettle MBE, former CEO, Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies, Nottingham. Facilitated by Trevor Wills, Director of Estates, University of Plymouth and UDF Chair.

12:00

Lunch

12:55

University Design Forum Student Prize 2025, Bartlett School of Architecture: Overview of winning designs. Facilitated by Andy Macfee, AMA.

13:25

Session 2: Creating a cultural and educational quarter, and lessons for the university of the future – client perspectives. A Panel Discussion with UCL Julie Whetton, Executive Director of Estates Development, UCL; UAL London College of Fashion, Mark Farthing, Programme Director, Major Capital Projects; Sadler's Wells; Britannia Morton, Executive Director and Co-Chief Executive; Sadler's Wells & V&A, Jen McLachlan, Project Director, V&A East. Facilitated by Mike Borkowski, National Business Development Director, Morgan Sindall.

14:45

Pecha Kucha presentations providing an overview of the design of several of the new buildings on the Olympic Park by the architects. Facilitated by Matt Hutton, Bond Bryan Partnership.

- Plexal: Grimshaw, Andy Barnes
- Olympic Park Masterplan: Allies and Morrison, Daniel Elsea
- V&A: O'Donnell & Tuomey, John O'Tuomey

- UAL College of Fashion: Allies and Morrison, Bruno Marcelino
- Sadler's Wells: O'Donnell and Tuomey, Sheila O'Donnell
- UCL: Stanton Williams, Gavin Henderson.

15:45

Tea & Coffee

16:00 - 18:00

Guided tours to Sadler's Wells, The London College of Fashion, UAL and UCL Marshgate.

18:00 - 22:00

Drinks and Buffet Dinner in UCL Marshgate, with after dinner reflections by Professor Tony Travers, Professor in Practice and Associate Dean of the LSE School of Public Policy, London School of Economics. Drinks and dinner kindly supported by Stanton Williams.

Thursday 26 June *(all refreshments will be in The Park and all sessions will be in the Centre Stage)*

08:30

Refreshments and guided tours to Plexal.

09:30

Lessons from Antwerp: University Design, Past, Present and Future, by Rod McAllister.

10:00

Session 3: Looking to the future: the 21st century Estate Plan: Discussion Session with Elie Gamburg, KPF, Will Reed, University of Leeds & Adam Scott, Freestate Studio. Facilitated by Lyle Christie, Reiach & Hall.

11:00

Tea and Coffee

11:30

Session 4: 30-Year Look Back. Debate and Discussion on projects designed and built around 30 years ago: what has stood the test of time and what are the lessons for the future? With Andrew Fletcher, Director of Attenborough Centre, University of Leicester, Simon Fraser, Hopkins & Jerry Headley, University of Salford. Facilitated by Helen Groves, Atkins Realis & Ian Taylor, FCBStudios.

12:30

Session 5: Creating a Sense of Belonging for Students through Social Learning and Living – Panel Discussion with Hiral Patel, Lecturer in Architecture & Director of Engagement, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University and Roma Richardson, Student, Cardiff University, Erik Mueller-Ali, Head of Product Design, UNITE, John Ridgett, Associate Director, Atkins Realis & Trevor Wills, Director of Estates & Facilities, University of Plymouth & UDF Chair. Facilitated by Cora Kwiatkowski, Stride Treglown and Alex Grigull, Grimshaw Architects.

13:20

Lunch

14:10

Session 6: Belonging to the Future-Ready Campus: A Social Psychology Experiment with Professor Hugo Spiers, Dr Fiona Zisch, University College London & Suzi Winstanley, Turner Works. Facilitated by Adam Scott, Freestate Studio.

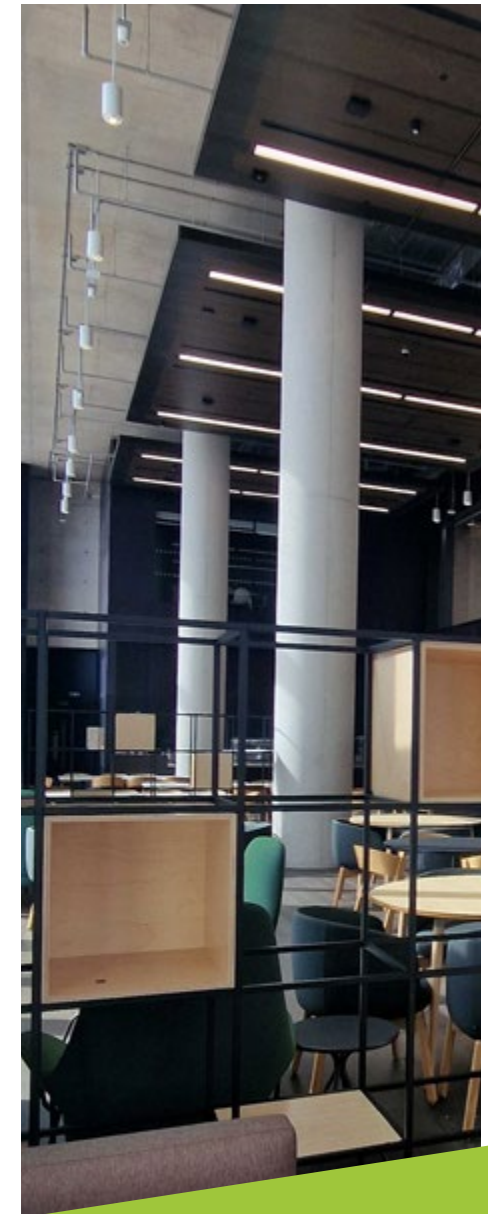
15:30

Session 7: Debate: AI: Friend or Foe: Is AI on the side of the angels or an invention of the devil? Do we need physical universities at all? With Professor Andrew Murray and Professor Conor Gearty, LSE's Law School. Facilitated by Julian Robinson, Director of Estates, LSE.

16:20

Finish & Conclusion, Trevor Wills, Chair of University Design Forum.

As the location is near to V&A East Storehouse, which is open until 22.00hrs, delegates may wish to take the opportunity to visit at the end of the conference.



Welcome



I look forward to welcoming you to the University Design Forum Conference. It is always nice to meet colleagues from around the UK and Ireland as well as our friends from universities and practices in other parts of Europe and beyond. We again have a packed and varied programme that aims to create plenty of interest for all delegates.

In this, the Forum's thirtieth year, we believe the theme of past, present and future reflects the richness of what has changed, and continues to change, in university environments. In striving for smarter and sustainable campuses, client universities are seeking future-proofed solutions for tomorrow's students, researchers, workers and visitors. Increasingly, this focuses on re-use and adaptation of the estate which makes for some interesting design interventions.

The Conference is about a dialogue, as befits the Forum, and so I encourage you to engage with colleagues and I very much hope you enjoy it.

Trevor Wills

Chair of University Design Forum



Since 1826, UCL has championed innovation, invention and inclusive knowledge. It is a place of firsts – the first university in London, the first in England to admit students of all faiths and beliefs, and the first in England to welcome women alongside men into university education.

