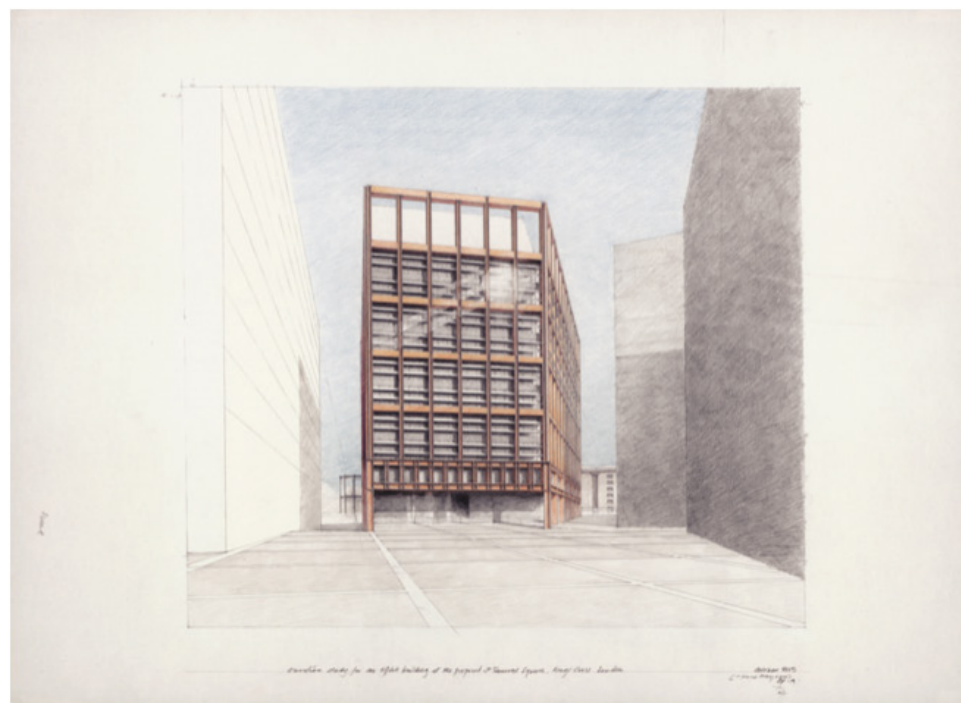


## Eric Parry: Drawing

Sketches and studies on show at Sir John Soane's Museum

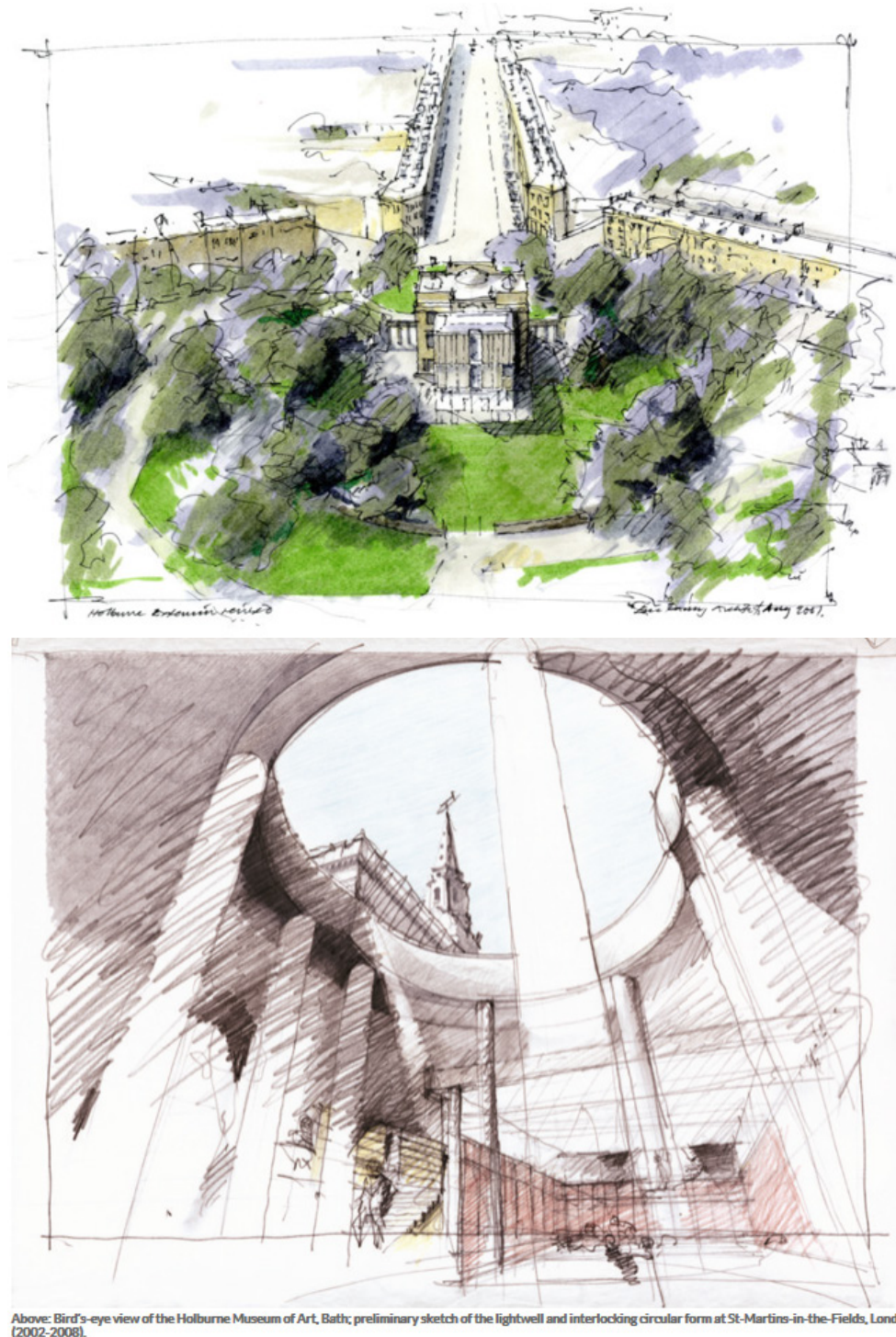


An exhibition of drawings by Eric Parry at Sir John Soane's Museum divides the work into three thematic sections: Observing, Designing and Building.



Top: Perspective view of 30 Finsbury Square (2002).  
Above: Elevation study for an office building at Pancras Square, London (2003-2014)

