



RETRO  
AWARDS  
2012





Bringing old museum buildings up to modern standards poses special design challenges. International criteria for art preservation calls for tight control of temperature, light and humidity and adding necessary humidity in winter can play havoc with traditional building envelopes. Secondary glazing and light-control systems can reduce energy consumption and provide vital daylight control, but sensitive design is needed when dealing with historic facades. The natural thermal inertia of heavy traditional construction can provide a 'flywheel' effect to stabilise internal climates, giving a low-carbon approach when combined with an intelligent, frugal ventilation system, as demonstrated in the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries at the V&A Museum in London.

*Andrew Sedgwick, Arts and Culture Business Leader, Arup*

#### WINNER

Project: **The Holburne Museum**

Cost: **£7.2 million**

Architect: **Eric Parry Architects**

Client: **The Holburne Museum**

Trust Company

Date: **February 2011**

**B**uilt in 1796, The Holburne Museum was once the Sydney Hotel and the gateway to Sydney Gardens, a late 18th-century pleasure garden. In 1916, the building was gutted and transformed into a museum by Reginald Blomfield, but during the Second World War the collection was stored in a reinforced room in the basement and the property occupied by the admiralty. Over time, problems came to the fore, such as out-of-date services, a damp basement, a leaking roof, inadequate visitor facilities, and a collection that was largely in storage. A clear curatorial brief led to a clear architectural arrangement – principally, that the new main gallery be at the same level as the existing one and that both be top lit.

Within the shell of the Grade I-listed Georgian building, and in a manner respectful of Blomfield's alterations, modifications included reconstructing the stair, upgrading the galleries and adjusting the rear elevation. The 18th-century basement vaults were unaltered and used for plant rooms, while the archive and the picture store

are now housed in a new basement.

Creating an axial public connection to the park, the stair hall was enlarged by rebuilding the existing stair to the west of the central axis. The old lift shaft has been re-used as the main vertical riser for the services in the existing building; a separate fire zone, this acts as a buffer between areas with varying climatic conditions. The stairs were rebuilt using a technique similar to the original; the old stone treads were re-bedded onto a new structure and its profiled soffits re-made in fibrous plaster, while existing balustrades were reused.

The Picture Gallery is now a top-lit room with magnificent rooflights. New glazing was inserted in the existing steel frames and the lights were raised to allow for the new roof build-up. New internal solar and blackout blinds have been fitted in the profiles of the ornate decorative mouldings. A new close-controlled air conditioning system with high-temperature and humidity control standards has been installed.

Historical features in the ballroom gallery were refurbished, while new window casings replaced old radiator grilles to conceal semi-close-controlled air-conditioning and humidity units. The pipes serving the units run in a new ceiling void in the floor below. New secondary glazing improves air-tightness and reduces heating and cooling loads. Solar and black out blinds control the damaging levels of light and solar radiation.

The Holburne's development has transformed a failing museum into one that makes more of its site, building and collection.

#### RETROFIT BUILDING OF THE YEAR



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June 2011

## Architecture of display: museums and galleries

MJ Long on David Chipperfield, Ros Diamond on ZMMA, Peter Clegg on Eric Parry, Alan Pert on Zaha Hadid and Martin Caiger-Smith on the future of the art museum

Plus: Robert Harbison on Charles Jencks' cosmic gardens, Seville's Metropol Parasol and RSHP's Barcelona bullring





## BUILDING ■ Outward signs – inward presence: Eric Parry Architects in Bath

*Peter Clegg applauds Parry's reinvention of the Holburne Museum. Photos: Paul Riddle.*

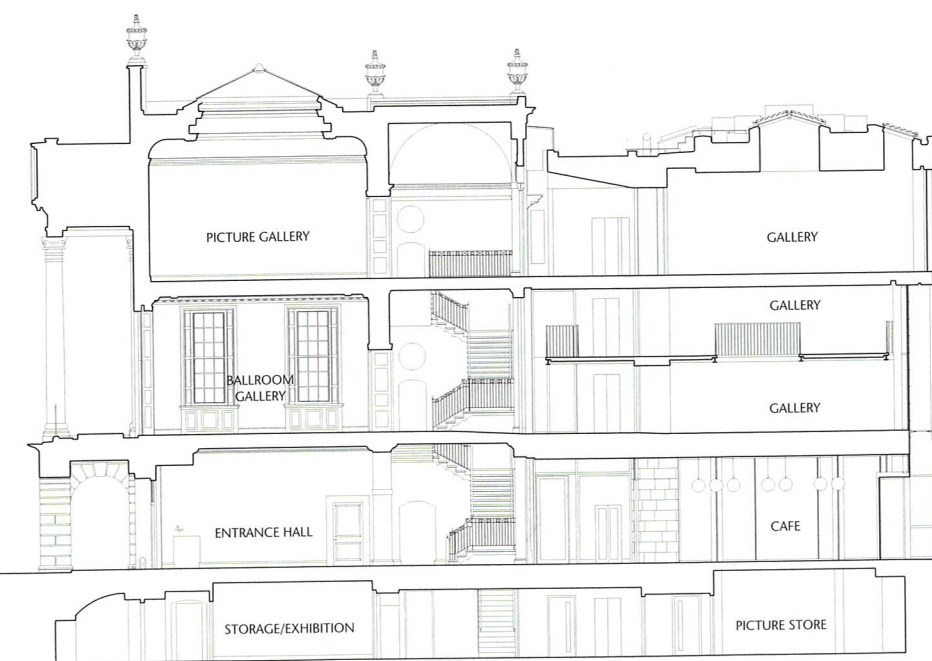


When William Pulteney laid out his great causeway eastwards across the Bath marshes from Robert Adam's bridge in 1789, he created one of this country's great neoclassical avenues. Designed by Thomas Baldwin, Great Pulteney Street terminated at Sydney Gardens, which provided the citizens with a series of theatrical spaces for public breakfasts, evening promenades, illuminations and popular gala nights. The Sydney Hotel, designed by Charles Harcourt Masters in 1795 to mark the entrance to the pleasure gardens, faced down Great Pulteney Street to the city, while its very different gardenesque facade flanked the park. The building forms a Janus

archway linking the grandeur of the city to the artifice of the landscape. Bath has always celebrated this interface.