Approaching our bicentenary year in 2026, we are keen to celebrate our founding ethos of inclusivity and are looking ahead to our next 200years. We are delighted to host colleagues from the University Design Forum, its guest speakers, and key sponsors. We hope you enjoy interaction with peers, exchange of ideas and joint exploration of the challenges we all face in the HE sector currently. Please enjoy your visit!

Julie Whetton

Executive Director of Estates Development

Keynote: How to build for the future

Synopsis

How can we use engagement with the future to re-shape our universities and campuses for the 21st Century? Drawing on experience working on foresight with leading global companies and cities, and through sharing examples from Cardiff University, this presentation will show how we can design for a future that respects and builds on context, place, and past while moving Universities – and how they work – forward.

Professor Peter Madden (OBE)



Professor of Practice in Future Cities at Cardiff University and Founder Director of Vivid Futures. Previously, led Future Cities Catapult, Forum for the Future, and Green Alliance, as well as holding senior positions in government. Peter has held Board roles with Igloo Regeneration, Building with Nature (Chair) The Crown Estate, Bristol Energy, Trane Technologies, and the South West RDA. Awarded OBE in 2015 for services to environmental protection and sustainable development.

Peter works on how engagement with the future can help us create better places for people and planet.

Ian Goodfellow (Facilitator)



Ian is Perkins&Will London Studio's Design Director and Higher Education lead – with deep expertise in designing and delivering estates masterplans and award winning projects including academic libraries, student hubs, new schools for engineering, the creative industries, business and maths.

Ian speaks widely at conferences, judges design awards and has contributed to many publications. In addition to his deputy Chair role for UDF, he is also an Industrial Advisory Board Member for Architectural Engineering Courses, Loughborough University.

Session 1: Looking to the future: The technological future

Synopsis

Craig will share the thinking and planning around developing such a technologically sophisticated creative campus in London, and the challenges of delivering such an ambitious project on a modest budget over an incredibly short timescale.

Craig Chettle MBE



Craig will share the thinking and planning around developing such a technologically sophisticated creative campus in London, and the challenges of delivering such an ambitious project on a modest budget over an incredibly short timescale.

Craig Chettle is an influential figure in Nottingham's creative and education scene.

His journey from band sound engineer to founding the Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies is inspiring. Back in the early 90s, Craig identified a gap in vocational, industry-led creative technology education and filled it with Confetti, which has grown significantly over the years. "Do it for Real" is the ethos at Confetti.

With the support of NTU and Trilogy, Craig and his team launched Confetti London in 2023, another ambitious creative performance and learning centre.

Craig was awarded an MBE for Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries in 2020.

Trevor Wills (Facilitator)



Trevor is Director of Estates & Facilities at the University of Plymouth where he has responsibility for services ranging from the capital build programme through to day-to-day running of the campuses. He has previously held similar positions at Nottingham Trent University and the University of Westminster as well as in the health sector. His experience has also included professional consultancy and the not-for-profit sector. At Plymouth, he has initiated and overseen a strategy for the estate which has resulted in some transformative and sustainable developments. As Chair of the University Design Forum, Trevor promotes the sharing of best practice and firmly believes that all of us engaged in the design, delivery and management of the university environment are creating places for future generations.

University Design Forum Student Prize 2025

Andy Macfee (Facilitator)

Andy is an Architect, Architectural Design Tutor, and works on behalf of University Design Forum UDF to facilitate the Student Competition and Prize.

Each year University Design Forum collaborates with a selected UK school of architecture to explore design research topics of interest to the Design Forum. We are pleased to continue this initiative this academic year with The Bartlett UCL and their Masters students. Working with the School, we have set a brief to dovetail with the Masters curriculum, based on broad education, adaptive re-use and sustainable themes from now and into the future, we will be assessing projects selected from across the Bartlett Masters Design Units. Projects are being submitted and assessed at the time of writing. UDF will award financial prizes to students with the most interesting and impressive project proposals. We also anticipate two of the prizewinning students presenting their work at the UDF conference.



Andy Macfee is an architect, design tutor and property investor. He is Principal of A.M.A - Andy Macfee Architects, now based in Canterbury. Andy founded A.M.A in 2017, then with the benefit of 25 years industry experience, including highly respected architectural design, RIBA award winning buildings and academic teaching. A.M.A works in the Education, Residential, Master Planning and Commercial sectors. A.M.A's design work is thoughtful, elegant and distinctive.

It begins by listening very carefully to the client's requirements and carefully appraising the brief. Then the design process combines original creativity with conceptual narrative to develop architecture that delights and inspires people. A.M.A consider the cultural and environmental context of each project and aim to make every project special in its own way.

Session 2: Creating a cultural and educational quarter, and lessons for the university of the future – client perspectives

Synopsis

In 2013, the creation of a new cultural quarter for London, bringing together several world-class institutions, was announced, with the aim of creating several thousand jobs in the East End of London and boosting the UK economy.

The 'Olympicopolis' vision took its inspiration from Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, who used the proceeds of the 1851 Great Exhibition to create 'Albertopolis' - the Exhibition Road site in South Kensington that is today considered one of the world's pre-eminent scientific, educational and cultural hubs.

This panel discussion will explore the aspirations of several of the different partners, what has been achieved and lessons for the university of the future, from the client perspective.

Mark Farthing



Mark Farthing is the Programme Director (Major Capital Projects) at The University of the Arts London. With a background in Building Surveying and Project Management, Mark has nearly 20 years experience delivering capital projects in the HE sector and in that time has overseen the near complete transformation of the UAL estate, including the recently completed London College of Fashion campus at EastBank in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and a new campus for London College of communication as part of the Elephant and Castle regeneration, which is due to open in 2027.

Jen McLachlan



Jen McLachlan is Project Director for V&A East, responsible for the completion of the V&A East Storehouse which opened on 31 May 2025; the David Bowie Centre opening in September 2025 opening; and the V&A East Museum opening in Spring 2026.

Over the last decade Jen has provided leadership for cultural clients undertaking major capital projects including delivery of Studio Wayne McGregor in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; English National Ballet at London City Island (RIBA London Building of the Year 2021); Punchdrunk Enrichment in Wembley Park; and refurbishment of The Donmar Warehouse.

Session 2 continued

Britannia Morton



Britannia Morton is Executive Director and Co-Chief Executive of Sadler's Wells and works closely with Sir Alistair Spalding CBE, Artistic Director and the Board to define and deliver a long-term strategy for growth.

She also led on the planning, development and delivery of Sadler's Wells East, the new venue in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which opened in February 2025.

Britannia has worked at Sadler's Wells since 2010 and previously led operational teams at Southbank Centre, the Barbican, Royal Albert Hall and ENO.

In January 2025 Britannia was appointed to Arts Council England's London Area Council.

Julie Whetton



Julie is Executive Director of Estates Development at UCL, and co-lead of the wider Estates function, having joined in 2023. She has direct responsibility for asset management of the 270 buildings / 750k sq m across Bloomsbury and Stratford, the £800m capital programme, including major projects such as the Institute of Neurology / Dementia Research Institute (jointly with UCLH) and she is also responsible for developing the long-term Estates Vision.

