

## **A Brief History of Art & Architecture**

**Art and Architecture was founded after the 1982** Art and Architecture conference at the Institute of Contemporary Art as the logical outcome of a sequence of events, competitions and meetings which had identified inadequacies in the provision of art to the public at large. Out of the passions aroused at the conference came a list of four priorities and separate groups met to consider Per Cent for Art legislation, Live Project Commissions, Events and Information and Education. The four groups then joined together under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Shephard to form Art and Architecture. A hybrid, with no single manifesto, its symbiotic and interdisciplinary nature was part of its strength.

The Legislation group examined Percent for Art elsewhere in the world. Henry Lydiate, a barrister well known for his ArtLaw organisation, produced a series of influential articles on the Per Cent systems which were instrumental in developing the 'One Percent' policies later adopted by local government bodies nationwide. The Live Projects group liaised briefly with the London Docklands Development Corporation and this type of initiative was to bear fruit at other major redevelopments such as Broadgate, Cardiff Bay and the national garden festivals. Events organised splendid series of lectures and visits. Information and Education produced the Newsletter under its first editor, Tim Ostler.

Jane Riches organised the main public events of the Society's early years, beginning with a double forum at the Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol in January 1983. The "Art, Architecture and Public Participation" conference at the Whitechapel Gallery in June '83 was followed by the Gulbenkian Foundation funded two day national conference 'Children, Planning and Play', drawing a mixed audience of 700 in September '84. These conferences were the first to place the then new development of community based architectural practices in an academic frame and the interest of the Prince of Wales in community architecture directly followed.

A research grant from the Department of the Environment was awarded to the Society for a national review of "Art in the Public Realm" The report was influential in establishing Public Art Agencies. The management of the four groups was eventually merged into a single Board of Management for Art and Architecture, first with Theo Crosby and later Jenny Towndrow in the chair. A strong core of supporters met regularly at Pentagram.

The 'Crafts Factor in Architecture' conference held at the RIBA in 1985 featured blacksmiths, stonemasons, carvers, stained glass artists etc. It was supplemented by an exhibition and catalogue of members' work. In the same year Art and Architecture helped to organise the Fourth National

Mural Conference at Chelsea School of Art. 1986 brought a second major conference at the RIBA, 'Working to a Percentage' which was widely reviewed in the architectural press. It was opened by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the new NMB Bank in Amsterdam took centre stage, showing how admirably art and architecture could work together.

The Society also published its first register of Artists and Craftsmen which was widely distributed. It featured the work of members and included a code of practice for artists working in the building professions. A&A now filled an important interdisciplinary niche and was increasingly influential. Christopher Martin, a senior BBC film director, who was to produce some very successful documentaries on Prince Charles, became chairman and took a prominent role in the Arts Council's Per Cent for Art Committee. Its recommendations on how artists could be involved in public building commissions later influenced the Lottery criteria. Joint events were held with the Art Workers Guild, the Society of Craftsmen Designers and the ICA, with AGMs at the Crafts Council. The series of regular monthly lectures with well known speakers drew keen audiences, undeterred by generous supplies of wine.

A joint conference with Oxford Polytechnic on mural painting in 1988 was followed by another on "Collaboration" A second Register of Artists and Craftsmen was launched at the height of the 80's building boom and A&A began its successful series of Summer lectures with Leon Krier at Leighton House. A programme of A&A visits began with Broadgate, the art embellished development next to Liverpool Street station. In 1990 there was a debate at the University Union with the Cambridge Architectural Association on traditional versus modern architecture, the second Summer lecture was by the prolific El Wakil and a breathtaking visit was made to Canary Wharf.

1991 saw a debate on education at the Royal College of Art and an impressive series of A&A educational posters on the visual environment sponsored by British Rail for distribution to schools to encourage craft, architecture and urban design studies. The A&A manifesto, drafted by Peter Lloyd Jones was published. Light in architecture was the theme of Richard Mac Cormac's Summer Lecture and water was the medium on our visit to William Pye's studio.

The Summer lecture of 1992 was given by Sir Ernst Gombrich on "The Artisan, the Artist and the Architect". \* his adamant delivery made even more impressive by rolls of thunder over Leighton House. Theo Crosby's Globe Theatre was the subject of a workshop held by A&A at Kingston University. With Theo Crosby's retirement, A&A gave up its Pentagram venue and with Peter Lloyd Jones as chair, held lectures at the Royal Society of British Sculptors in South Kensington. The main role of the society was now seen to be as a discussion group and a

platform for the exchange of views with lectures, visits and the journal as its core activities.

In 1994 the nomadic phase ended with permission form from Alan Baxter Associates to join the heterogeneous group of organisations lodging at his premises in Cowcross Street, where the lectures could also take place. Our talks programme has since welcomed 150 speakers, 50 artists, 30 critics and 70 architects many of whom are principle practitioners in the field. As chairman since the move to Alan Baxter's, we have seen the beginning of a new chapter in A&A's impressive history. A distinguished list of patrons has been assembled and a brochure 'the little red book' and new branding and letterheads were designed by Pentagram who also produced a series of posters which have become collectables. With Hans Brill as editor the newsletter, was re-designed as a journal and in 2004 outsourced. In 2001 the A&A web site was launched to develop a network for information and direct links to practitioners. Among outstanding occasions might be mentioned talks by Will Alsop, Cecil Balmond, Ken Shuttleworth on Climate Change and an important Summer Lecture by Richard Rogers. Art and Architecture has consolidated its position as a leading platform for discussion, both in the Gallery at Cowcross Street and on the website where reviews on thirty recent talks are to be found.

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