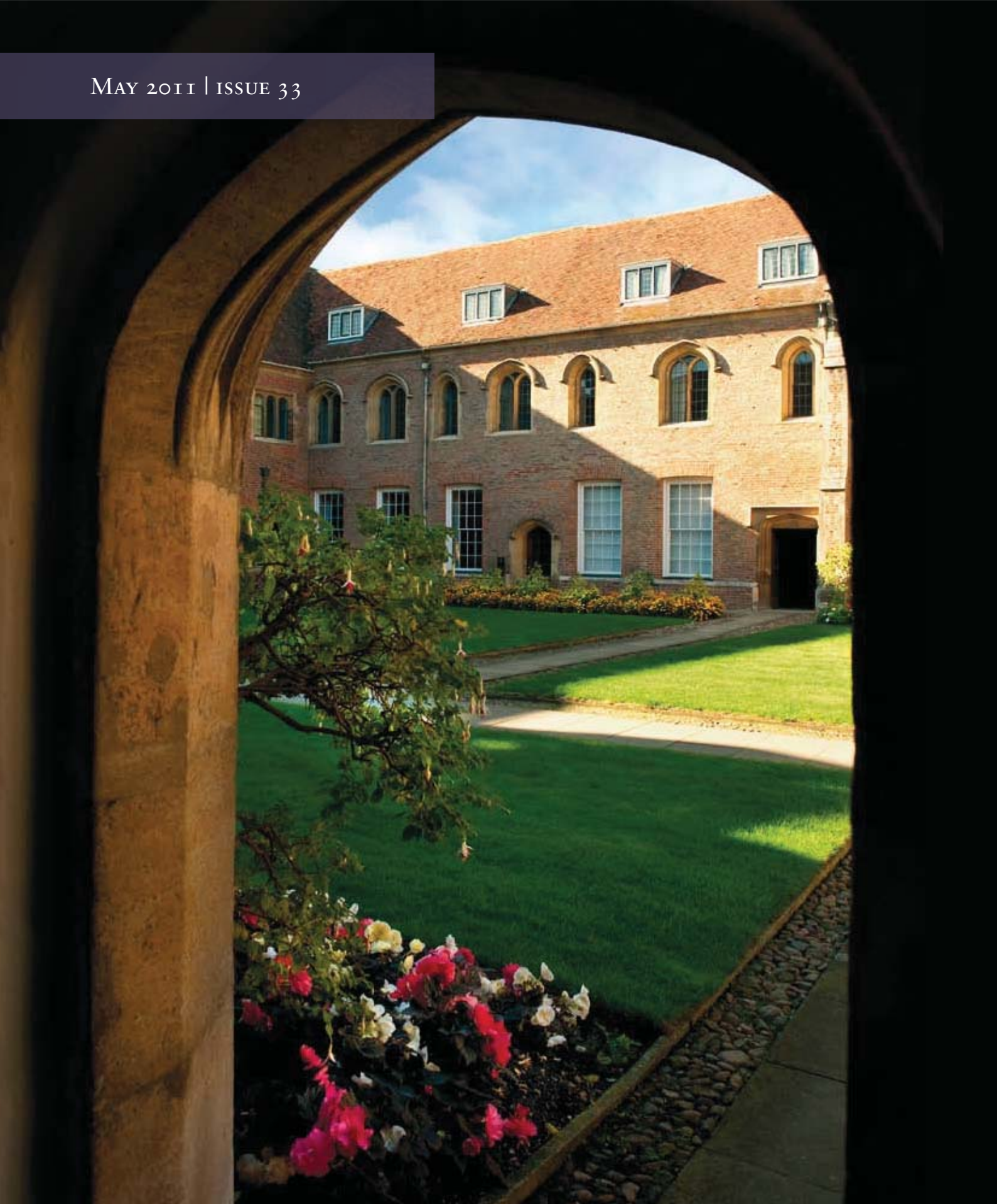


MAY 2011 | ISSUE 33



# MAGDALENE MATTERS

THE NEWSLETTER OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE



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# MAGDALENE MATTERS

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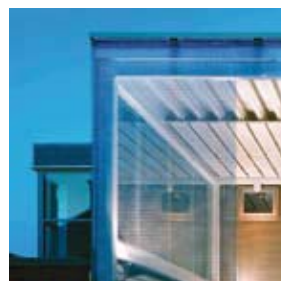
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## COMMENT from the Development Director

The issue of funding in the Higher Education sector has been dominating discussions both at Magdalene and Cambridge and, I imagine, in many households throughout England (as students in Wales and Scotland will not be paying fees).

The University has decided to charge the maximum fee of £9,000 and for many of us, who enjoyed a free education, the decision leaves us with a heavy heart. However, the realities of the cuts in the Higher Education budget mean that we have no real choice. The cost of educating an undergraduate at Cambridge is around £17,000 per year, a significant chunk of which, around £7,000, is met by the College. This cost is funded, in part, by our own endowment income as well as the Government grant and the student fees. In 2012 our income will be around £10,500 per student – including the fee of £9,000 – resulting in the University and the Colleges injecting a tremendous subsidy into undergraduate education, which is more than we can afford. The teaching budget is facing a cut of up to 80% over the next few years and we are still looking at

a significant funding shortfall. I hope many of you will have seen Professor Steve Young's article on University fees in the most recent issue of CAM in which he explains the University's position.