The hotel was reconfigured by Reginald Blomfield in 1916 as a museum to house the collection of naval officer William Holburne (1793-1874), once a 12-year-old midshipman at Trafalgar and later a baronet, who had amassed an extraordinary assortment of paintings and porcelain, furniture and bric-a-brac. The triumph of Eric Parry Architects' new extension to the Holburne is that it re-opens the urban axis and its archway through the building, crudely interrupted by Blomfield's extension.

*Above* South flank of the new wing; porticoed facade of the museum; ground floor gallery and mezzanine level.  
*Below* Archive engravings showing the entrance front and original garden facade (ph: Holburne Museum).





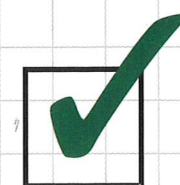
# Not just a Tick Box Exercise



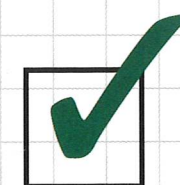
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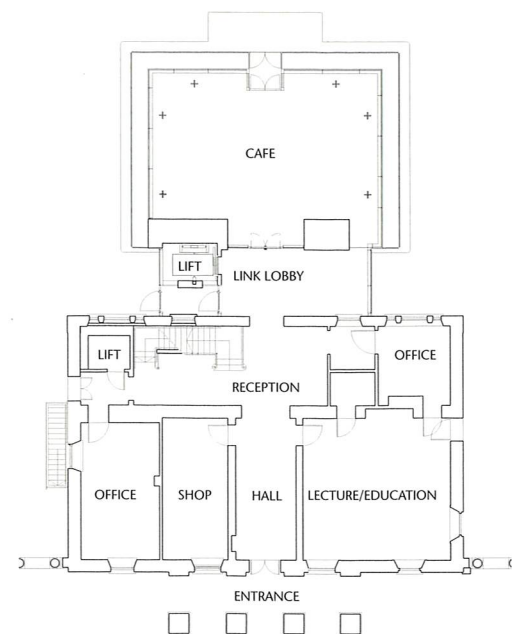
Code for Sustainable Homes



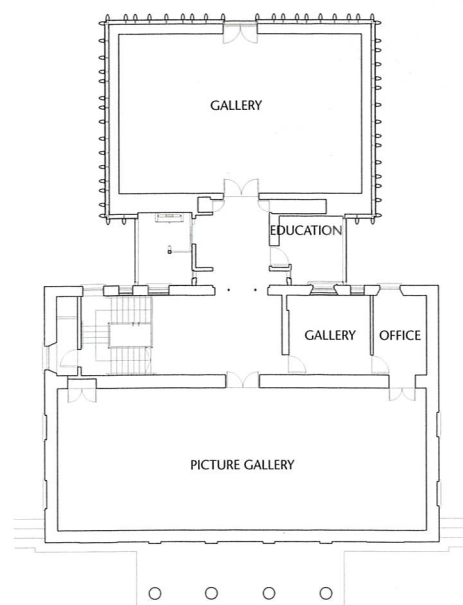
Green Guide Ratings



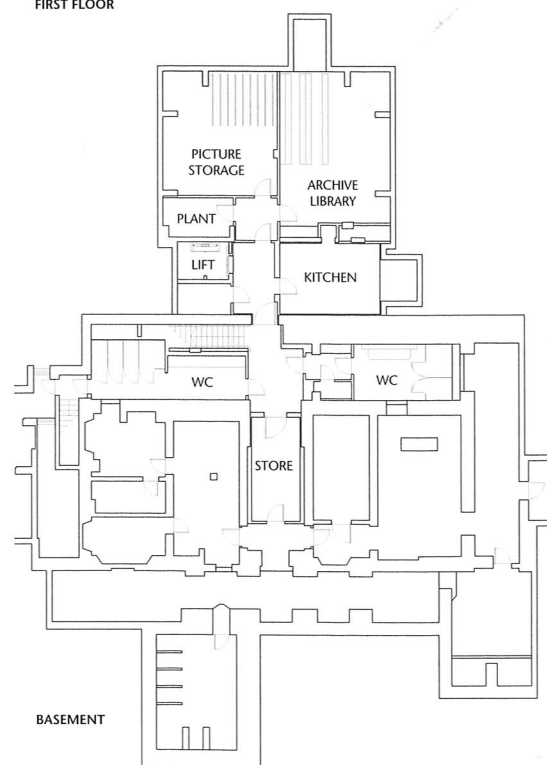
Responsible Sourcing



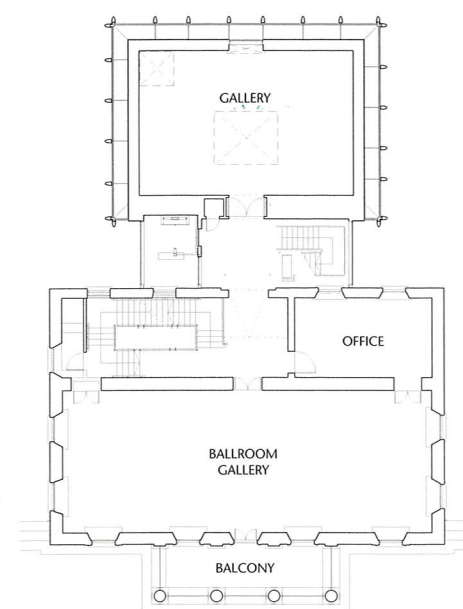
FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



