

## WORLD NEWS

## GLOBAL DIGEST

GERMANY  
EDINBURGH FIRMS WIN  
BERLIN AIRPORT JOB

Gross Max and Sutherland Hussey have won an international competition to transform Berlin's Tempelhof Airport. The two Edinburgh practices described the £54 million commission as one of their "most significant" so far.

They will design a new park plus a pavilion on the 280ha site of the now-closed 1930s airport and its airfield. The proposals, for what will be one of Europe's largest city parks,



SOM's masterplan for Danang preserves the natural landscape

maintain the openness of the site while strengthening connections with the city.

The semicircular terminal building will be preserved as part of the project, which is due to complete in 2017.

VIETNAM  
SOM TO MASTERPLAN  
DANANG ECO PROJECT

SOM's London office has won a masterplan commission for

Golden Hills, an eco-urban community in Danang, a major coastal city in central Vietnam. It is the practice's third recent project win in the country after Green Tech City, in Hanoi, and FPT City, also in Danang. SOM's masterplan is for a sustainable edge-of-town community with a series of parks and linear greenways preserving existing watercourses and the natural landscape of the 375ha site.

INDIA  
FOSTER SCHOLARSHIP  
GOES TO RIZVI STUDENT

The 2011 RIBA Norman Foster Travelling Scholarship has been awarded to Sahil Bipin Deshpande – the second student from Rizvi College of Architecture in Mumbai to win the prize. His proposal, Sanitation: a case study across eight metropolises, will take him to Delhi, Shanghai, Beijing, Oslo, Paris, Belfast, Kumasi and Johannesburg, where he plans to develop a sustainable manifesto for sanitation with applications for Mumbai.

The jury, led by Foster, included RIBA president Ruth Reed, critic Rowan Moore, Stephen Hodder, and Spencer de Grey and Roger Ridsdill Smith, both from Foster & Partners.

WORKING  
ABROAD  
DRDH  
ARCHITECTS

The London firm is active in China, Norway, Belgium and the USA. But it doesn't want to open any overseas offices, says Elizabeth Hopkirk

It was the dark days of 2008 and Daniel Rosbottom and David Howarth were just moving into a Dickensian office in Southwark, when they got two calls that told them the new place was already too small.

DRDH Architects, the practice they founded in 2000, had been picked from 193 architects to produce a £100 million masterplan for the Norwegian town of Bodo. And it was one of 100 young firms chosen by Herzog & de Meuron and Chinese artist Ai Weiwei to design villas for a future arts quarter in the inner Mongolian city of Ordos.

The Bodo job quickly generated a third commission: designing two of the buildings within the masterplan; a library and concert hall with a joint construction value of £65 million. For such a young practice it was an unprecedented success.

For a year they camped out in the cramped London Bridge office surrounded by unopened boxes before moving to their current premises, a 1930s building in Bloomsbury which is also notably home to the hair salon favoured by both David Chipperfield and Zaha Hadid.

Ordos is swathed in uncertainty – not least because Ai Weiwei and the city's mayor have both been arrested by the Chinese authorities. But the Norwegian projects are at the detailed design stage and taking up 80% of the firm's time. At least one of the partners is up there – north of the Arctic Circle – every two or three weeks.

The practice's other key projects are also overseas: a church in Oklahoma and a social housing scheme for elderly people in Aarschot, Belgium.

"We never had a plan to become an international practice but it's a

bit like sailing: you have a sense of your ultimate trajectory but the wind changes and you get where you want to go by tacking all over the place," says Rosbottom.

He and Howarth are highly critical of the "peculiarly Anglo-Saxon" attitude to procurement in this country that marginalises the architect's contribution and shoehorns them into specialisms.

They have felt obliged to go abroad to achieve their ambition to be general practitioners, an ambition strongly motivated by academic curiosity.

## Reinventing typologies

Rosbottom and Howarth taught together until DRDH became too busy, though Rosbottom is still head of school at Kingston University.

"We have often picked competitions to work on something we haven't worked on before and to test ideas about things we don't know how to deal with," he says, noting with pride that they are close to "covering the canon".

It's the canon with a difference, though. Reinventing typologies is one of the threads running through their work.