Whilst we do not yet know what the full impact of the new system will be, we remain fully committed to our needs blind admission system, ensuring that the very best students can study at Collegiate Cambridge regardless of their ability to pay. We are intent on offering more help to undergraduate and postgraduate students in the form of bursaries to ensure that Cambridge remains in the top three Universities in the world.

I hope to see many of at our first Family Day on the 3rd of July and again at our first annual Donors' Day in September where we will be aiming to continue the discussion about the changing nature of Higher Education today. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me with your comments, views and questions.

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# THE CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE & INNOVATION IN ARCHITECTURE

BY PAUL VICK (1988)

As the Net has redefined methods of the creation of knowledge, innovation, modes of production, needs and approach to identity, the below traces how values in architecture and the motivations for building are developing.

*Paul Vick describes and illustrates with examples of his work including drafting the British Museum Masterplan and Spaceplan for the next 50–100 years and under his own banner, a business incubator space at Smithfield Market with Innovation Warehouse and The Corporation of London, and a Vision for Diocese of London.*

## PUBLIC, PRIVATE, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE

The movie 'The Social Network' (2010), showed the creation of the social networking site Facebook and its dramatic growth. Its growth is a reflection of contemporary social proof and currency: the website was launched in 2004 and had an estimated 600m+ users and estimated worth of \$15bn at the end of 2010. For those unfamiliar, it is an online place where you register selected details and choose people you would like to 'chat' with online. Central to it are forums from the more to less public and private. Formats allow one-on-one chats and group forums that may be more or less closed and of varying sizes, e.g. for a group of friends, university members or for the public.

This is another version of what as an architect I work with every day in the physical world, whether private or public. Physical places host one-on-one meetings, larger private 'get-togethers', conferences by invitation or by membership, as well as public places.

The relationship between the visible, physical structures of our places (buildings, streets, squares) and those of the invisible structures (relationships, networks, privacy, ownership) is an essential part of developing and designing the architecture of buildings. Clearly, the relationships between visible and invisible structures are changing as a result of 'informationalism' and its associated technology. The reasons for building buildings, what you use them for and where you build them is also changing accordingly. This presentation, 'joins some of the dots' and looks at some of the influences on architecture.

## MOTIVATIONS FOR ARCHITECTURE AND ITS VALUE – A NEW APPROACH

Motivations for commissioning architecture vary enormously. Think of the Taj Mahal, Salisbury Cathedral, The Eiffel Tower and Big Ben which were built from motivations including love, celebration of a particular god, show of technological prowess and statement of civic pride and order.

Now, on a daily basis, six different values help me prioritise how to approach the architecture defining motivations more clearly (see box). Consciously developing purpose-led networks i.e. networks that lead from knowledge to the relevant one of the six values identified below, is a

### *Six values to prioritise values that an architectural project needs to achieve:*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| i. Economic value (e.g. capital and rental values)             | iv. Image value (what identity is it putting forward e.g. as a brand)  |
| ii. Use value (e.g. operational efficiency and occupancy type) | v. Environmental value (e.g. energy use and waste)                     |
| iii. Social value (e.g. community cohesion, networks)          | vi. Cultural value with a small 'c' (in the sense of our leisure time) |

Notably, all these have indices for measurement

(ref: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment 2006)



critical determinant of success. As such, innovation and the work associated with it, is defined as making knowledge value-laden. This is a model for urban development and architecture quite unlike zoning laws that were previously prevalent and still are in some places.

On top of these, the overriding set of motivations and context driving building, in my opinion and experience, come from cultural reasons in the broader sense of the word 'culture' – the invisible structures, relationships, aspirations, habits and passions of the patron and how they meet similar categories for the visible structures of the site and its context. There is usually a strong emotive side as well.

For example, in Manchester, hospitals have been linked with university design departments to develop new health products and instruments.

A cultural example is when I was involved with drafting the 50–100 year Masterplan for The British Museum (Photo 1). The BM has been viewed as a passive receptacle for the storage of ancient artefacts. Yet the saying is that the history of the world could be written 10 different ways if all the museum artefacts were studied fully. The Masterplan looked at making the architecture active, in the same way as the virtual architecture of Facebook is active.



**Photo 1: Aerial view of the British Museum showing the existing complex series of relationships of the invisible structures through the visible structures.**

With 10m objects, 1,000 staff and 1m ft<sup>2</sup> of space, the BM is a city in itself. It includes discrete spaces: galleries, storage and logistics, libraries, research and restoration departments, conference facilities, classrooms, cafes and shops as well as the development of temporary and travelling exhibitions.