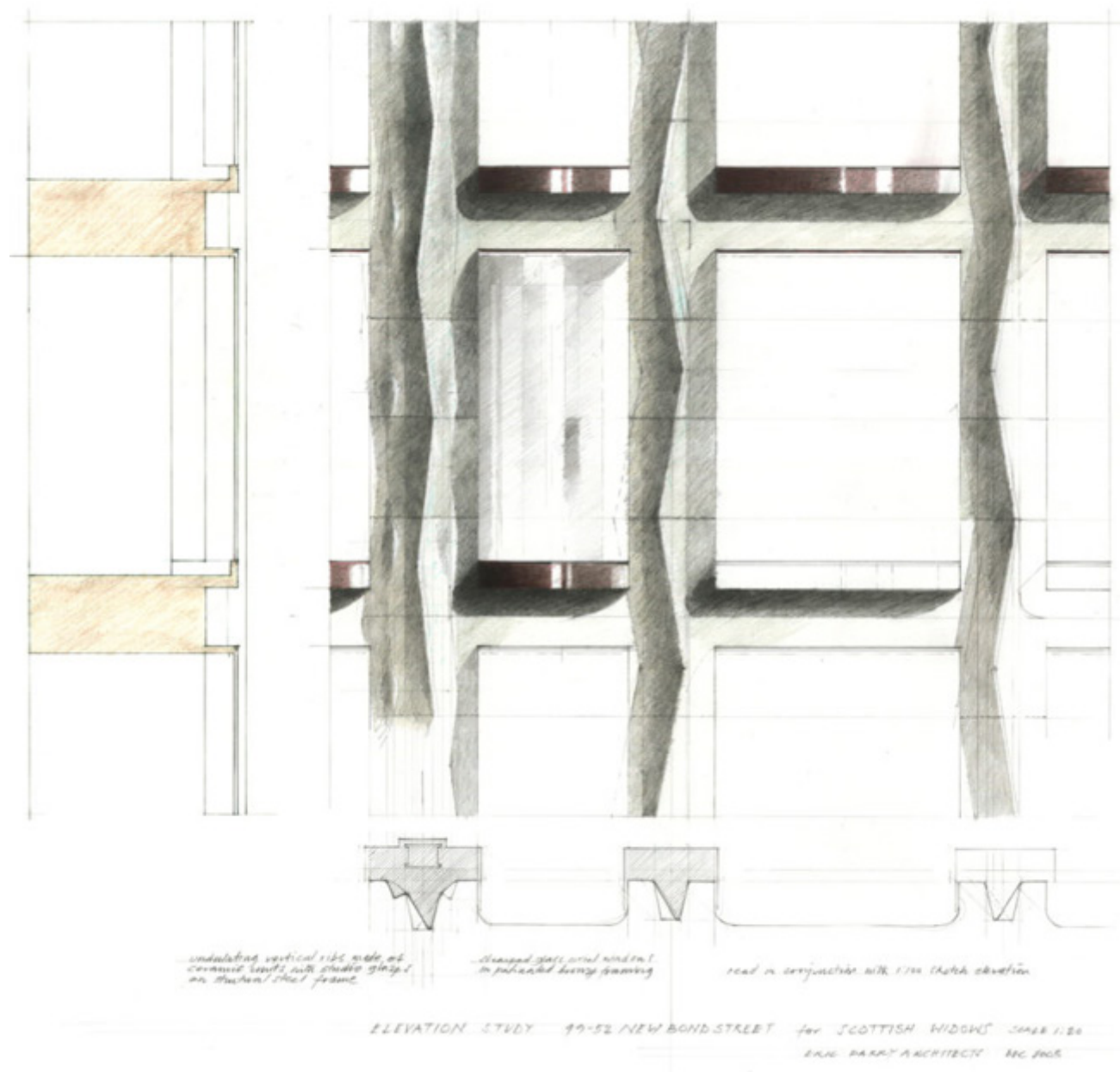
Works on display were created over the last four decades, and range from sketchbooks that record Parry's travels to Iran and India in his twenties (displayed in purpose-designed table cases and vitrines) to exploratory drawings and detailed renderings of recent projects such as the Holburne Museum of Art, Bath (2007), the renewal of St Martin-in-the-Fields and office buildings in the City of London and the West End.



