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## LETTERS

### Land and money still conquer all

Although I would love to agree with Sarah Wigglesworth (*Polemic* September 20), my problem with her argument is that her modern examples of spatial occupation are all very transient. Open House weekend demonstrates nicely how very little space in cities is actually open to the public. And the eviction of the Occupy movement demonstrates the power of land ownership rights above all else.

I actually designed a building for Occupy at Pinsbury Square, but due to the high turnover of people the project never got built. Conversely, two things that are solid and permanent are land and money, therefore architects (who all presumably want to work – not just for money, but because it is what we trained to do) must doggedly follow these commodities.

The fact that we are merely window-dressing a predetermined massing model is the inevitable consequence of land law in this country. Even the recent government self-build funding relied on applicants to own the land to be developed, ruling out 99.9% of the people who would pursue it.

The only solutions that will make a difference to the role of the architect will happen outside the profession, and perhaps that is the best place for people who care – Wigglesworth included – to aim.

**Oli Lowrie**  
via [bdonline](#)

I completely agree with Sarah Wigglesworth, especially that architects should take control with a political/socio-environmental agenda rather than the self-interested one that is pandemic.

However, it is a fallacy to suggest that architects are trained with an expansive vision, given how easy it is for almost anyone who can read and write to qualify at parts I, II and III level!

I believe engaging a social conscience should begin at an academic level, whereby qualifying in architecture is made difficult without a clear understanding that only a positive impact on civic space is to be practised.

**Dipun Gandhi**  
via [bdonline](#)

### Let's learn a new civic language

Ellis Woodman touches on something very important in his review of Peter Barber's extension to ET Hall's Poor Law Guardians' Office (*Buildings* September 20), when he talks about its "sense of civic decorum".

As a student I was taught to deride late Victorian urban architecture for its failure to create a language of its own time (excepting a few Arts and Crafts houses considered to be harbingers of modernism). But this is to miss the excellent way in which the schools, libraries, police stations and town halls of this era manage to convey their exact level, and type, of civic importance.

In the history of British architecture Philip Webb became the guru while the spatially brilliant, proto-Loosian work of Richard Norman Shaw was forgotten –



ET Hall's refurbished building.

a complete injustice as it is the latter who was the main influence in creating a mode of urban expression that was legible in a way that the shiny new language of modernism could never be.

Students and architects of our time would do well to study Norman Shaw and his generation carefully – it would make our cities richer.

**Simon Gill**  
London SW6

### Part III needs to be maintained

What is the problem with part III? ("RIBA and Arb to reform education" *News* September 20) If you can reliably carry out the role of an architect, it should pose no issue.

There have been issues with finding projects to use as a case study, but I know of people who worked around this in the depths of the recession while fighting tooth and claw to hold on to jobs.

Part III is the critical professional examination and should be maintained – yes, revise it continually to reflect the changes in the industry and profession.

On another note, why are the RICS, RTPI and other bodies not being asked to comment? After all, we work in a interconnected industry. Most critical should be to involve CIAT for the broader range of technicians and technologists the modern industry demands. Key to all of this is to engage employers and get the debate out of the ivory towers. It must be instigated with a truly open mind – to do otherwise will fail to find any meaningful outcomes.

Professionalism must be key. If anyone questions what value an architect brings, it should be set out on these grounds: we have to uphold high standards because the public, industry and public sector have a right to expect the very best from those they have to put their trust in.

It is this that always seems to be forgotten. However people end up being educated to carry out the role of an architect, the foundation must be to understand the duty of care to clients and the wider public.

