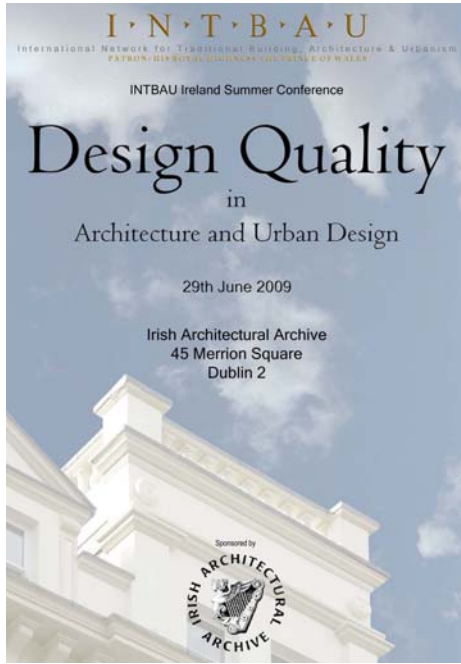


Report on INTBAU Ireland's Summer Conference 2009, Dublin

Design Quality in Architecture and Urban Design



45 Merrion Square, Dublin

Go raibh míle maith agat! to the Irish Architectural Archive (IAA) for hosting the 2009 Summer Conference “Design Quality in Architecture and Urban Design”.

The IAA is an important and sophisticated repository of architectural records from the seventeenth century to the present day, housed in an equally sophisticated and truly beautiful, double-fronted Georgian terrace in Merrion Square, Dublin, which dates from the late 18th Century.

As well as from the IAA, speakers included highly respected practitioners in the fields of architecture and urban design from Ireland and Great Britain.

Welcome: David Griffin, IAA Director, warmly welcomed INTBAU and delegates to 45 Merrion Square.

Introduction: Joe Drew, Chair of INTBAU Ireland gave an introductory presentation on the history and vision of INTBAU Ireland.

Building includes all changes to our built environment – not just dwellings. It includes bridges, roads, walls, tunnels, everything. Architecture is what we live in and with. The changes in Architecture since the 1930s have given rise to such organisations as INTBAU.

Urbanism is where most of us spend long periods of our lives, a lot of it stationary in motor cars. Yet successful urban places depend on footfall, not motor traffic. Urbanism is of crucial importance in the quality of our lives. INTBAU is thus not just for Architects. It is for everyone. Membership is currently free.

Talk No. 1: Irish Architectural Archive Background and Resources.

by Simon Lincoln, IAA Exhibitions and Outreach Officer.

The Irish Architectural Archive, a registered charity, was founded in 1976, by Nicholas Robinson and Dr. Edward McParland.

It's objective is to collect, and preserve, records of all types, and all periods relating to the architectural heritage of the whole island of Ireland, and to undertake photographic surveys of Irish buildings, and the copying of material of interest in private or other ownership in Ireland or abroad.

In the period since its foundation the Archive has in effect become Ireland's national buildings record and is now recognized as the starting point for anyone seeking information on Irish architecture.

The Archive collection ranges in date from the 1690's to the present day and consists of in excess of 400,000 photographs, 200,000 drawings and a wide range of printed material including books, pamphlets and press cuttings. Also held are the early printed book collections of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland and the recently acquired Institute of Engineers book collection. There are in addition a number of architectural models dating from the 1830's to the present day. The holdings of the Irish Architectural Archive contain material - primary or secondary – on every notable Irish architect, on Irish buildings of every type, period or style, and on most significant buildings in the 32 counties of Ireland. The Archive is open to the public from Tuesday to Friday from 10am until 5pm. Admission is free.

Talk No. 2: "Preservation of character in adapting and extending existing traditional buildings"

by Marcus Patton OBE, Director of HEARTH, Associate of the Royal Ulster Academy.