She is an experienced property professional and chartered surveyor, having worked nationally and internationally across the private, corporate, and public sectors. Prior to working at UCL, she led the National Property Management and Strategy teams at NHS Property Services, optimising the diverse healthcare estate and for ExxonMobil across Europe, Middle East and Africa, as a Master-Planner and Asset Portfolio Manager.

Mike Borkowski (Facilitator)



Spending the past thirty years in the built environment, Mike has held a succession of senior roles as client, consultant, supplier and principal contractor, gaining a very rounded view of the sector.

Mike has previously worked in procurement/estates for Devon County Council managing the Southern Construction Framework, a joint venture with Hampshire Council and the London Borough of Haringey.

Currently Mike leads the delivery of the Scape national framework for Morgan Sindall across England, Scotland and Wales.

Mike is passionate about good design, placemaking and social value.

Pecha Kucha presentations

Synopsis

Inspiring Innovation and Creativity through Adaptive Reuse

Andy Barnes of Grimshaw will share insights from two adaptive reuse projects – Plexal Innovation Centre at Here East and the Bath Schools of Art & Design. He will explore how existing buildings can be thoughtfully transformed into dynamic environments that foster innovation, collaboration, and learning.

Andy Barnes



Andy is an architect and Principal at Grimshaw, leading transport, cultural, and masterplanning projects in the UK and internationally. He is accredited by the International Living Future Institute (ILFI), reflecting his commitment to regenerative design and creating places that harmonise the built environment with natural ecosystems. Andy was part of the Grimshaw team that designed and delivered the Plexal Innovation Centre at Here East. His nature-inspired design approach, focused on beauty and efficiency, is evident in his long-term collaboration with the Eden Project – including new destinations in Morecambe and Qingdao – and his recent award-winning work at Shenzhen Airport East International Transport Hub in China.

Synopsis

The Pecha Kucha Presentation will provide a high-level overview of the design and planning history of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, host site of the UDF's conference this year. Allies and Morrison's role on the Olympic, Legacy and East Bank Masterplans has helped to transform a post-industrial landscape into a valuable ecological asset, the largest park created in London in 150 years. New east-west connections and new neighbourhoods with thousands of homes have taken root; as well as the most significant collection of cultural and educational buildings to be built on a single site in Britain since the Victorian era.

Daniel Elsea



An urbanist and journalist by background, Daniel is a Partner at Allies and Morrison and a core member of the practice's Masterplanning Group. He is leading the Barbican Renewal, a multi-million-pound rejuvenation of London's leading arts venues and one of the world's most celebrated examples of brutalist architecture; and the West End Public Realm, a re-imagination of the landscape surrounding the Crown Estate's landholdings in Westminster. He is also the co-author of *Complex City: London's Changing Character*, which grew out of the practice's award-winning research in urban characterisation. He holds degrees from the University of Oxford and Williams College.

Pecha Kucha presentations

Synopsis

Marshgate represents an ambitious new typology of academic architecture designed to foster the cross-disciplinary learning and research essential for addressing today's global challenges. Part of University College London's emerging UCL East campus on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stanton Williams' 35,000sq m building fulfils the university's vision for accessible academic space that actively dismantles disciplinary silos across arts, sciences and technology, while meaningfully engaging local communities and businesses in its research activities.

In this talk, Gavin will present how Marshgate's innovative design approach creates environments that catalyse collaboration and knowledge exchange, demonstrating how thoughtful architecture can support new models of education and research that respond to complex societal needs.

Gavin Henderson MA (CANTAB), Dip Arch, RIBA, RIAI



Gavin Henderson is a Principal Director at Stanton Williams, an internationally recognised architecture practice known for thoughtful approaches to sensitive sites and complex, ambitious projects.

Gavin's expertise spans diverse scales and building types, with particular focus on innovative educational and research spaces within complex urban contexts. His work demonstrates that understanding a city's historical evolution is essential for designing environments that foster knowledge exchange and collaboration, and which prioritise human experience.

Beyond practice, he contributes to architectural discourse through lecturing, critiquing, and serving on committees including the Society of Antiquaries of London, NLA Expert Panels, as well as chairing the RIBA Regional Awards.

Synopsis

The new London College of Fashion brings together the college's six sites under one roof for the first time. It is the largest of the four buildings that make up East Bank, London's newest educational and cultural quarter.

A 21st century factory for fashion – it is a home for different methods and modes of teaching, from millinery to fashion business, from classroom teaching to groupwork sewing.

Housing a student and staff population of 5,000, this stacked, vertical faculty is tailored to last. It is only fitting that today it is the world's largest building dedicated to the exploration of fashion.

Bruno Marcelino



Bruno blends a global perspective with a commitment to a contextual architecture. He has worked on projects from initial competitions to site delivery worldwide – including civic buildings in Doha, a residential quarter in Beirut and a hotel in Bangalore.

Most recently, he was one of the key design leads for the London College of Fashion and is currently heading the design of another major university building in London.

Bruno studied at FAUP (Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto) and gained architectural experience in Stockholm before joining Allies and Morrison.

Pecha Kucha presentations

Sheila O'Donnell



Synopsis

Sadler's Wells East

Sheila O'Donnell will present O'Donnell + Tuomey's thinking behind their design for this new dance theatre and school of choreography.

The client brief was for a powerhouse for dance, home to everything from hip hop to ballet, rave to rhumba and kathak to krumping, with a flexible auditorium for audiences of 550 people and six dedicated dance studios.

The new building opened its doors to the public in February 2025.

Sadler's Wells East was listed by Time Out magazine as "the number 1 best thing to do in the UK for 2025."

John Tuomey



Synopsis

V&A East Museum

John Tuomey will present O'Donnell + Tuomey's thinking behind their design for this new museum.

The client brief was for a new kind of museum space, with galleries, exhibitions and events spotlighting the people, ideas and creativity shaping global culture right now.

Sited on Waterfront Square at the centre of the East Bank cultural, educational and residential district, the V&A East Museum is to be a place for people to meet, find inspiration and fresh ideas.

Now in the final stages of completion and fit out, the new museum opens its doors to the public next spring 2026.

O'Donnell + Tuomey is a studio-based architectural practice, with offices in Dublin and Cork, Ireland and London, UK. Committed to the craft and culture of architecture, they have worked on numerous urban design, cultural, social and educational projects and have a reputation for engagement with complex urban situations and sensitive landscapes. They have completed schools and universities, theatres and cinemas, community centres and social housing, art galleries and libraries in Ireland, the UK and Europe. They have exhibited six times at the Venice Architecture Biennale

Winners of more than 160 awards, RIBA Royal Gold Medal, and two RIAI Gold Medal recipients, their buildings include The Glucksman, Cork; Irish Language Cultural Centre, Derry; Lyric Theatre, Belfast; V&A East Museum and Sadler's Wells Dance Theatre, London; Liverpool University School of Architecture; London School of Economics Student Centre; Central European University, Budapest, University College Cork Student Centre and The Hedge Theatre, Stone Vessel and Passage House at Fartha, County Cork, Ireland.