Above: Bird's-eye view of the Holburne Museum of Art, Bath; preliminary sketch of the lightwell and interlocking circular form at St-Martin-in-the-Fields, London (2002-2008).

Two additional exhibits are a video installation in the Foyle Space exploring the construction of Parry's corten-steel-framed 4 Pancras Square, and an intervention in the museum's Picture Room, illustrating the same project from different perspectives. In a supporting publication, Parry discusses the role of drawing in his practice with exhibition curator Owen Hopkins.





Above: Facade study, 50 New Bond Street

'Eric Parry: Drawing'

Sir John Soane's Museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3BP

20 February – 27 May 2019

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# Man of substance

Architect Eric Parry shares his passion for the creative use of materials

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### 40 COVER STORY: ERIC PARRY

The undeniable cover star with an emphatic passion for all things materials



**ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | COVER FEATURE**

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# Beneath the surfaces

*Architect Eric Parry uses a multiplicity of interesting exterior effects to make his buildings stand out from the crowd. He tells OnOffice of his passion for materials and his love of London*

Words by Helen Parton

Portraits by Phil Sharp

ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | COVER FEATURE

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LEFT Polychromatic glazed ceramic on One Eagle Place

RIGHT Richard Deacon's sculptural cornice stands out visually

Considering he has just stepped off a flight, architect Eric Parry is in remarkably chipper spirits when he returns to his London office, a stone's throw from Old Street. He has recently been in Boston, where he is teaching at Harvard; Hamburg where he divides his non-work time; and Singapore, where his practice has an office.

Parry was born with an international outlook, having been raised for the first ten years of his life in Kuwait "in the desert", and indeed the Middle East has found its way back into his life at various junctures. After studying architecture at Newcastle University in the early 1970s, he went on to the Royal Academy and the Architecture Association, with a year studying nomadic settlements in Iran.

Some 40-odd years on, his work ranges from condominiums in the Middle East to large-scale office projects in London, which is where OnOffice's interest lies. That, and his love of the possibility of surfaces made him a

shoo-in for this, our materials issue. He talks passionately about the possibilities of Corten steel, terracotta and ceramic.

The latter forms the hero element of One Eagle Place in the West End, one of the first major projects for the Crown Estate in its St James's portfolio in 2013, which involved a mixture of conservation of existing elements and innovation in incorporating new facades. The ceramic facade features polychromatic glazes that delight the eye in terms of colour and the interplay with light.

"Casting clay has some fantastic qualities," Parry enthuses. "The product becomes eminently sculptural. We created the profiles then it was a question of glazes – and wow what a wonderful sense of artifice. It's no longer taking a known material like stone or brick." Sculptor Richard Deacon created an artistic flourish, creating a cornice that almost appears to have grown out of the building.