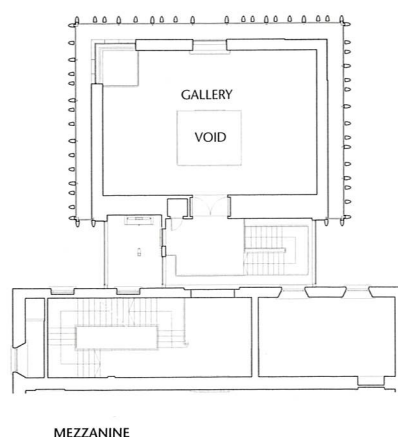
BASEMENT



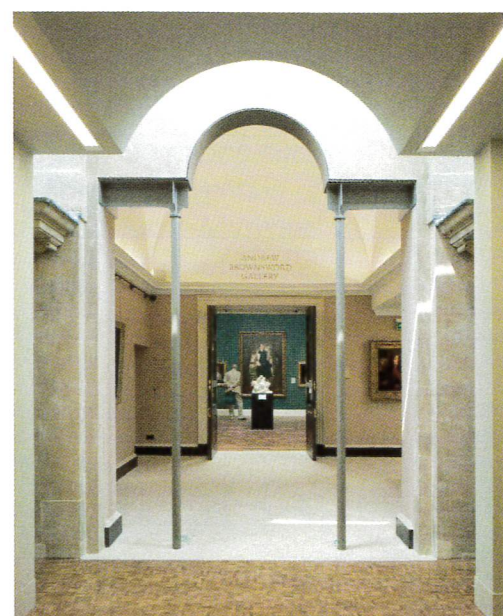
GROUND FLOOR

**Floor plans** The new wing is planned to reinforce the symmetrical arrangement of the existing listed building. A new glazed link lobby articulates the junction between the old and new, while the rear part of the existing building has been reconfigured, realigning the staircase (a later addition by Reginald Bloomfield) to open the central axis through the museum at all levels.

**Below** Parry's reinterpretation of a Serlian archway, with slender steel columns, marks the transition between new and old at second floor level.

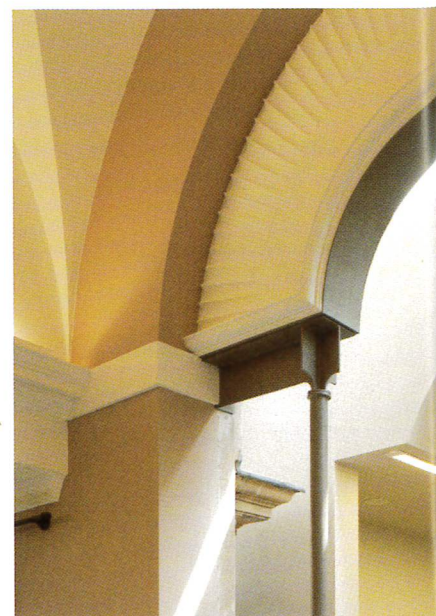


MEZZANINE



Both the form and cladding of Parry's proposed extension had caused much controversy and this led to inordinately costly delays. The footprint of the new extension is less than half that of the original grade-one-listed building. Its simple cubic volume contains a cafe on the ground floor and a temporary gallery on top with two floors fitting – just – into the piano nobile. A secondary staircase, lift and service spaces form a re-entrant in between the new and the old. A basement extension provides storage and education space.

The building has a Tardis-like quality. Blomfield's staircase has been moved to one side to recreate the axial links through the building at the ground and upper floors. This also provides much more generous circulation space at the junction between new



Sometimes it can be difficult to work out how all the rules and regulations fit together.

The jargon alone can be daunting to say the least, so Kingspan Insulation has put together some information to help.

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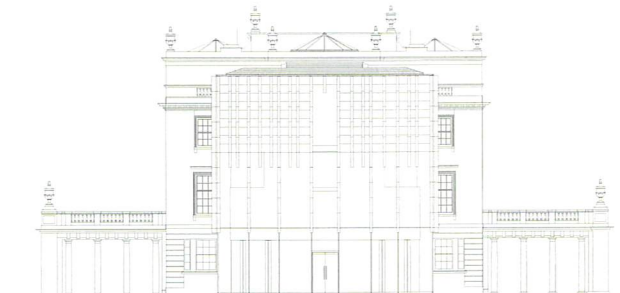


and old. The intermediate floors in the extension provide a delightful 'cabinet of curiosities' housing a playful display by designer Metaphor from the vast range of Holburne's collection that was formerly in storage. The daylight top floor provides a temporary gallery where the inaugural show,