Pecha Kucha presentations

Matt Hutton (Facilitator)



Bond Bryan CEO, Matt Hutton, leads a growing practice of approximately 140 staff across x6 studios within the UK (London, Birmingham, Sheffield, Bristol, Cambridge and Kent).

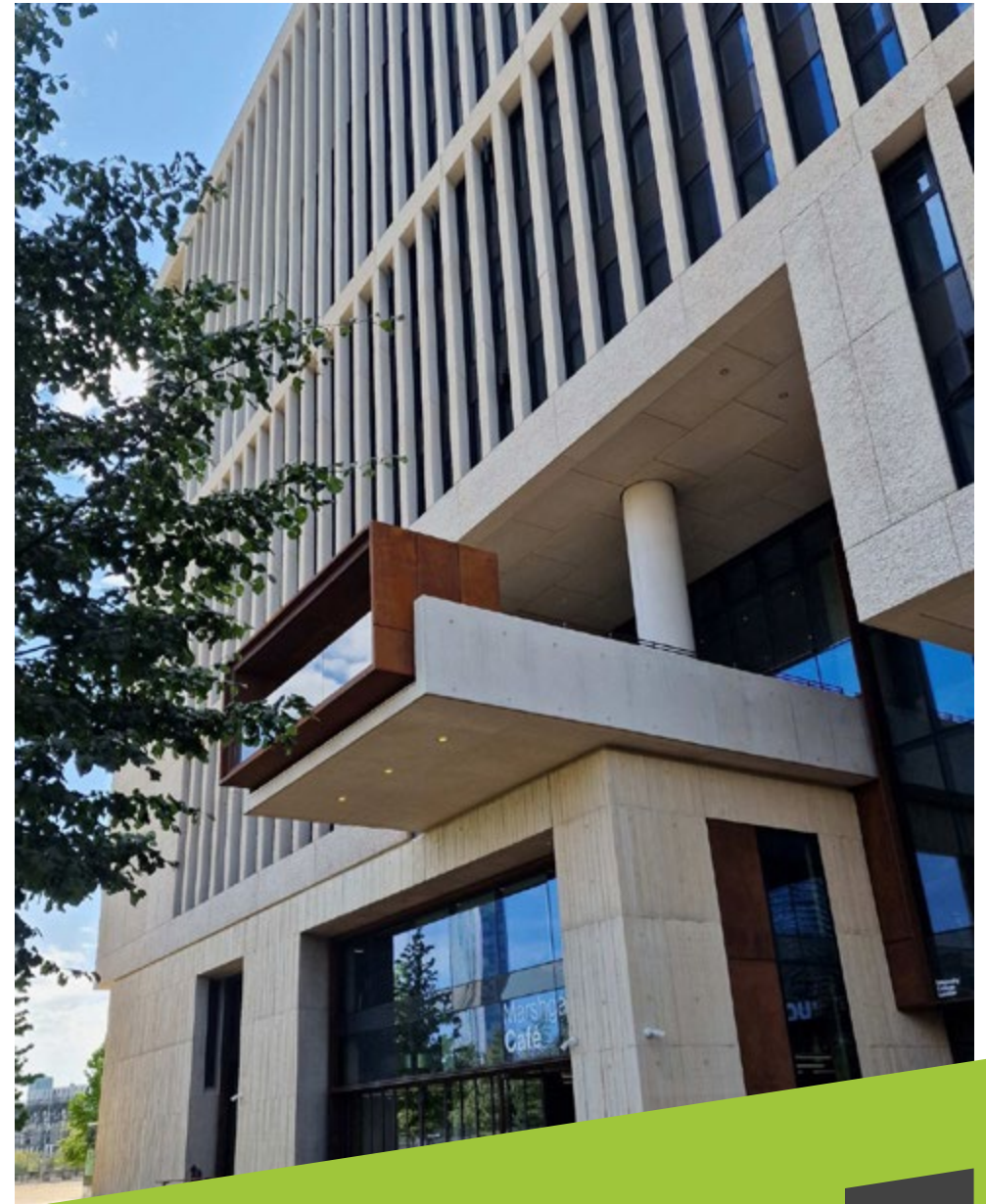
He has developed a national portfolio over the last 20 years: designing and delivering a series of award-winning facilities within education environments; establishing high-quality concept designs of the highest ambition and as a practice, setting standards for their delivery.

Matt believes in developing solutions that are driven by their client's vision; utilising their 'Circular Thinking' methodology. The key priorities of People, Process and Place don't just define how Bond Bryan design, they are the thread that connects how they operate as an organisation.

Matt has led numerous major projects in all sectors, including the RIBA award-winning University of Sheffield's Engineering Heartspace, University of Nottingham's Advanced Manufacturing Building and Sheffield City Council school, Mercia Academy.

As a practice, Bond Bryan have committed to RIBA 2030 Challenge and are members of the Architects Declare initiative. They are passionate about promoting engagement and driving change within the industry.

Their commitment to sustainable design was most recently recognised with the BREEAM Excellent, National College for High Speed Rail (NCHSR) Doncaster, being presented with the RIBA Yorkshire Design and Sustainability award.



Building Tours

Sadler's Wells East

Located at the southern gateway to East Bank, Sadler's Wells East is designed as a welcoming and highly functional building, described by its clients as a "powerhouse for dance".

A 550-seat theatre is adaptable for end-on and flat-floor productions. Six studio spaces allow Sadler's Wells to establish a new centre for choreographic practice and a hip hop theatre academy.



Photo credit: Peter Malloy

Building Tours

London College of Fashion (UAL)

The new London College of Fashion brings together the college's six sites under one roof for the first time. Set on a slender site overlooking Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, it is the largest of the four buildings that make up East Bank, London's newest educational and cultural quarter.

Think of it as a 21st century factory for fashion – a super-sized atelier, rich with creativity and productivity. It is a home for different methods and modes of teaching, from millinery to fashion business, from classroom teaching to groupwork sewing. Here, architecture weaves together many strands of learning and expression.

So, it is both lofty and pragmatic. Its 'heart' is one of London's most dramatic new interiors, a singular, yet ever changing, interconnected atrium that links large entrances and public functions at lower levels where there is an auditorium, gallery, cafe and library. It threads upwards through workshops and teaching floors at the middle and, at upper levels, a refectory, drawings studios, roof terraces and classrooms wrap around. Dramatic stairs, like catwalks themselves, link the College's 16 floors.

A trio of materials is relentlessly applied with a consistency of detailing to all elements. This rigour allows the informal character of students and their activities and creative outputs to take centre stage. As the college's forever home, these have been specified with long-term robustness in mind. Concrete is the structural skeleton. A warm maple provides the tactile elements – those things you touch, doors, screens, balustrades, fixed furniture, handrails. Dark metal accommodates services. From super-sized industrial windows to patterns found in panelling, some of the much-loved qualities of the College's former locations are woven into the fabric of the new building.

Housing a student and staff population of 5,000, this stacked, vertical faculty is tailored to last. A place with personality, confidence and seduction, it is only fitting that today it is the world's largest building dedicated to the exploration of fashion.

