

**RIBA LONDON EUROPEAN PRIZEGIVING
TOWARDS AN AGE OF DESIGN INTELLIGENCE
JUNE 1999**

IAN RITCHIE

As Chairman of European UK I would first of all like to thank all competitors for contributing your time and energy to the European competition. Secondly, I would like to congratulate those who have been premiated.

I would also like to take this opportunity to make a short statement of where I sense design and the environment are at this moment in time. I hope that it will give you something to think about for a long time to come.

Design and concern for the environment is essentially the same subject - the objective being to design and make things that contribute positively rather than negatively towards the environment. Thus, we not only have to consume less of the negative products to maintain acceptable comfort levels for human beings, and to dramatically reduce pollution levels of our biosphere from building activities and use of them, but also to re-orientate our thinking towards life-enhancing characteristics of the products we make.

Since the first oil crisis in the early seventies, some architects and engineers have taken a more intelligent approach to design taking advantage of the natural benefits of the climate and location within which they are designing. More recently, 'sustainable' architecture has set out to establish energy consumption and pollution emission levels that are compatible with obligations made by government to international bodies. But that is not all, and it is no enough. There are still justifiable concerns about levels of CO2 emission; genuine and safe recycling of materials; how to embrace all issues in whole-life costing and questions still remain regarding the use of non-replaceable energy sources versus renewable sources and how these are reflected or not within current legislation, such as the latest Part L draft of the UK Building Regulations.

Many architects, supported by ill-informed political initiatives, continue to 'badge' themselves on the basis of placing photovoltaic cells on the facades and roofs of their designs, when there is more than ample evidence of the folly of this in our UK climate. Wind, on the other hand, along with passive solar benefits represent huge potential, if only we would commit genuinely to both in an intelligent and responsible way.

A new generation of 'intelligent' buildings does not depend upon sophisticated technology, but on understanding the relative values of sealing buildings against heat loss while maintaining sufficient and healthy air quality through natural ventilation; natural heat recovery; natural benefits through orientation; building form; building mass and using biomass for roofs; and exploiting natural lighting though astute use of glazed areas and light transmitting thermal insulating panels. New technologies and analytical methodologies do offer huge potential to improve the products and buildings we design, but we do need far better thinking to achieve environmentally positive solutions. Please try your very best. We all need your talent.

END