For example, Bodo's 1,000-seat concert hall must also function as a theatre and cinema, and is on the tightest of sites.

The Tulsa church, a private commission on 40ha of prairie, was a chance to reconsider the house of God as transportable tabernacle, familiar from the pages of Exodus and American settler history. The design resembles a series of farmsteads around a covered "courtyard" which is in fact the worship space.

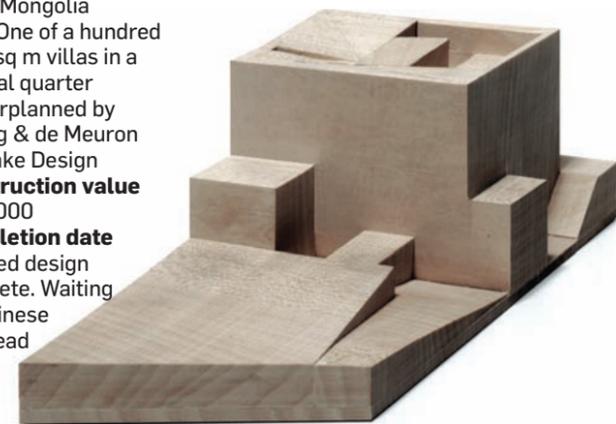
The older people's housing in Belgium tackles the problem of isolation on a number of scales –

CHINA ▶  
Project Villa in Ordos,  
Inner Mongolia

**Brief** One of a hundred 1,000sq m villas in a cultural quarter masterplanned by Herzog & de Meuron and Fake Design

**Construction value** £350,000

**Completion date** Detailed design complete. Waiting for Chinese go-ahead

Award Winning Architects  
Go Bespoke

Stirling Prize winners, Zaha Hadid Architects specified bespoke triangular rooflights for the Maggie's Centre, Fife.

21 rooflights were specifically designed to complement the building's unusual shape.

Bespoke Contemporary steel Rooflights for Riches Hawley Mikhail Architects. Flush fitting and frameless appearance, designed to achieve solar gain targets in this award winning social housing scheme at Clay Field, Suffolk.



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**NORWAY ▼**

**Projects** Concert hall and library in Bodo  
**Brief** Overlooking the harbour, the two buildings will stand behind each other on the last two empty blocks in the city centre. The concert hall (below) will also function as a theatre and cinema.  
**Construction value** £65 million in total  
**Completion date** May 2014



**BELGIUM ▲**

**Project** Housing and social centre for the elderly in Aarschot  
**Brief** Won a competition with Architecten de Vylder Vinck Taillieu for 36 serviced apartments located on the line of the old city walls  
**Construction value** £6.5 million  
**Completion date** 2013



from drawing the rest of the city right into the fringes of the scheme to clustering trios of flats around tiny courtyards.

Both Rosbottom and Howarth are fascinated by such “unfashionable” details as place, materials, history and nuance and claim they want to design “boring buildings”. They reject the “cynicism” of some practices that follow the money around the world leaving a ubiquitous trail of “inherent internationalism”.

By contrast, Rosbottom and Howarth pay so much attention to a project’s location that the judges in Norway assumed they were a local practice. In reality they had never set foot in the country, let alone Bodo.

“You are working in a place you don’t know very well and working at a distance,” says Rosbottom. “It’s an interesting conundrum. You don’t necessarily understand the traditions or nuances of place and

you have to be very careful. On the other hand it’s sometimes an advantage to arrive and see the obvious.”

**London ambition**

So far they have never worked in the same country twice, but that is about to change. They have just been asked back to Belgium to produce a wider masterplan for Aarschot. But they won’t be opening an office there.

“Opening other offices doesn’t feel right,” says Rosbottom. “It’s an incredible privilege to go to a new country where you are a stranger and have people trust you to make something for their community. But London is still a target. London taught us about place and context and we still see ourselves as London architects. We want to work for our own city.”

“But the value system we wish to operate in is difficult in the UK, and that should be a real concern.”



**USA ▲**

**Project** Beacon Hill Baptist Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma  
**Brief** An initial request to build a memorial pavilion for two congregation members killed in

Iraq and Afghanistan led to the commission to design a new church on open prairie  
**Construction cost** £1.2 million  
**Completion date** 2013



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