Photo credit: Simon Menges



Building Tours

UCL Marshgate

Marshgate is a new breed of academic building at the heart of the UCL East Campus – the largest single expansion of University College London since its foundation nearly 200 years ago.

The vision for Marshgate is based on the recognition that the answers to the global challenges facing our planet lie less within traditional disciplines than in the interaction between them. To enable new interdisciplinary ways of working, the design focussed on highly flexible spaces that encourage collaboration between teaching, research, academia and the public.



Photo credit: © Hufton+Crow

After Dinner Reflections

Synopsis

Tony Travers will consider the evolution of the university sector within the UK in the past 30 years, including the importance of development within regenerating cities across the country. As the British economy has changed, university research has become an ever-more important part of regional and civic economic capacity, as well as being the generator of cutting-edge start-ups. But the university sector has challenges, including income shortfalls and an uncertain policy environment at home and globally. Separately, higher education has increasingly been drawn into complex cultural and political debates. What might the next 30 years look like and what do universities need to do to continue to flourish?

Professor Tony Travers



Tony Travers is Associate Dean of the School of Public Policy at the London School of Economics. He is also a professor in the LSE's Government Department. His key research interests include public finance, local / regional government and devolution.

In 2012-13 and again in 2016-17, he chaired the London Finance Commission and was a member of the City Growth Commission and also the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance in Wales. He co-chaired the King's Commission on London. He was an advisor to the House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee until June 2024. He is a member of the London Partnership Board.

He is an Honorary Member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy and also of the Institute of Revenues, Rating & Valuation.

He has published books and book chapters on local government, devolution, cities, and London.

Building Tours

Plexal Park

Plexal is a groundbreaking innovation centre at London's Here East, designed by Grimshaw with a focus on sustainability, adaptability, and wellbeing. Located in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Plexal spans 68,000 sq ft and is one of the largest innovation centres in Europe, serving the needs of the capital's entrepreneurs and start-ups.



Photo credit: Quintin Lake

Lessons from Antwerp: University Design, Past, Present and Future

Rod McAllister



Rod McAllister is an architect, film-maker and travel editor. He was a lecturer at the University of Liverpool and Visiting Professor at La Sapienza University, Rome. His most notable projects include Liverpool School of Architecture with Dave King; London Business School and Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital in Johannesburg whilst a partner and design director of Sheppard Robson. Rod has produced films for AUDE, HEDQF, UDF and LSE and led study tour groups to Delft, Dublin, Vienna, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Milan, Berlin and Rome. He's led the UDF tour to Antwerp next and another to Amsterdam as part of the European Universities Estates Congress. Rod is a former Trustee of the University Design Forum.

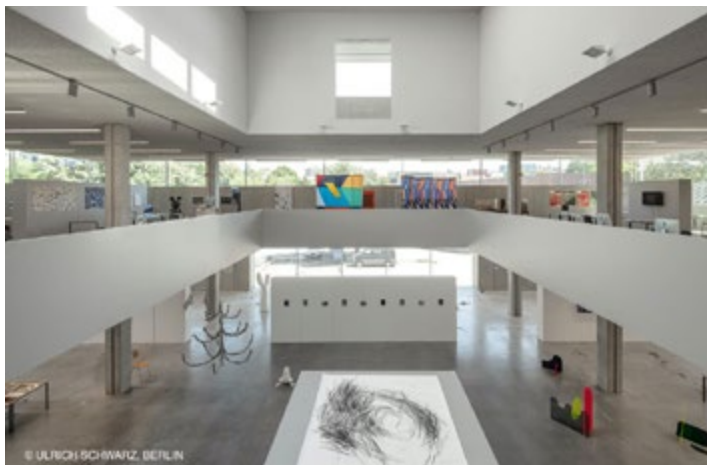


Photo credit: Ulrich Schwarz, Berlin

Session 3: Looking to the future: the 21st century Estate Plan

Synopsis

NYU Shanghai: The Integrated Campus

The historic model for a university was an integrated campus where the creation of spaces and connections was as important as any individual building. NYU Shanghai is an entirely new integrated campus on a constrained urban site, accommodating more than 2,500 Chinese and international students. The design combines programmatic density with a focus on interdisciplinary integration and cultural exchange, celebrating and reinforcing connections and spaces. A data-driven approach was utilised to break down silos and position shared areas such as maker spaces and common zones. The presentation focusses on NYU Shanghai to illustrate themes, challenges, and solutions in university design and suggests ways that this approach can be applied to strengthen the connections across existing UK campuses.

Elie Gamburg



Elie designs innovative solutions for cities, institutions, and developers that address some of the most pressing questions in contemporary architecture and urbanism. His work is defined by simple but powerful design moves that elevate the experience of place, creating value for tenants, visitors, and clients. He brings international and cross typology experience to his academic work. Elie has pioneered the use of data-driven academic master plans to deliver flexible frameworks and individual projects that address the needs and values of institutions such as King's College London and The University of Birmingham. He was the senior designer for NYU Shanghai, an integrated academic campus has been delivered on a constrained urban site.

Will Reed



Will Reed is the Programme Manager leading the University Leeds' ambition to achieve net zero by 2030. Will has a decade of experience leading transformational projects across higher education and financial services. His job is to coordinate the different delivery teams across the university working on net zero.

Session 3 continued

Adam Scott



Adam Scott – urban designer, strategist and teacher – has spent more than two decades thinking, talking and writing about the power of the designed experience to change the way we think, feel and act.

Working with some of the world's greatest brands, urban planners, developers, architects and place activators, he has helped pioneer the concept of Experience Masterplanning for the likes of NIKE, Sony, Google, The Crown Estate, Network Rail, Melbourne Airport, University of Leeds. It is an approach designed to help businesses and governments, city-makers and brand-builders, to properly meet the needs of the people they are designing and building for.

Adam is co-author of RETHINK Design Guide: Architecture for a post-pandemic world (2021 RIBA Books) and The Experience Book (2022 Black Dog Press).

Lyle Chrystie (Facilitator)



Lyle Chrystie is a Director of Reiach and Hall Architects, his career has heavily focused on educational projects. He was instrumental in leading the design for the City of Glasgow College, shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize for both the City and Riverside campuses in 2016 and 2017. Lyle also worked on the University of Central Lancashire's Engineering Innovation Centre and various briefing projects for key campus buildings at the University of Glasgow. Currently, he is involved in the Fife College project, a net zero carbon pathfinder for the Scottish Government's public building standard and is leading work on a major education programme overseas.

Session 4: 30-Year Look Back. Debate and Discussion on projects designed and built around 30 years ago: what has stood the test of time and what are the lessons for the future?

Synopsis

The University Design Forum was founded 30 years ago by the RIBA as a Client Forum. Then called the Higher Education Design Quality Forum (HEDQF), the Forum responded to a stepped increase in investment in new university campuses and buildings from a relatively low base, reflecting changes in the university sector including polytechnics becoming universities, medical school mergers in London requiring new medical teaching and research buildings on university campuses, the ability to borrow for new developments, and the new concept of PFI.