Number 50 New Bond Street is nearby, a project completed in 2012 that features ribs of faience – a fine tin-glazed pottery. Parry again talks with passion about the "depth achieved with glazing, of layering ☺





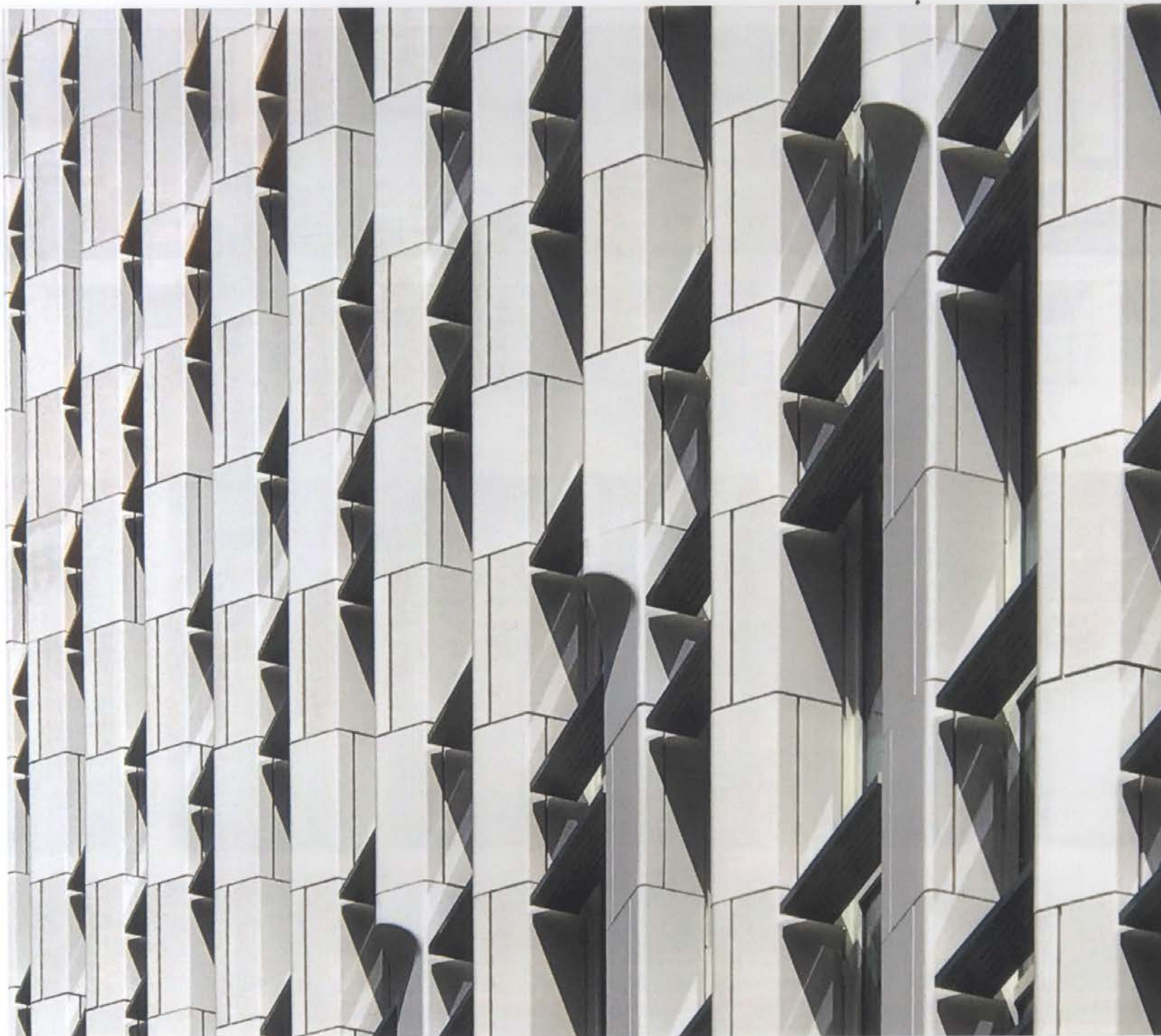
Dirk Lindner X2

## ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | COVER FEATURE

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*“It’s trial and error by the human hand, which is very different from using polychromatics and colour, which is more artificial”*



**ABOVE** The iridescent white ceramic frontage of 10 Fenchurch Avenue

**LEFT** Public roof gardens have been designed with Latz + Partner

and firing glazes. It’s trial and error by the human hand, which is very different from using polychromatics and colour, which becomes much more artificial.” This redevelopment, where New Bond Street meets St George Street, created two office buildings in what is a highly restricted site where listed buildings abound.