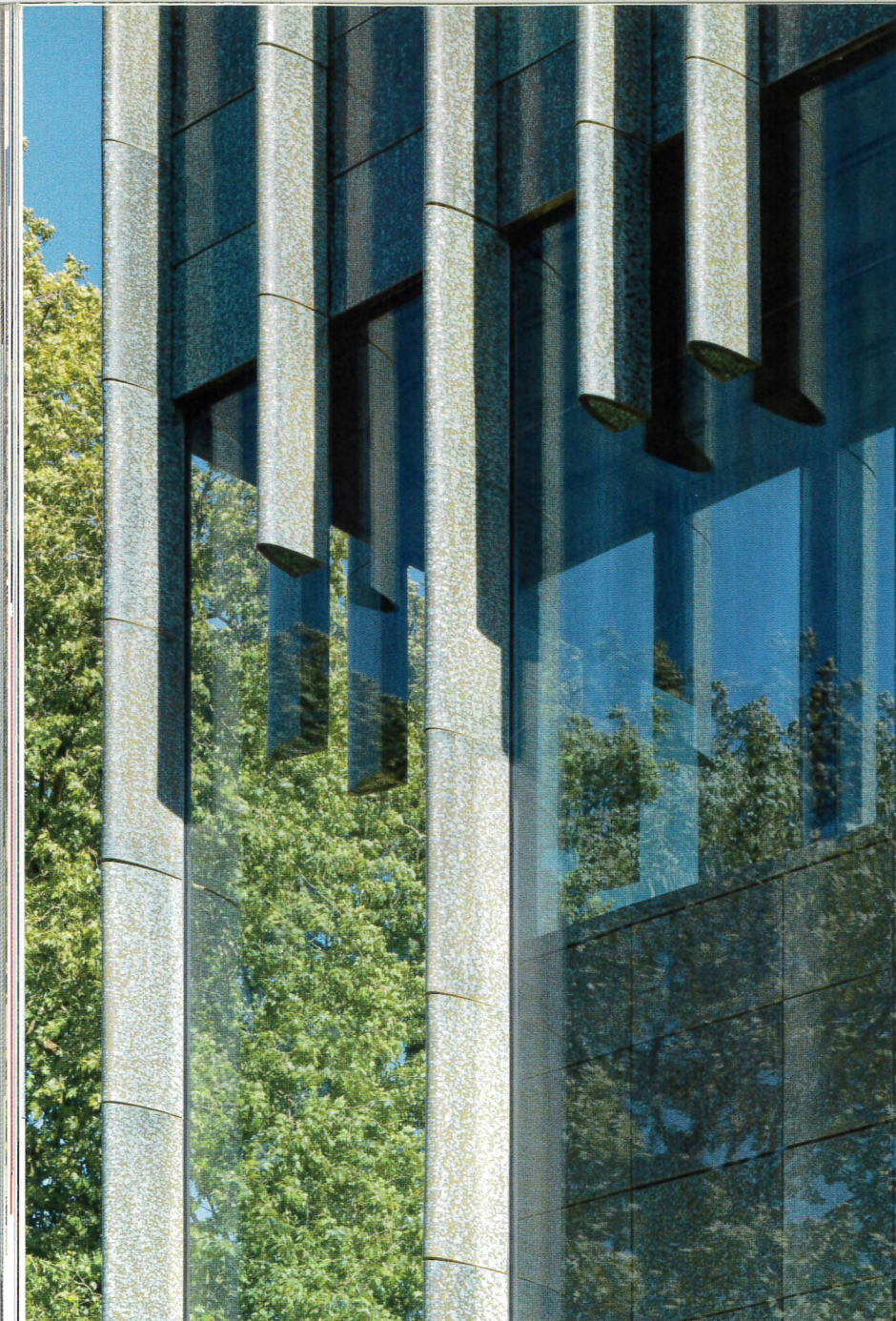
**Above** The cafe opens from the east-facing garden elevation in which the rhythm of the projecting fins evokes a classical composition.

**Below** Facades (clockwise from top left) facing west, south, east and north.

'A Museum of My Own' by the artist-collector and one-time Bath resident Peter Blake, offers a contemporary counterpoint to the collection below. The new cafe provides a 180-degree view of the surrounding gardens, with low-iron glass and silicone jointing – and a well-argued case to avoid manifestation –







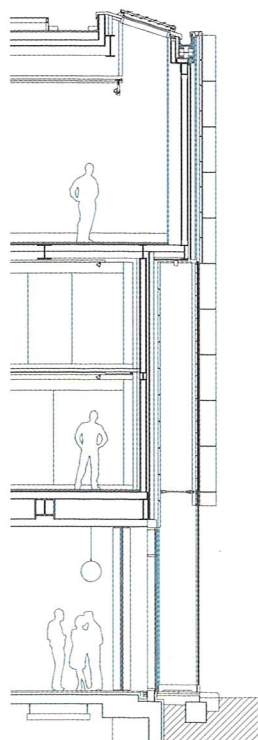
allowing spectacular transparency, enhanced by changes in the floor finish ensuring that essential connectivity to the park.

Back in the old building the appearance of little change is misleading. The daylighting and environmental controls have been dramatically improved, with air ducts skilfully inserted into Blomfield's original casings. A single dramatically large glazed exhibition case inhabits the room on the floor below.

Parry talks eloquently of the reasons for not succumbing to pressure from both the local authority and conservation groups to clad the building in Bath Stone. 'Lose your dreams', was the initial advice of the planning officer. It prompts the question, what would Bath be like if earlier architects had followed such advice? The idea of ceramic cladding emerged from a desire for lightness and reflectivity. The slip-cast colours, green on green, both merge with and reflect the surrounding trees. The irregularly spaced fins, set perpendicular to the facade, break the skyline and reach down over the transparent glazing at ground floor, adding another layer of complexity. An outer skin of laminated glass on the lower floors adds to the rich confusion of reflections, giving the building a limpid, watery quality. The overall composition, by Parry's own admission

**Left** The suspended faience fins. Each component was made from clay slip in a mould before being left to dry naturally and in a drying kiln for a total of 11 days before glazing. A base coat containing manganese and copper was followed by a mottled top coat containing manganese and titanium oxide to give the desired effect and colouring. Finally the components were fired and checked for flaws before delivery to site.