University projects of 30 years ago, as featured in architectural journals of the time, include new campuses for the University of Nottingham and the University of Sunderland, and new buildings such as the Queen's Building at De Montfort University, the Law Library at the University of Cambridge, and the Faculty of Health and Social Care, Robert Gordon University. One of the buildings from 30 years ago was the first winner of the RIBA's Stirling Prize in 1996 - the Centenary Building at Salford University.

This discussion session will explore , with short presentations followed by facilitated discussion on what was innovative in terms of design at the time, what design elements from these buildings were adopted in future university designs generally and what lessons do they provide for buildings into the future?

Andrew Fletcher



Andrew Fletcher has been Director of Attenborough Arts Centre at the University of Leicester since 2022. Over his 18 year career to date, Andrew has specialised in arts venue management in a range of nationally-significant, Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations including Warwick Arts Centre, National Theatre, Lyric Hammersmith, Serpentine Gallery and Wigmore Hall. He has held governance roles with Lancaster Arts at Lancaster University and Buxton Opera House. His expertise covers all aspects of artistic and executive leadership and in running successful creative and financially sustainable cultural organisations which engage a diverse range of audiences and communities.

Session 4 continued

Simon Fraser



Simon joined the Practice in 1990 and is the Principal in charge of our Dubai design studio. He is responsible for an international portfolio of projects varying in scale from strategic masterplans to educational, commercial, cultural, and medical buildings.

His early work for the Practice includes Jubilee Campus for the University of Nottingham, which transformed a disused bicycle factory into a BREEAM 'Excellent' academic park for 2500 students. Following its completion, Simon worked on the campus' extension with the National College for School Leadership and the new Business School. Most recently he has completed the first international campus for the University of Birmingham in Dubai which sits at the heart of the Dubai International Academic City, the largest education hub in the Middle East.

Currently Simon is designing a Neurological Institute for Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, a new Institute which incorporates 15 disparate Neurological Centres and is one million square feet in size. In London he is developing new visitor facilities for the Highgate Cemetery.

Jerry Headly



Jerry Headley is a Chartered Construction Manager with nearly three decades of leadership experience in estate development, infrastructure strategy, and capital project delivery across higher education, parliamentary, airport, and commercial sectors. He has held senior roles at institutions such as the University of Cambridge, the Scottish Parliament, and BAA, and currently specialises in interim Director of Estates appointments, where he leads masterplanning, team development, and transformational change.

Recognised for his ability to build high-performing teams and deliver complex programmes in sensitive and architecturally significant contexts, Jerry brings a deep understanding of how estate design, operations, and stakeholder engagement intersect to shape exceptional environments. He has also advised international bodies on infrastructure for democratic institutions, reflecting his global perspective on the built environment.

Session 4 continued

Helen Groves (Facilitator)



Helen is an Architect with 25 years experience in the Education Sector. As Head of Education Architecture for AtkinsRéalis, she brings together the team designing everything from nurseries to university facilities. Helen has a passion for working with stakeholders to promote the value of good design, whilst embedding the importance of human centred design and wellbeing. She is particularly interested in promoting the benefits of data analysis and space utilisation in university estates to underpin great design.

Ian Taylor (Facilitator)



Ian Taylor: Partner, Director of Sustainable Design and Research, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios.

Ian has extensive experience in complex, low energy and creative projects in the University HE sector including master plans for the LSE, Imperial, and Queen Mary University of London, and the design of student housing, and academic and social buildings.

Beyond his role on projects, Ian leads FCBStudios' Research and Innovation group and has been involved in the development of sustainable design guidance, the carbon calculator tool FCBS Carbon and post-occupancy evaluation methodologies. Ian is Visiting Professor of Environmental Design and Architecture at UCL IEDE.

Session 5: Creating a Sense of Belonging for Students through Social Learning and Living

Synopsis

A discussion on how creating an integrated campus-wide approach to social learning can help create a sense of belonging for students, leading to a better student experience. Student accommodation also plays a key role, and we will discuss connections between social learning on campus and Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). We will explore typologies of inclusive experiences not just related to space but curricula, people, technology etc. and offer guidance on curation and stewardship.

During the session, attendees will discuss, offer views and share ideas on 'Are spaces for non-timetabled activities more important than spaces assigned to courses?'; 'Are we underestimating the role of stewardship to ensure we create inclusive experiences and spaces for a diverse student population?'; 'How can social learning form part of the living experience?'

Erik Mueller-Ali



With broad experience across hospitality, residential, and retail projects, Erik approaches design as a way to connect people to their environment—and to each other. As Head of Product at Unite Students, he focuses on creating student spaces that feel lived-in, intuitive, and human in scale. He believes spaces should be flexible, giving students options in how they live, study, and socialise. Just as importantly, they should be interactive and fun—places that invite participation, spark conversation, and reflect the energy of student life.

Session 5 continued

Hiral Patel



Hiral Patel is a researcher and educator dedicated to comprehending the needs of users in the built environment. Her focus encompasses learning pedagogies, socio-material practices, holistic building performance, briefing processes and building adaptation. Her extensive research portfolio delves into learning environments including academic library buildings, teaching spaces, and social learning spaces with an aim to develop practical interventions. Serving as a trustee of the University Design Forum, Hiral engages within the higher education sector bridging academia and practice. With industry experience in the UK and India, Hiral has a multifaceted career spanning research, business processes, project management, and technical building design.

Roma Richardson



Roma Richardson is a fifth-year architecture student at Cardiff University. Her final-year design thesis explores how the campus can be reimagined to better support current students and adapt to future learning needs. Roma focuses on upgrading and rationalising existing buildings and the underused spaces between them, many of which remain empty as more students study from home. Her goal is to transform these areas to better serve both students and faculty, boost campus vibrancy, improve the overall experience, and create new revenue streams to help relieve financial pressure on the university.

Session 5 continued

John Ridgett



John is Higher Education sector lead for AtkinsRéalis in London and the South East and London Design Director. John has a wide range of experience in designing and delivering complex HE projects. For John's work on the John Henry Brookes Building, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Technology from Oxford Brookes University. In 2015 John served as RIBA South Awards Jury Chair and in 2021 John became a certified PassivHaus Designer. With Paul Conway of Architecture PLB and Claire Jackson of Galliford Try. John co-authored the University Design Forum research paper on student accommodation, the latest edition of which was published earlier this year.

Trevor Wills



Trevor is Director of Estates & Facilities at the University of Plymouth where he has responsibility for services ranging from the capital build programme through to day-to-day running of the campuses. He has previously held similar positions at Nottingham Trent University and the University of Westminster as well as in the health sector. His experience has also included professional consultancy and the not-for-profit sector. At Plymouth, he has initiated and overseen a strategy for the estate which has resulted in some transformative and sustainable developments. As Chair of the University Design Forum, Trevor promotes the sharing of best practice and firmly believes that all of us engaged in the design, delivery and management of the university environment are creating places for future generations.

Session 5 continued

Alex Grigull (Facilitator)



Alexander is an Associate Principal at Grimshaw where he focuses on integrating architecture into complex environments to create vibrant, human-centric spaces that draw people together to excel in their professional endeavors.