Both these projects have that glorious quality of reaffirming what a great city London is when you just look up. Parry’s love affair with the capital continues with 10 Fenchurch Avenue, a 15-storey, 40,000sq m, office building for Italy’s largest insurance company, Generali, which has retail at the lower levels and a public passageway at street level. The meeting room in which our interview and photoshoot takes place has an abundance of architectural models, among them a scaled-down version of this City of London scheme, which has a beer mug next



to it, the complex next to the mundane at first sight. The white of the drinking vessel was a way of keeping in mind the desire for iridescence, Parry explains.

Featuring a staggering 19 kilometres of ceramic in total, Fenchurch Avenue has a brise soleil facade which has an iridescent coating that plays with the light. This project also has a roof garden, designed with German landscape architect Latz + Partner, and Parry was keen that this be accessible to the public: "The greatest privilege is to be able to dedicate the top to London." This new structure, due to complete in summer 2018, will provide views from the Square Mile of the City's original incarnation, down to the Tower of London and into the expanse of greater London as we know it today.

Parry isn't burdened by the weight of history, however, but sensitively takes it in his stride, as evidenced by his work at the Leathersellers' Hall at St Helen's Place, a slice of another age among the bustle of Liverpool Street. The new elements marry with an original wall, where its south elevation is clad in ceramic tiles.

Leather-clad banquettes, bespoke rug and

table designs and a concrete oval stair for this livery company hall demonstrate his care and consideration for this project.

One Undershaft, meanwhile, is set to be a more future-facing part of the City of London. A planning application for this 73-storey development was submitted in 2016 with a provision for 90,000sq m of office space. Echoing what's been achieved at Fenchurch Avenue in terms of accessibility, the top of the building will feature a public viewing gallery. A new public square will be created at the tower's base, creating a landmark at a more human level and benefiting not just the office workers who are based there, but the general public beyond. The building's reception is elevated and Parry talks in terms of "simply lifting the height like medieval churches".

Heading back in the opposite direction, one of Parry's most significant projects – completed last year – is at 4 Pancras Square in King's Cross. "It's a fascinating story of persistence," he says of the Argent development. "In terms of urban regeneration, it has been outstanding. There's a sense of urbanity to it." He'd ☺



ABOVE The 73-storey 1 Undershaft will have a public gallery at the top

RIGHT A public square will be created at the foot of 1 Undershaft



DBOX X2





*“It’s a fantastic story of persistence. In terms of urban regeneration, it has been outstanding. There’s a sense of urbanity to it”*

been an admirer of the developer’s work at Brindleyplace in Birmingham. Parry got involved in a series of charrettes organised by Argent and eventually was given what he describes as a “trapezoidal plug” of a site to play with, a “perspectival alley”. Structurally there is a vierendeel frame at the first floor – a type of truss used on difficult-shaped diagonal sites such as this to both aesthetic and load-bearing ends. This means the ground floor columns can be widely spaced.

The materials used for the facade of this ten-storey office building, now let to Universal Music, are a mix of weathering steel and, for the brise soleil shading, a white glazed ceramic, both of which have historical references points intertwined in the contemporary architecture. The use of steel is a nod to the railways and the engineering prowess of the industrial age, still seen in the 19th century gasholders that are this building’s neighbours.

In some ways, Parry says, 4 Pancras Square is a “raw version of Aldermanbury Square” in the City, which was completed in 2007 and nominated for the Stirling Prize. That 18-storey building has stainless steel cladding, which encloses the perimeter structure and where two wings are divided by a central section which lets light in to the triple-height reception space.

Parry’s work follows the railway line up to



**ABOVE** 4 Pancras Square mixes weathered steel and ceramic brise soleil



**LEFT** The steel exterior nods to the industrial heritage of the area



Cambridge – or a little way out, in fact, at Granta Park – where Eric Parry Architects was commissioned in the mid-1990s to design a masterplan, transforming the arable land which was once the economic cash cow of this part of East Anglia to the science park which is where the money is now. The Welding Institute, which is a national centre for materials, has three buildings. These house amenity operations, an NSIRC education facility, as well as light engineering laboratories and office accommodation. The outside of the buildings is clad with vertically hung 1.5m terracotta baguettes to spectacular visual effect.