**James Francis**  
via [bdonline](#)

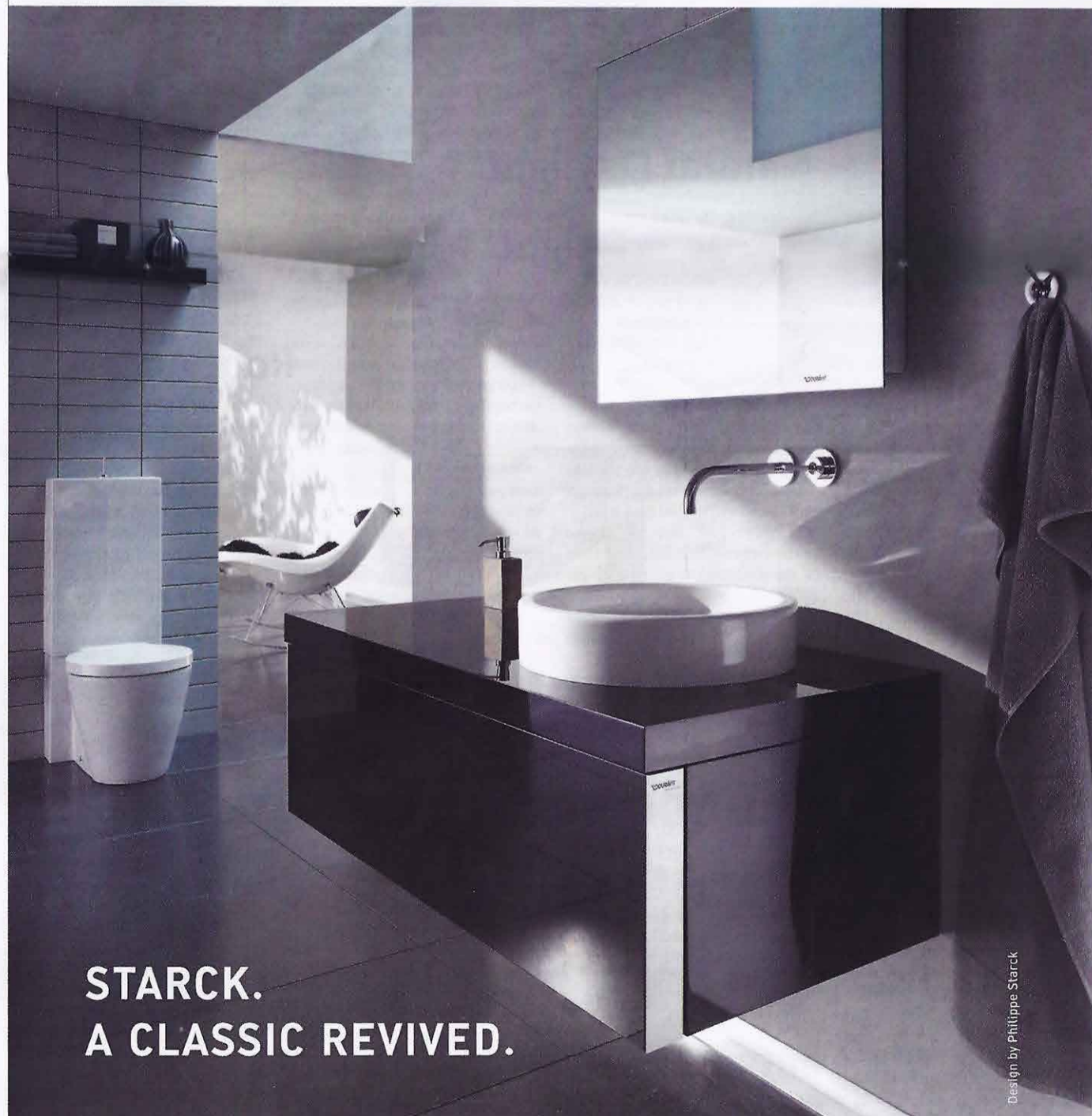
### Non-EU students want to qualify

A great component of UK architecture education is acquired in practice. However, passing part III for non-EU students is increasingly difficult as the terms on which they set out to study changes with every change of migration policy (*News* September 20).

The three-part system has virtues and defects, but non-EU students must not be deterred from fully qualifying – as it is the ambition of every student enrolling.

**Fabrizio Matillana**  
via [bdonline](#)

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