He serves as a Trustee of UDF and co-chairs the Research Group, leading initiatives such as the Sustainable Campuses Study and spearheading other ongoing research projects. Alexander actively contributes as a member of the steering group and advisory panel for UDF's pioneering research pursuits exploring campus environments.

With a diverse architectural background spanning multiple sectors, Alexander's insights are particularly applied to tertiary education, laboratories, and research facilities, emphasising the significance of learning, innovation, and scientific exploration.

His notable achievements include developing the master plan for the University of Bern, Switzerland, to establish a new research hub within a historic inner-city district. Prior to this, he was involved in redefining London's largest site, transforming it into a vibrant Knowledge Quarter centered around the bustling Euston transport interchange. Alexander was also instrumental in the multi-award-winning redevelopment of the University of Southampton's Boldrewood Campus from its inception in 2007.

Alongside his project work he is an occasional lecturer in architecture and has a keen interest in regenerative designs that emphasise strong integration with landscape and ecology.

Cora Kwiatkowski (Facilitator)



Cora is an Associate Director and Stride Treglown's national Sector Lead for Higher Education, having worked actively with over 15 universities on award-winning, change inspiring new build and creative reuse projects.

She serves as Board Trustee of UDF and co-chairs the Research Group where her interests help explore visionary spatial solutions to new pedagogies and deliver workable solutions. Cora has headed up the 'Campus spaces and places' and the follow on 'Social Learning @ University' research.

Cora has also demonstrated championing design excellence as thought-leader as Commissioner for DCfW, Board Trustee at Design West as well as chairing the Education Expert Panel at New London Architecture (NLA).

Session 6: Belonging to the Future-Ready Campus: A Social Psychology Experiment

Synopsis

At last year's University Design Forum, we surfaced the deepening engagement crisis on campus. This year, we take it further: how might we design more effectively for connection, involvement and belonging – across every channel of influence and every layer of the campus experience?

To do that, we must better understand people's thoughts, behaviours and social drivers. This session positions human psychology – not just bricks and budgets – as the experiential foundation for long-term, future-ready campus planning.

Together with an architect, neuroscientist, psychologist and data scientist, we will conduct a live Social Psychology Experiment involving all 150 participants. Guided by professional facilitators and actors and inspired by two fine examples from across the world, we'll explore the key psychological triggers that drive individual attraction, engagement and belonging – within a crowd and across a campus.

Expect insight. Expect interaction. Expect to be part of this giant experiment!

Professor Hugo Spiers



Hugo Spiers is Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, and a Vice Dean for Enterprise, at University College London (UCL). He has over 25 years of research experience in neuroscience and psychology studying how our brain recalls the past, navigates the present and imagines the future. He has published over 100 academic articles and received numerous awards including the Charles Darwin Award from the British Science Association and a James McDonnell Foundation Scholar Award. He is co-director of the International Centre for NeuroArchitecture and NeuroDesign, a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Navigation, a Lighthouse Fellow of the Centre for Conscious Design and the Vice Chair of the Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture in the UK. His research project Sea Hero Quest has tested over 4 million people in 195 nations on their navigation ability, providing a powerful benchmark for assessment in Alzheimer's disease and global insight into cognition.

Session 6 continued

Suzi Winstanley



Suzi Winstanley is an architect and director at Turner Works, a London-based studio recognised for its community-focused approach to architecture and urban regeneration. Her work centres on activating underused buildings and places to help communities thrive. With a background in inclusive design Suzi has a hands-on, people-first approach. She uses creative tools like large-scale hand drawing and spatial prototyping to co-create and drive incremental, positive change in campuses, neighbourhoods and cities.

Dr Fiona Zisch



Dr Fiona Zisch is Associate Professor in Architecture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, where she directs the MArch Design for Performance and Interaction. She has 25 years of experience in architecture, with over a decade at the intersection of architecture and the brain sciences. Fiona leads research in the BodyLab at UCL Here East. Her research explores cognitive ecologies with a specific interest in embodied cognition and experience of architectural space, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion in the built environment.

Fiona has held academic positions both nationally and internationally. She is Co-Director of the International Centre for NeuroArchitecture and NeuroDesign and UK Chair of the Academy of Neuroscience For Architecture.

Fiona has practiced as an architect and architectural writer in the UK and in Austria and was part of a design team at NASA. She studied Architecture at the University of Innsbruck and Lunds Tekniska Högskola and Production Design at the National Film and Television School and gained her PhD at UCL at the Bartlett School of Architecture and the Institute of Behavioural Neuroscience.

Session 6 continued

Adam Scott (Facilitator)



Adam Scott – urban designer, strategist and teacher – has spent more than two decades thinking, talking and writing about the power of the designed experience to change the way we think, feel and act.

Working with some of the world's greatest brands, urban planners, developers, architects and place activators, he has helped pioneer the concept of Experience Masterplanning for the likes of NIKE, Sony, Google, The Crown Estate, Network Rail, Melbourne Airport, University of Leeds. It is an approach designed to help businesses and governments, city-makers and brand-builders, to properly meet the needs of the people they are designing and building for.

Adam is co-author of RETHINK Design Guide: Architecture for a post-pandemic world (2021 RIBA Books) and The Experience Book (2022 Black Dog Press).

Session 7: Debate: AI: Friend or Foe: Is AI on the side of the angels or an invention of the devil? Do we need physical universities at all?

Synopsis

Technology has the capacity to change the model of operations for all sectors including higher education. Covid demonstrated that we could continue to educate, research, present and commune without a physical building. In 2020 universities went virtual and we found it worked (with limitations). Many people still work from home at least part of the time and technology continues to improve. With developments in AI such as Generative AI, including chatbots which demonstrate Master's Level reasoning, and with according to Sam Altman of OpenAI Artificial General Intelligence (or superintelligence) just around the corner we might ask does a university need a (human) staff? Could we create a "UniversityGPT" where all education and instruction is given by algorithmic bots? Or is a university a place? Do we need physical universities in a digital world?

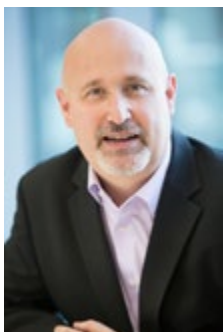
Professor Conor Gearty



Conor Gearty is professor of human rights law at LSE, and an honorary King's Counsel. He is a member of Matrix Chambers from where he continues to practice, and is a bencher at both Middle Temple and the Honourable Society of the King's Inn in Dublin. He has honorary degrees from four universities in three different countries, Britain, Ireland and the United States. From 2020-24, Conor was Vice-President for Social Sciences at the British Academy. His cases as a barrister are mainly concerned with human rights issues and he has appeared in the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the (old) House of Lords. Conor's academic scholarship is concerned with issues related to human rights, civil liberties and terrorism law. In 2021 he published a study on the role of the judges in relation to the use by British authorities of torture: 'British Judges Then and Now: the Role of the Judges' (2021) 84(1) Modern Law Review 119-154: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2230.12578>. His study of the UK's approach to human rights was published in 2016: *On Fantasy Island. Britain, Britain, Europe and Human Rights* (Oxford, 2016). His most recent book was published in May last year: *Homeland Insecurity: The Rise and Rise of Global Anti-terrorism Law*. He has also published ten or so other books, a number of edited volumes and scores of articles.