Though he's modest enough to say he's not a collector, Parry cites a particular interest in ceramicists Bernard Leach, Nicholas Rena, Clare Conway and Carina Ciscato – his love of materials crossing effortlessly from his longstanding architectural practice into the whole of his life. ■



Dirk Lindner X4

**ABOVE** The Welding Institute reception looks out over the grounds

**BELOW** Vertically hung terracotta cladding on the Welding Institute







AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2017



ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | INTERVIEW - BRUNO TAUT'S GLASS HOUSE

Publication: The Economist - 1843

Date: August/September 2017

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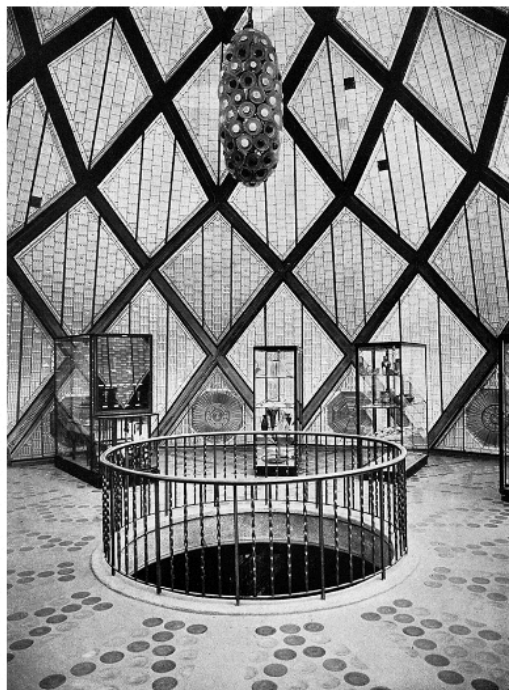
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I've only ever known Bruno Taut's Glass Pavilion through photographs and drawings, and they are always in black and white. But you have to imagine it as full of colour. Having climbed the concrete steps you would enter the dome where the roof was a grid of diamonds in yellow glass. Under your feet there was glass in the floor and a set of stairs to a level below, illuminated by an oculus. There the walls were silver and gold and a waterfall cascaded over underwater lights. It was a luminous world.



Taut built the pavilion in 1914. He had been working in Stuttgart for Theodor Fischer, an architect who was head of the Deutscher Werkbund, an association of designers and industrialists. In 1913 Konrad Adenauer, later chancellor of West Germany but at that time an aspiring inventor, organised an exhibition for the Werkbund. Taut was commissioned by the association of the German glass industry to design a building that would show their technical advances. The result, destroyed shortly after the exhibition finished, was groundbreaking.



On the one hand it is an expression of the rational trajectory of modern architecture, and looks forward to the kinds of buildings we're now familiar with, made from a kit of glass and steel. Yet it also has a poetic dimension. Taut was one of a number of German architects, later called the Crystal Chain group, who were interested in the iconography of the crystal, which was for them a profound metaphor – a mineral which allows light to pass through it, a rock without a shadow. It represented renewal and openness, a kind of Utopia. On the outside of Taut's pavilion were aphorisms by Paul Scheerbart, a writer and friend. One of them read "Coloured glass destroys hatred".

The way this building is a fulcrum between the industrial, the poetic and the social has always fascinated me. There was a period at university when I was spending more time in the sociology department than in the architecture department, particularly when I was a student in Newcastle, where we were thinking about social housing. Then I went to the Royal College of Art, where I was cheek by jowl with people working with glass, fabric, printing, painting or sculpture. Like Taut, I carry this dual mantle.

In 2008 I was commissioned to redevelop the church of

St Martin-in-the Fields in London. I designed a glass pavilion as an entrance to the crypt beneath the church, with an oculus illuminating the underground space. The pavilion stood between the church, by James Gibbs, and a set of buildings by John Nash, part of his plan for Trafalgar Square. The glass walls created a building with no shadow, a presence without a presence, and they connected the earth and the air. I wasn't thinking about Taut, but he was there subliminally. I feel charged by the poetic and metaphoric leanings of his work. ■



Eric Parry is a British architect whose most recent building is Four Pancras Square in London. He was talking to Simon Willis

IMAGES: WERKBUNDARCHIV, MUSEUM DER DINGE BERLIN/TIMOTHY SOAR

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# British architect Eric Parry praises Singapore's success with building skyscrapers



British Architect Eric Parry (above). PHOTOS: ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS

Architect Eric Parry designs a simple facade for 1 Undershaft to add sobriety to the London skyline, which is full of buildings with unusual shapes and forms

🕒 PUBLISHED: JUN 10, 2017, 5:00 AM SGT



Natasha Ann Zachariah 

Sandwiched between the wedge-like Cheesegrater and the pickle-shaped Gherkin, the design for the latest skyscraper in London's financial district may come off as a tad regular.

With its simple rectangular facade, 1 Undershaft does not challenge the novelty silhouettes in the neighbourhood.