**Below** Facade section and view from south-east.



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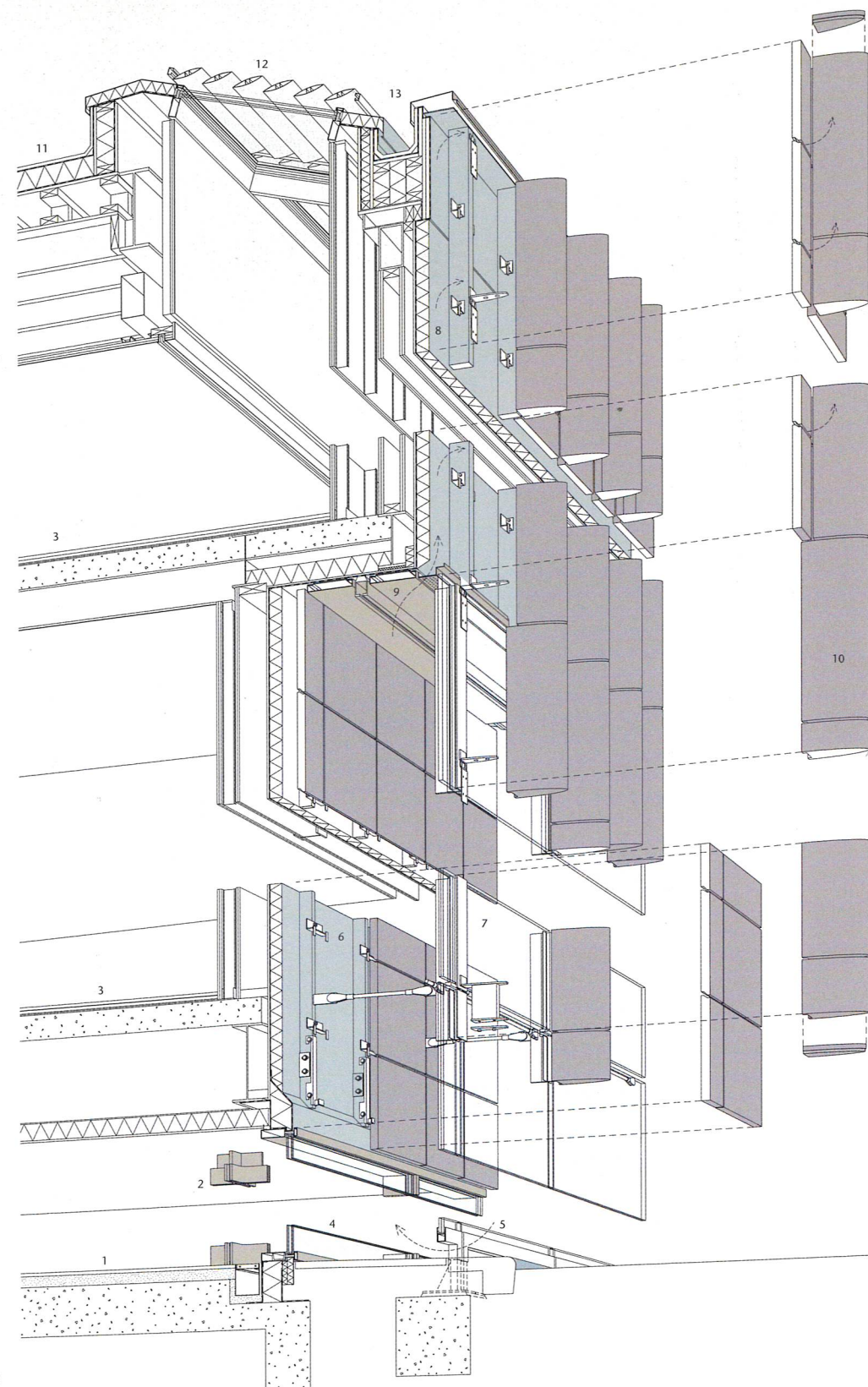
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### Cutaway facade cross section

- 1 Ground floor: riven slate on 200mm concrete slab spanning between 280mm concrete basement retaining walls; 200mm high external stone plinth.
- 2 Primary steel frame: cruciform columns made of four 180x180x15mm curved mild steel plates bolted to cross spacer.
- 3 First and second floors: 18mm end-grain oak glued to plywood subfloor on acoustic underlay and DPM; 150mm concrete on ribbed aluminium deck spans between steel beams; ceilings are suspended plasterboard with 100mm mineral wool acoustic backing over cafe.
- 4 Ground floor inner glazing: 150mm curtain wall T-section frames with satin anodised aluminium cappings; 3600mm high double-glazed unit with two 12.8mm laminated low-iron panes and 16mm air gap; bottom frame spans between steel angle brackets bolted to slab; external and internal aluminium flashings are filled with insulation.
- 5 Ground floor rainscreen: 4225mm-high 31.5mm-thick laminated low-iron glazed rainscreen with satin stainless steel bottom glazing supports on 450x450mm concrete strip foundation.
- 6 First floor external wall: 80x50x3mm aluminium rectangular hollow sections at centres to suit ceramic panels; stainless steel brackets hold ceramic panels bolted via slotted holes; 50mm-thick ceramic cladding panels with lapped joints located on fixing plates via top and bottom slots.
- 7 First floor rainscreen: 5015mm-high by 25.5mm-thick laminated low-iron glazed rainscreen; stainless steel bottom glazing support; T-sections restrained by 12mm stainless steel tie rods between each fin, tied back to edge beam with 20mm rods.
- 8 Second floor external wall: ceramic cladding panels on stainless steel fixing plates with lapped joints between panels; vertical RHS rails span full height, supported on stainless steel dead-load brackets bolted to floor edge beam and restrained at top by windload brackets; 60mm cavity, 120mm insulation, waterproof membrane, 12mm cementitious board on softwood studs; fireboard on metal frame, plasterboard and ply on metal stud frame.
- 9 Second floor soffit: 3mm polyester powder-coated folded aluminium panels.
- 10 Ceramic fins: 290x180x1000mm fins at second floor, 355x180x1000mm at first floor, supported on stainless steel base plates, secured at top by folded stainless steel restraint; bottom fin sections supported on plates suspended by brackets.
- 11 Roof: 20mm polymer modified mastic asphalt on 120mm insulation, ply deck on joists; plasterboard suspended ceiling.
- 12 Rooflight: 110x50mm aluminium box section frame with PPC finish, double-glazed with 10mm toughened outer pane, 16mm air gap, and 17.5mm laminated inner pane with low-e coating and UV interlayer; PPC aluminium louvers fixed to glazing; 65mm aluminium flashings.
- 13 Gutter: zinc gutter on venting layer on plywood deck; plywood box gutter carcass. (Drawing: Graham Bizley)