The layers of use and existing process it is improving are:  
i. raw data storage (the objects) on which there is academic research and the creation of knowledge  
ii. putting it into today's context and thereby making it value-laden to a wider audience  
iii. dissemination. This is not dissimilar to the process outlined for the electronics industry (see below). A key difference however is that the *primary* value priority (of the six values outlined above) is that of social and cultural value rather than the maximising of economic return. The museum is a 'museum of the world for the world'. At one meeting, the Director started the conversation by placing a 2,000-year old Persian sculpture on the table in front of a newscaster and an American diplomat and said, "Let's talk about Persia," putting into perspective current territorial claims, identities and conflict in the Middle East as recent history. This is highly significant, relevant and potentially very powerful as varying groups try to gain legitimacy and support among constituents.

For the Diocese of London, we developed a vision and particular architectural brief. The Anglican Church is deeply embedded in our society. The Diocese is growing in numbers, draws on a network of 80m adherents worldwide and geographically includes St Paul's Cathedral. It receives no state funding yet runs 25% of the country's primary schools and has more people in development than the government. Particularly, it has always been one of the places to turn to in troubled times. The image of St Paul's in the Blitz, for example, has become iconic. A study of the image value of architecture was an explicit part of the study (see Photo 2).

#### CONNECTION AND LOCATION – COMMAND, CONTROL AND DECENTRALISATION

The result of greater 'informationalism' and its associated technology has seen the dominance of centres that have 'plugged into' the network. For example, the London Stock Exchange has invested much effort in the technological means to keep up with the speed of trades (measured in milliseconds). A third of Goldman Sachs' expenditure allegedly goes on technology and its systems. The emergence of New York, London and Tokyo in financial markets and then subsequently the growth of other centres as they plugged in, e.g. in Germany, is well-documented. This is the physical centralisation of command and control functions.

... continued



**Photo 2: A comparison of the image value of walls from The Wailing Wall and The Berlin Wall to the above illustrated stainless steel mesh wall by Paul Vick Architects. Photo: Martin Storey (1989).**

Activities remain centralised because they offer: flexibility in the event of a market downturn given that global market events are not controlled; growth of highly-skilled specialisms associated with these command and control functions; the discretion and importance of face-to-face meetings and the established value of the real estate. Other issues relate to schools, entertainment, culture and travel connections.

In the industrial system, a familiar model in electronics is i. research and development as a core command and control function, including the building of prototypes as far as they are not detrimental to their environment ii. skilled production in local centres iii. semi-skilled labour for mass production which has been categorised historically with SE Asia (e.g. Special Economic Zones, Export Processing Zones...) over the last 20 years iv. after sales technical maintenance and regional follow-up to suit the market. These are clearly widely-distributed around the globe.

For the industrial system, R+D can also form part of the command and control centres such as we see in Silicon Valley and the emerging 'Silicon Fen' in Cambridge, UK, where universities and industry come together.

Work distribution is assisted by technology allowing realtime (synchronous) and asynchronous use of the Net. Remote spaces for these forms of communication are a familiar sight and can be almost anywhere depending on privacy, noise and associated paperwork. Core spaces remain in a central place and include specialist facilities, project rooms and team working spaces and canteens. There are also spaces that can be either, like training spaces.

Importantly, thriving urban centres have many of these remote functions already (homes, cafes, restaurants, stations etc). For a small command and control outfit, like an incubator growing small businesses, these existing urban facilities can be used as part of its infrastructure.

The incubator project we have been designing at Smithfield Market for Innovation Warehouse and its partner, The Corporation of London, sheds further light on how the generation of knowledge and innovation can be developed. The project aims to grow small businesses (from up to approx. £0.5m turnover). These will be sold on to larger investors. It has links to several London universities and provides three critical components: experienced mentors who have an investment stake in the company, professional services at favourable prices and affordable space structured to best suit the promotion of the needs.

Important elements to the success of an incubator have been identified as:

- Proper empirical research into a city's strengths
- Leadership that works across industries and often with an institutional entrepreneur
- Purpose-led networks bringing together the links of the chain from those creating the knowledge, R+D to the market (Ref: NESTA 2010)

Finally, it is worth observing that global informationalism has qualities of centralisation e.g. the globalisation of standards and protocols, collective memory (e.g. Wikipedia), international news streams, and yet at the same time sees a multiplication of channels, greater diversity and spread of images. This has allowed not a narrowing of identities to say, an 'international style' (image value), but stretching and further multiplication of identities and greater extremes of social movements.

Being connected into the informational system gives enormous leverage for change. To end on a suitable note of opportunism, Mark Penn, the pollster who was central to helping Bill Clinton achieve presidency, quantifies this leverage. He states that 1% of a society is a large enough trend to create a new movement, which by extension may include changing the leader or direction of policy, creating a hit song or influencing peace (or war). It is up to us to seize the opportunity and guide it.

*Above is an excerpt from a talk by practising Architect Paul Vick (1988), given to SIMA (Securities Industry Management Association) in March 2011. [www.paulvick.co.uk](http://www.paulvick.co.uk)*