Not that its British architect Eric Parry was looking to outdo the neighbours with a more outlandish spectacle. Instead, he was hoping to add some "sobriety" to the skyline.

Not that its British architect Eric Parry was looking to outdo the neighbours with a more outlandish spectacle. Instead, he was hoping to add some "sobriety" to the skyline.



But there is no disputing that, height-wise, the building, slated for completion within six to 10 years, will be an imposing presence in the city. At 73 storeys and 304.94m high, it will be the tallest building in the City of London financial district and the second tallest in Western Europe.

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The "tallest building in Western Europe" title goes to The Shard, a 95-storey spire-like skyscraper by Italian architect Renzo Piano that stands across the River Thames from 1 Undershaft.

But Mr Parry, 64, is not interested in a height competition. "With the increasing number of tall buildings, the designers were all trying to do something different," he tells The Straits Times in a recent interview. "But the skyline has become like a strange theatre set, where the pieces don't really speak to one another."

"There's such a predisposition to (unusual) shapes and forms that my immediate response was that we needed some dignified calm here."



1 Undershaft, with a simple rectangular facade, is sandwiched between the wedge-like Cheesegrater and the pickle-shaped Gherkin. PHOTO: ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS

The Guardian reported in 2015 that 1 Undershaft got its name as a tall maypole loomed over the site in mediaeval times.

The skyscraper has a strong Singapore connection. The building, which will provide office space for 10,000 people, is commissioned by Aroland Holdings, a Singapore-based real estate developer.

Aroland is partly held by HPRY Holdings, which is, in turn, owned by Singaporean billionaire Kuok Khoon Hong. He is the co-founder of Wilmar International, the world's largest palm-oil processor.

Aroland had put out a design competition for the building, which Mr Parry's 34-year-old firm, Eric Parry Architects, won in 2014. The firm provided an understated blueprint for a building that combines commercial office spaces with several public areas at its highest and lowest spots.

The building sits on the west side of the site and in the centre of the plot will be a sunken plaza with cafes and shops to attract human traffic. There will be a 360-degree public viewing gallery, spread across the two highest floors, which Mr Parry will develop in collaboration with the Museum of London.

He hopes that the bird's-eye view of the city from the gallery will give visitors a comprehensive history lesson of London's architecture and its influences. A restaurant will be housed below the gallery.

The Kuwait-born architect, who started his career as a lecturer at the department of architecture at the University of Cambridge in 1983, says: "Rather than having the top part of the building celebrating a corporate place, I strongly feel it should be a civic place of opportunity. Looking over London, you can see the fantastic layers of history."

He plans to clad the building with a white vitreous enamel that "acts as a skin to protect against solar penetration while allowing you to see out". In the sun, the building will shimmer white, instead of looking green from the tinted glass that many other buildings have.

He says: "The city is turning into a swamp of bottle green-coloured glass buildings. When light reflects off the green, people look sick. That's very unhealthy."

## ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS | INTERVIEW

Publication: The Strait Times Singapore

Date: 10 June 2017

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**The designers were all trying to do something different. But the skyline has become like a strange theatre set, where the pieces don't really speak to one another. There's such a predisposition to (unusual) shapes and forms that my immediate response was that we needed some dignified calm here."**

BRITISH ARCHITECT ERIC PARRY, on the 304.94m-high 1 Undershaft, the upcoming tallest building in the City of London financial district

”

has worked on lifestyle projects, such as the rooftop spa of the Four Seasons Hotel in London and two bars and a dance floor for the Ministry of Sound club there.

Mr Parry ventured into South-east Asia about two decades ago, designing two condominiums in Kuala Lumpur and taking on small interior projects for some residences and F&B outlets. He has an office in Singapore with two staff, which he started about four years ago.

But unlike his British compatriots such as Norman Foster and the late Zaha Hadid, who have put their names to major properties here, he has remained relatively low-key.

Designing buildings for the tropics, he says, is a welcome challenge after working with the English climate for so long. "I think the time has probably come and doors are open. Starting the Singapore office was a response to my feeling to wander more in my latter years."

He praises the Republic's success in building skyscrapers that have worked in greenery and carved out courtyards at high floors, such as home-grown firm Woha's Oasia Hotel Downtown in Tanjong Pagar, where this interview takes place.

He says: "Even though Singapore has only a short history of design, there's lots to learn from it. Architects here took on the idea of building bioclimate buildings and have done it well. Nowhere else in the world matches Singapore's level of sophistication for these buildings."

While he susses out business opportunities here, he will be busy with the construction work on 1 Undershaft. In December, its plans were formally approved by the City of London's Planning and Transport Committee.