'mannerist', is an essay in ambiguity: visual distortions mean that windows turn out to be mere reflections, fins appear double-depth and irregular rhythms contradict what at first seem to be classical proportions.

Double-skinned facades are often exploited for environmental value, so it is slightly disappointing that here it has little benefit. Normally a second skin would act as protection to blinds but here they run on the interior of the ground floor to cut out morning sun. Theoretically the intermediate space provides stack-effect ventilation to the cafe, but it seems a shame that the laminated

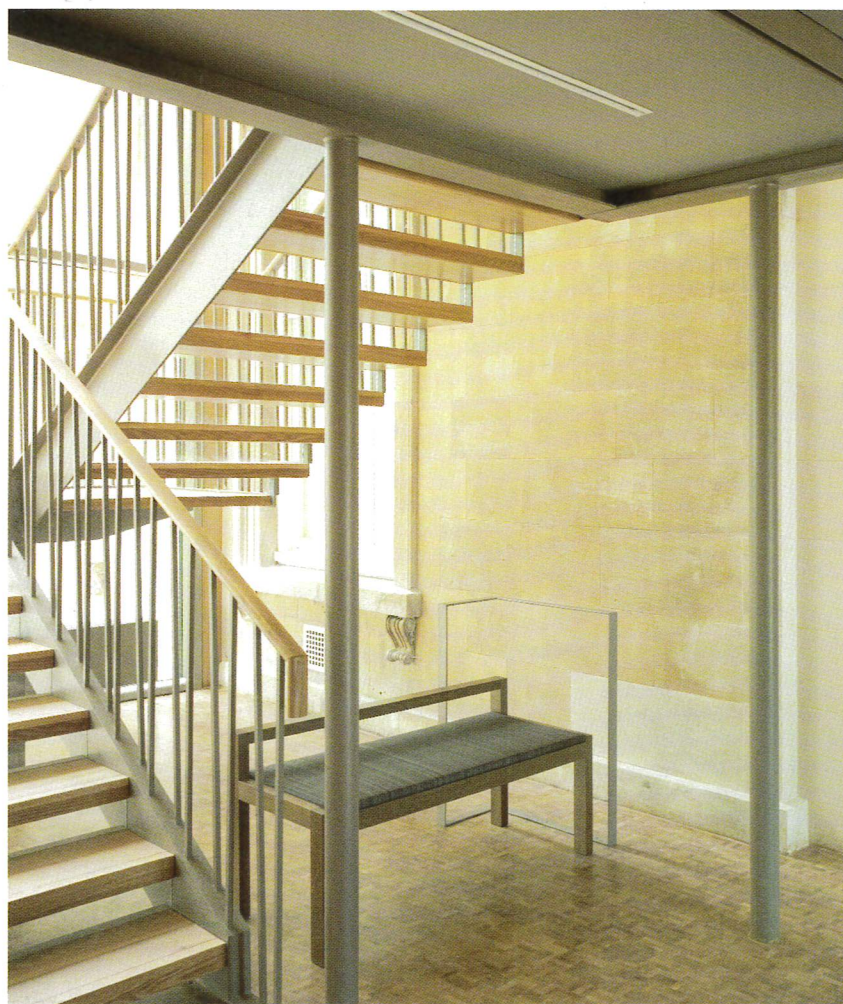
glass exterior layer doesn't have more environmental justification. Likewise the Aalto-esque vertical fins would usually be associated with shading from low-level sunlight, but this is patently unnecessary.

For those who tend to more minimalist elevational design, the opulence of the multi-layered facade may seem over indulgent. But this is not an expensive building, and it is a very significant secondary facade. The art, science, technology and craftsmanship (by Shaws of Darwen) of the outer skin is a triumphant achievement. If the value engineering of the design-and-build contract





**Above** The existing main staircase, added when the original hotel was adapted for museum use, was dismantled and moved off centre to allow a central axial route through to the new wing.  
**Left** The interstitial link between the old and new buildings incorporates a staircase giving access to the mezzanine level.



begins to show inside, the exterior quality has remained intact. The corner condition is a particular achievement, where the suspended ceramic fins appear like algal stalactites.

Parry's building is an eloquent contribution to the inventive tradition of Bath's eighteenth century city fathers. When next year it comes up for consideration for the Stirling Prize shortlist, comparisons will inevitably be drawn with David Chipperfield's new galleries in Margate and Wakefield. An important consideration in this respect will be to recognise that this is a modest £3.5 million extension within an overall construction cost of £6.5 million and a project cost of £11 million. More significantly, however, it demonstrates the transformational power of a new building and shows how a struggle against the forces of conservatism can end in triumph. Hopefully the project will lead to the refurbishment of the gardens that the building now embraces, but for now it establishes a civic museum in Bath to rival any provincial city.