The presentation covered a variety of approaches to the conservation of historic buildings which respected their original character - rather than attempting to impose the personality of the current architect on them. It dealt with the inherent sustainability of re-using existing buildings as opposed to building new ones, and on the paucity of education in traditional construction in present-day architecture schools. Marcus not only gave examples of the successful applications of these concepts but illustrated his talk with many of his own sketches and paintings, for which he is justly renowned.

Talk No. 3: Traditional Urban Design

by Professor Robert Adam, Robert Adam Architects, internationally-renowned architecture writer, publisher and practitioner, and Chair of INTBAU International.

This presentation illustrated the importance and meaning of tradition and its importance to a locality. Conventional urban design tends to follow universal standards and makes each new place around the world much like any other new place. A new direction in urban design started to emerge in the 1990s and is now becoming more widely accepted. This new direction has various names but includes a positive response to the traditional character of the locality. The talk described these new trends in traditional urbanism and provided four key factors that underlie Robert Adam Architects' own work that have wide applications for the production of successful and sustainable urban design.

Talk No. 4: Sir Thomas Drew – a Traditional Architect."

by Brian Hamilton, Senior Architect, Office of Public Works

The famous Italian Architectural Historian and Philosopher Manfredo Tafuri once said that for a history to be truly scientific it should contain an element of autobiography. Brian grew up in a house designed by one of Ireland's most famous nineteenth century architects, Thomas Drew, and a mirror image of his own home next door on Alma Road Monkstown. His surroundings gave him a deep impression of the achievements of Thomas Drew.

The presentation discussed buildings by Drew including Belfast's St Anne's Cathedral, The Graduates Memorial Building at Trinity College Dublin, Rathmines' Town Hall, Waterford Cathedral and other domestic projects.

Neglect of Sir Thomas Drew is of concern as he was the founder of the Irish Architectural Association, President of the R.I.A.I., Founder and first President of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects and the first Professor of Architecture in University College Dublin. He is also the only Irish architect to be knighted. A re-evaluation of his contribution to Irish architecture is long overdue and his imaginative and scholarly reinterpretation of various traditional and classical styles has still much to teach the architects of today.

Talk No. 5: "The Power of Traditional Architecture"

by John Smylie, Partner WDR & RT Taggart and Member of the INTBAU College of Traditional Practitioners.

The presentation demonstrated that of all the contemporary design approaches available, traditional architecture has the greatest potential to produce buildings and places with a real sense of drama and with a heightened theatrical quality. It is a design approach based firmly on the overt expression and celebration of structure and materials and thus easily engages and befriends the onlooker, from the trained architect to the 'man on the Clapham omnibus'. Traditional architecture is immediate, punchy and memorable, all essential elements in design quality. The presentation described the visual logic of built materials, when walls should be used to demonstrate strength, when columns should be used either singly or as groups, and how design based on traditional approach is both aesthetic and practical.

Talk No. 6: Using Traditional & Natural Materials in Low Energy New Buildings & Renovation

by Professor Tom Woolley, Centre for Alternative Technology Graduate School of the Environment.

Traditional building methods using earth, lime and natural fibres are making a comeback in both new building and rehabilitation. These methods and materials have significant advantages over conventional modern materials. Natural materials have lower embodied energy, are healthier, flexible, durable and breathable and are more sustainable. The presentation showed examples of buildings that combine the best of the old and the new, displaying how current, modern and innovative thinking is leading to a reappraisal and an appreciation of traditional materials and building techniques .

Conclusion: The conference concluded with a lively and enthusiastic discussion.

Following the conference, INTBAU Ireland held its first Board Meeting of 2009 at the offices of the Dublin Civic Trust in Castle Street, in a beautifully preserved Georgian building. We wish to extend our sincerest thanks to Chair Geraldine Walsh, now Board Member of INTBAU Ireland, for the kindest of welcomes that was extended to us.

The next INTBAU Ireland Board Meeting will be held at Newry Arts Centre, Newry, Co. Down on 27th September 2009 at 7.30pm, with special thanks to Jacqueline Turley, Arts Officer, Newry Arts Centre. INTBAU Ireland displayed its Travelling Exhibition at this venue earlier in 2009.