Like its quirky neighbours, 1 Undershaft has been given a playful moniker that has Mr Parry cringing. It has been nicknamed The Trellis for the distinctive red steel crosses that run the length of the building.

He says: "I don't like it. I think its current name is quite dignified. But if it becomes The Trellis, I'll live with it."

He sounds like he is an old hand at designing skyscrapers, but 1 Undershaft is actually the tallest and biggest project he has done.

Eric Parry Architects has taken on mostly low-rise offices, cultural and residential projects, though these are no less significant.

It has worked on some of London's most notable contemporary structures. These include the Stirling Prize-nominated 5 Aldermanbury Square, an 18-storey commercial building; and a luxury apartment complex in Albemarle Street in the Mayfair district, which was converted from office space.

It is also behind the sensitive restoration of many old buildings, including the St Martin-in-the-Fields church in Trafalgar Square and the acclaimed new extension for the Holburne Museum of Art in Bath. It



## BUILDINGS RESTORED AND DESIGNED BY ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS

### ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS, LONDON



The project to restore St Martin-in-the-Fields included seamlessly integrating various uses of the church and the other old buildings on site. PHOTOS: TIM SOAR, THE STAR, HELENE BINET, DIRK LINDNERN

Designed in 1726 by Scotland-born architect James Gibbs, St Martin-in-the-Fields is one of London's best-known churches.

Eric Parry Architects was tasked with restoration and renovation works for the multi-purpose space, which sits at the north-east corner of Trafalgar Square.

The architects decided to take out additions that were made through the years and detracted from the church's original Baroque look. Major restoration work included replacing the linoleum floor with a pale Isle of Purbeck stone and a thorough cleaning of the church's exterior.

The architects also had the complicated job of seamlessly integrating various uses of the church and the other old buildings on site. These spaces have vastly different uses, including providing housing for the homeless and a community centre.

So, they decided to dig under the delicate building to create more space to house a shop, a large hall, a small chapel, offices and a new rehearsal space. A new glass pavilion was built as the entrance to the new space below.

The £36-million refurbishment was completed in 2008, two years after building work began.

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## DAMAI SURIA, KUALA LUMPUR



Located on Jalan U-Thant in the Malaysian capital's ambassador district, Damai Suria is a low-rise condominium building with 32 apartments.

Designing for a tropical climate, Mr Eric Parry linked the units with wide passageways and installed windows that facilitate cross-ventilation. Completed in 1998, the RM24-million project spanning 10,117 sq m also has tropical landscaped gardens.

It became the first Malaysian building to be featured on the cover of the official journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (Riba).

Mr Parry's other Malaysian project is Iringan Hijau, another low-rise residence with 26 units of different sizes in the affluent Ampang Hilir neighbourhood. It was completed in 2009.

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## HOLBURNE MUSEUM OF ART, BATH



In 2011, Eric Parry Architects completed work on an extension to the public art gallery in the city of Bath. This included new gallery spaces, archives as well as educational and visitor facilities.

Founded in 1882, the Holburne was Bath's first art museum and is filled with paintings, portrait miniatures, Renaissance bronzes, ceramics and furniture. It is also known for its collection of 18th- century British paintings.

The firm's proposal for the addition to the Georgian building did not always sit well with the local council, though it eventually came around.

The extension at the back of the museum is a glass box, with turquoise ceramic fins running down from the top of the building. It is also linked to the original museum building.

Prior to the £11.2-million restoration, the museum drew few visitors. In 2012, The Telegraph, a national British daily broadsheet, reported that the museum had become Bath's third-biggest tourist attraction. It has also won the Riba 2012 South West Building of the Year award.

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## THE LEATHERSELLERS COMPANY, LONDON



A glass sculpture by American artist Dale Chihuly hangs in the reception area of The Leathersellers Company.

The brief for the seventh headquarters of this historic livery company involved providing a new company hall in the basement of an existing building.

Eric Parry Architects carved out spaces for a library, dining hall, reception room and a meeting room called The Court Room.

The posh spaces feature lots of luxurious materials, as well as precious fixtures that have been with the company as it changed homes through the years.

For example, The Court Room has walls made of American walnut wood. Two 19th-century glass chandeliers, from its previous headquarters, hang above the meeting-room table.

Other highlights include a blue- and-white glass sculpture by American artist Dale Chihuly in the reception area.

Work started on the project in 2012 and was completed last year.

A version of this article appeared in the print edition of The Straits Times on June 10, 2017, with the headline 'A skyscraper with gravity'. [Print Edition](#) | [Subscribe](#)

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