*Peter Clegg is a director of FCB Studios, based in Bath and London.*



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**Stephen Greenberg of Metaphor:**  
Inspiration for the exhibition design came not just from William Holburne's collections but also his life story. A young midshipman on the HMS Orion at the Battle of Trafalgar, he returned, probably with post-traumatic stress disorder, to devote his life to collecting, and we felt it important to make him and his obsessive collecting the heart of the gallery. Many items from Holburne's study occupy the double-height void within the two intimate levels of the permanent galleries. From there the collections, both his own and others that have accrued since his legacy, are displayed in a series of spaces and on floating screens that are arranged in a pin-wheel plan around the central void. It was an opportunity to make an intense collector's gallery reminiscent of Charles Wade's Snowhill or John Soane's Lincoln's Inn Fields house.

As visitors will quickly realise, and unusually for a new museum, the Holburne's interior is polychromatic, and there is a striking density of works, from paintings to porcelain, gems, watercolours and silverware. The displays re-explore the 'cabinet of curiosities', where the world reduces in scale but increases in intensity and variety. This is enhanced by the use of



Georgian artefacts and the urban scale of eighteenth century Bath in one panoptic sweep. Around the candelabra, a central display holds the room and contains a banquet table with the museum's best tableware. Around the walls are buffet displays, where the vitrines have been made minimal. Looking from the staircase landing toward the candelabra or figurines in Holburne's 'study' they appear in silhouette, resonating with the displays of early nineteenth century cutouts.

**Top** The top gallery in the new wing currently houses an exhibition of Peter Blake's artworks and collections.

**Left/below** Ballroom and upper gallery in the existing building. The colour scheme was chosen through a collaboration of the curators, former trustee and colour expert David Mlinaric, Eric Parry and Metaphor.

### Project team

Architect: Eric Parry Architects; design team: Eric Parry, Christine Humphreys, Christopher Burton, Guy Parkinson, Roz Barr, Ze'ev Feigis, Gert Halbgebauer, Laura Miller, Julian Ogiwara, Janna Posiadly, Justin Sayer, Alvaro Valdivia a L'Onions, Thorsten Overberg; exhibition design: Metaphor; project manager: Cragg Management Services; conservation consultant: Richard Griffiths Architects; structural engineer: Momentum Consulting Engineers; services engineer: Atelier Ten; planning consultant: GL Hearn; townscape consultant: historian: Richard Coleman; facade consultant: Arup Facade Engineering; fire consultant: Ramboll Safe; access consultant: Jane Topliss Associates; lighting: KSLD; archaeology: Wessex Archaeology; planning supervisor: PFB Construction Management; contractor: Sir Robert McAlpine; client: Holburne Museum.

**Selected suppliers and subcontractors**  
Mechanical services: CMB Engineering; electrical services: Concab Electrical; facade contractor: MBM Konstruktionen; faience: Shaws of Darwen; timber floor: Bembe; curtain wall: Wicon; doors: Schuco International; louvers: Maple; blinds: Kensington Blinds; secondary glazing: Selectaglaze; existing metalwork and rooflights: Dorothea; stone facade cleaning: Nimbus Conservation; joinery: JMS Joinery.

coloured boxes within the vitrines, a theme of boxes within boxes within the ceramic casket of the building. Colours are employed to respond to the artefacts, to create warmth and atmosphere and heighten the drama with the suspended pots in the double-height void. There is also a nice play between the splatter-ware faience cladding of the building and the abundant ceramics in the collections.

The display in the ballroom, like those works of Matisse in which a still-life is held by a window with a view beyond, consists of a gorgeous Georgian silver candelabra and fruit bowl with the view down Great Pulteney Street as backdrop. The display thereby attempts to make connections between the intimate scale of the





## WORKS: ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS



The ceramic-faced extension addresses Sydney Gardens.

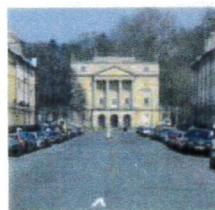
# Another world

An extension to Bath's Holburne Museum, as well as providing urgently needed gallery space, will create a new gateway into the neglected Sydney Gardens, writes **Ellis Woodman**

**B**efore settling in Bath in 1815, where he amassed one of the great private art collections of the 19th century, William Holburne led a less sedentary life. Having joined the Royal Navy at the age of 11, he fought at Trafalgar before the year was out and then in Brazil, the West Indies and the Mediterranean before he was 21.

One likes to think that on the darker days during their five-year campaign to extend the museum that houses Holburne's collection, the trustees were able to draw strength from their founder's fondness for a battle – for a battle it has certainly been. The idea of extending one of the country's best-loved small museums was always going to be contentious. Given that the building is grade I listed and is one of the most prominent locations in a Unesco world heritage site, for many Bath residents, it is little short of criminal.

So why have the trustees committed themselves to this thankless venture? In short, because the museum's future depends on its



The existing museum at the end of Great Pulteney Street.

success. At present, space is so tight that 70% of the Holburne's holdings have to be kept in storage at any time. More frustratingly still, only the smallest of temporary exhibitions can be staged.

As the museum's director Alexander Sturgis explains: "For better or worse, exhibitions are now the life blood of museums. They encourage new audiences and bring back old ones. The museum has a grand presence but it is surprisingly small. Essentially we have only two display rooms. The building can't support the scale of exhibition for which we

can charge unless we close half the permanent collection".

This situation has stymied all attempts to increase visitor numbers above the current 33,000. Offering an 80% increase in display area, including a dedicated temporary exhibition space, the new block should radically transform the Holburne's fortunes. Sturgis anticipates that visitor numbers will more than double.

The exceptional project that has recently been submitted for planning permission is the second that Eric Parry Architects has prepared for the Holburne. Parry won the commission in February 2002, with a competition design that was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund later that year. Budgeted at £12 million and comprising an extension and two free-standing pavilions, it was deemed too costly and too intrusive. Following a change of director, Parry was sent back to the drawing board. It has effectively taken three years for this reduced scheme to find sufficient financial and political backing to ensure its viability.