Session 7 continued

Professor Andrew Murray



Andrew Murray is Professor of Law at the London School of Economics and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA). He is the Academic Director of the LSE's Law, Technology and Society research group and is Academic Director of LSE Online. Since 2014 he has been a visiting Professor at the Amsterdam Law and Technology Institute.

Andrew is a recognised expert in information technology law and regulation. His principal research interests are in regulatory design and digital products and services, particularly the role of non-State actors, the protection and promotion of Human Rights within the digital environment and the promotion of proprietary interests in the digital sphere, encompassing both intellectual property rights and traditional property models. He has written the leading textbook *Information Technology Law: The Law and Society*, now in its fifth edition, and was co-author of *Rethinking the Jurisprudence of Cyberspace* with Chris Reed. Andrew has written on *Regulating AI and Machine Learning* with Julia Black and gave the 2020 TMC Asser Lecture on the subject of "Law and Human Agency in the Time of Artificial Intelligence".

Julian Robinson (Facilitator)



Julian is responsible for the delivery of all capital development, facilities, property and sustainability management at the London School of Economics. He has delivered many high-profile projects, receiving the RIBA London Building of the Year in 2014, when the LSE was also named AJ100 Client of the Year. Julian is a champion of high-quality architectural design, often using design competitions to select project architects.

Holding post graduate qualifications in Town Planning and Surveying, most of his working life spent as a client-side project manager. He was a CABE Enabler and was Chair of the Higher Education Design Quality Forum between 2017 and 2020. In September 2016, Julian was made an Honorary Fellow of the RIBA and appointed to the National panel for Civic Trust Awards in 2017.

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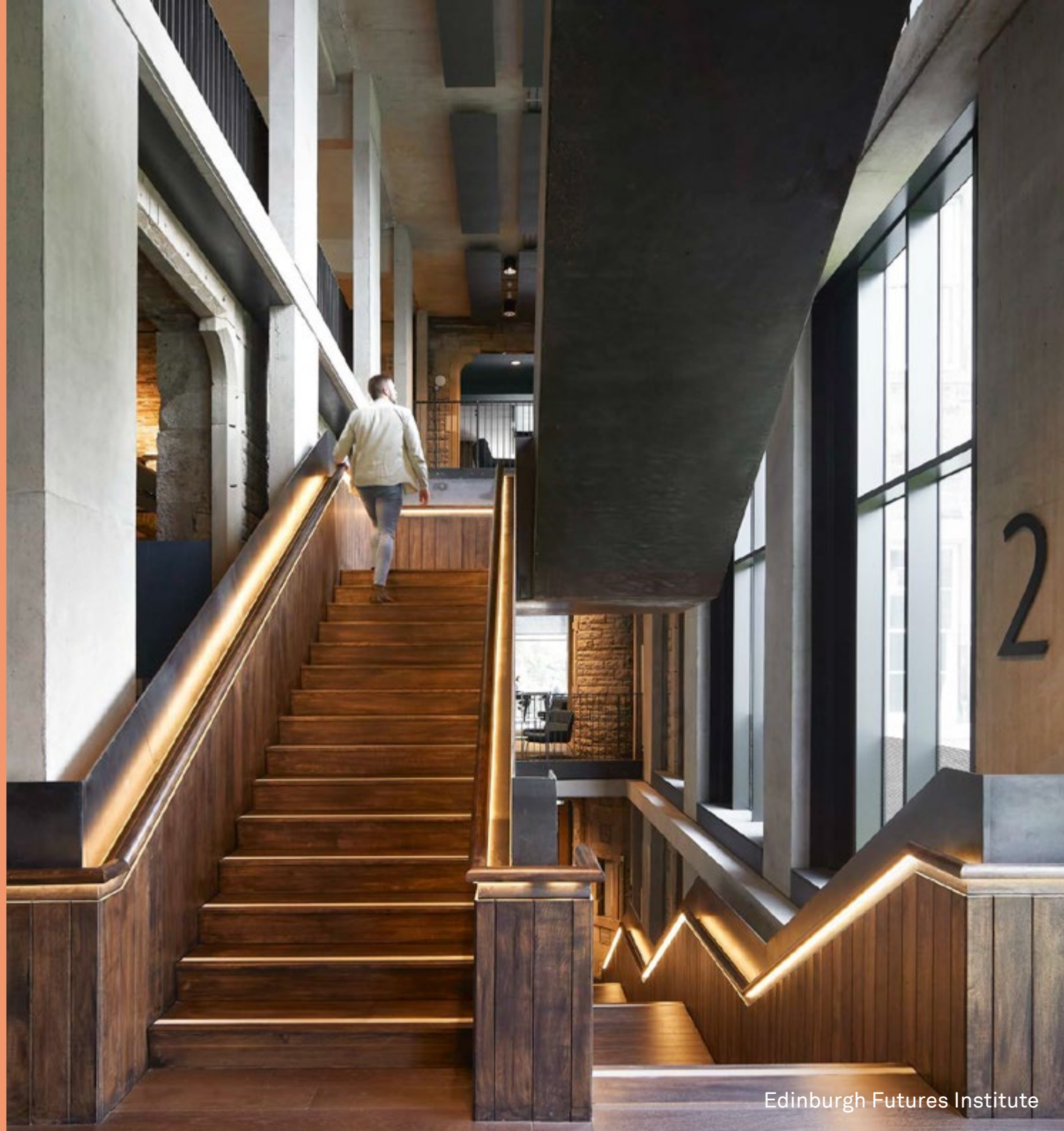
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Gary	Ashmore	Head of Capital Projects	University of Salford
Andrew	Bacon	Director	Fraser Brown MacKenna Architects (FBM Architects)
Satinder	Bancil	Director	Pascall+Watson Architects
Giorgio	Banfi	Head of Facility Management Bocconi University	Bocconi University
Jon	Banister	Associate Director of Landscape Architecture	Land Use Consultants
Andy	Barnes	Principal	Grimshaw
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Gary	Clark	Managing Director	HKS Architects Ltd
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Rupert	Cook	Partner	Miltiadou Cook Miztman
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Kathleen	Dean	Head of Content	STEP CONNECT2
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Matthew	DeRenzy Jones	Regional Director	AECOM
Julian	Dickens	Founder & Director	Dickens Architects
Ryan	Dixon	Senior Associate	Pascall+Watson Architects
Richard	Dobson	Area Director, London	Morgan Sindall Construction
Charles	Dokk Olsen	Director	Shepherd Epstein Hunter
Alan	Doltan	Head of Design	Morgan Sindall Construction
Lia	Doolan	Space Planner	University of Glasgow
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Gayle	Harris	Head of Programme Management Office	University of Cambridge
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Gavin	Henderson	Principal Director	Stanton Williams
Oanh	Henriksen	Partner	Dorte Mandrup
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Delegates

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Delegates

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University Design Forum is an independent organisation which exists to promote high quality design in university campuses, buildings and facilities, in the knowledge that this enhances teaching, learning, research and public engagement.

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