The old structure was built to

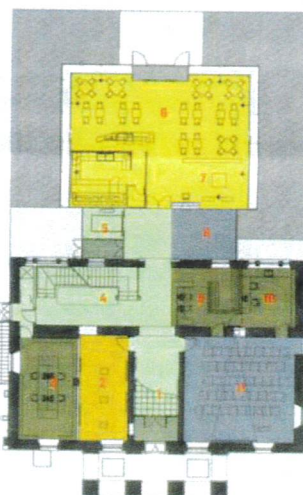




Section through the museum and new extension.

## SITE PLAN

- 1 Existing museum
- 2 New extension



## GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 1 Entrance hall and lobby
- 2 Temporary gallery
- 3 Office
- 4 Main staircase
- 5 Lift
- 6 Café
- 7 Shop
- 8 Interpretation area
- 9 Entry desk
- 10 Education office
- 11 Flexible learning space

designs by Charles Harcourt Masters in 1796. It was a perfectly unexceptional example of late Georgian neo-Palladianism, but distinguished by its extraordinary location. It commands the end of Great Pulteney Street which, at 300m long and 30m wide, is arguably the grandest street in a city where there is plenty of competition for that title. Harcourt Masters' building served as a hotel and gaming house but doubled as a gateway to Sydney Gardens, the pleasure ground behind it. Having passed under the building, visitors emerged beneath a band stand appended to its rear face to discover a bucolic world populated by freestanding supper boxes.

## Blomfield's remodelling

When the museum trustees bought the building in 1910, however, the popularity of pleasure grounds had declined and the hotel was empty and derelict. Reginald Blomfield, the architect of London's Regent Street, was commissioned to remodel it to accommodate the change of use. His work has a good deal to re-

commend it. He established two magnificent galleries on the first and second floors – the lower, side-lit room being largely devoted to decorative arts, the upper top-lit space to paintings. Achieving this involved reducing the number of windows on the principal facade, which enabled him to devise a notably grander elevation than the one he had inherited. It also presented an opportunity to draw the attic storey that had been added in 1836 into a happier relationship with the overall composition through the introduction of a rooftop balustrade and urns. Blomfield was an authority on French architecture and the recast Holburne strikes a distinctly Francofied note. Given that Great Pulteney Street is about as close as any street in Britain comes to the character of a French boulevard, it proves an evocative allegiance.

If Blomfield's scheme has a failing it is the relationship, or lack of relationship, that it establishes to the landscape behind the building. The garden elevation has nothing of the quality of the main facade – it is overglazed and dominated by

an upstanding central bay that accommodates the main stair but carves the composition into two. More problematically, the stair blocks the passage into the park.

Parry's scheme abuts this facade and crucially promises to reinstate the building's significance as a link

### The extension contravenes the one sine qua non of building in the city: all projects have to be in Bath stone

between city and garden. It incorporates three floors of minimally fenestrated exhibition space held above a fully glazed café. The temporary exhibition space is sited on the top floor, where it benefits from top light and is aligned with the floor level of the old picture gallery. A new decorative arts gallery sits below. Incorporating a

mezzanine, it has an almost domestic scale, offering a valuable counterpoint to the grandeur of the neighbouring display spaces.

The £9 million project also includes the complete refurbishment of the old building. The change to the existing galleries should be marked: Parry has designed new cabinetry and it is proposed that the skylights to the picture gallery will be reinstated after many years of being blocked up. One change that will hopefully go largely unnoticed promises to be the most significant of all. Parry intends to take Blomfield's stair and move it wholesale a couple of metres off the central axis, allowing visitors once again to pass directly into the garden. Sydney Gardens is in need of significant restoration, but the council is seeking heritage lottery funding to bring that about. The Holburne project clearly has the potential to serve as a catalyst for that larger transformation.

Since the planning application was submitted last month, the Bath Chronicle has published a steady flow of green-ink letters

bemoaning the proposed monstrosity/excrescence/alien intrusion. A source of particular outrage has been that it contravenes the one sine qua non of building in the city: all projects have to be in Bath stone. Parry intends to clad his building in large pieces of ceramic, glazed to a colour he describes as "cobalt over olive". His elevations have a powerful tripartite structure in which the upper third is fully clad in ceramic, the lower third fully glazed and the central part represents an intermediary condition. Here ceramic fins drop down from above and the glazing is carried up from below, generating a kind of weave. The actual wall of the decorative arts gallery is set back 800mm and again is faced in ceramic.

As with Parry's recent Bedford music school (*Works* March 23), the play of shadow and reflection will take a significant role in how one reads the building. It cuts a similarly enigmatic image – classical in bearing, almost Scheerbartian in the delight with which it registers fleeting natural phenomena. The colour of the

ceramic should further enforce the building's sense of alignment with the natural world, reflecting both the colour of the trees and the sky.

"I didn't want to make stone fly," is how Parry pithily explains his resistance to cladding the galleries in masonry. Curiously the casquette-like disposition of his building is not so very far from that of the last public building to be finished in the city – the spa. There, of course, Grimshaw did make stone fly, albeit with the get-out clause that it was stack-bonded and therefore articulated as no more than a veneer. The effect was, if not ridiculous, then at least self-conscious to a painful degree. The material homogeneity of the buildings in Bath is undoubtedly one of the city's great glories and should not be sacrificed lightly.

However, on this site if nowhere else, one can make a powerful case that the normal rules should be suspended. The experience of passing into Sydney Gardens via the Holburne stands to be a charmed "through the looking glass" moment in which Parry's building is the first in a new world.