

# Time

While October of this year marks a birthday for the AA, AArchitecture commemorates its own 20th edition with a diachronic account of the school's alumni and layered history using Time as its theme.

As Brett Steele noted at June's graduation ceremony, the architect's universe is defined by an assortment of temporal modes: real time, machine time and dead time all contribute to a resolution. In this sense, the newsletter can be read in two ways – either following exchanges between students and alumni or exploring the relationship between time and architecture as a profession.

The interview serves as this issue's leitmotif, bringing together distinct generations and world views in a genealogy that traces the student–tutor relationship. Mike Davies, of Roger Stirk Harbour + Partners, and first year student Assaf Kimmel converse about the architect's fashion and the role of technology in the architectural project. Educator and writer Dalibor Vesely and his former student, Iolanda Costide (AADipl 1980) reflect on the AA's 'Golden Age'. And Pink Floyd's Nick Mason and the editors commemorate the band's stage designer Mark Fisher (AADipl 1971) as well as the essential role architecture played for the band.

# Architecture

## Hits *The Wall*

Mark Fisher (AADipl 1971 and Unit Master 1973–77), designed some of Pink Floyd's most memorable sets. He recently passed away, and is remembered here in an interview with the band's drummer, Nick Mason.

I remember playing at the AA in 1966 for the Christmas party, as it was one of the first semi-professional gigs that we did through an agent. I never actually went back to the AA after that. Roger, Richard and I were at the Regent Street Polytechnic, which is now Westminster University, and we had friends at the AA, but there wasn't a huge amount of interaction between the schools. It happens that two of my part-time tutors at the Poly were Richard Rogers and Norman Foster! We were signed quite soon afterwards, doing 200 shows a year, so I inevitably drifted away from architecture schools. I like to say that Pink Floyd was a government-funded initiative, as Roger, Richard and I were all on grants and used the student common room to practise.

One of the interesting things about all the people we worked with was how many links there were to architecture. It is a really good training for rock and roll because it mixes the practical with fine art, drawing, three-dimensional thinking and structural engineering. Arthur Max, for example, who took us from 35mm slide projectors to hydraulic 'cherry picker' lifts with racks of mounted lights, was an American student architect who helped introduce us to stage lighting. He is now an Oscar-nominated production designer for Ridley Scott.

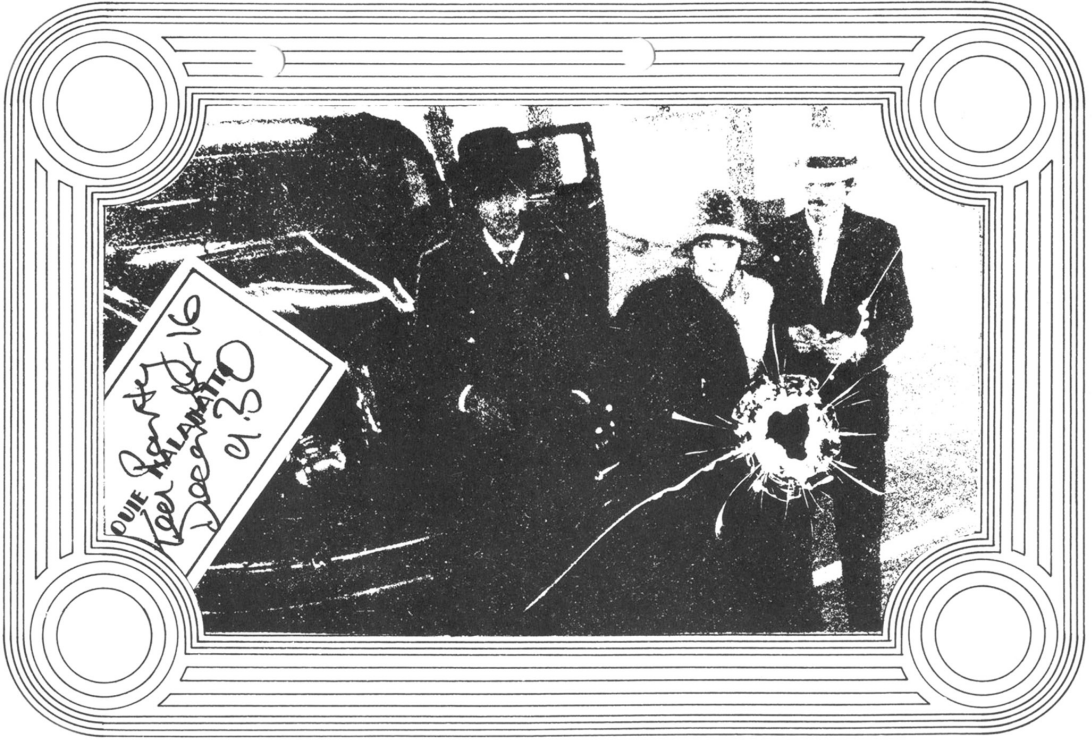
But the great thing about Mark Fisher was that he got along so easily with people, and everybody thought he was the nicest guy. He also did beautiful drawings. Of the sets he designed for us, his work for

The Wall stands out in particular, as it was so groundbreaking and defined a completely new set of parameters. He was the first to do what many had only thought of doing. We'd already done large projection screens for example, but he produced the design for The Wall that could be erected in an hour, double as a projection surface, and then collapse at the end of the show.

We had faith in Mark's proposals because he made them work practically. Gerald Scarfe and his team would have been involved in the actual content of the projections, whilst Mark dealt with the construction. In any given show there'd be around 20 ideas, of which two or three wouldn't work. Sometimes the props were just too heavy to transport, and a large part of Mark's task was making as many lightweight structures as possible. Like a theatre director, he'd come to oversee the first shows and then move on to his next project.

We generally had a clear idea of what the show would be, so we'd hand Mark the set list of the show and he'd design the production accordingly. We tended to follow the same format, playing new material in the first half, and then the 'Best Of' in the second half. We were always trying to break the audience into new material first, which was the toughest thing. We also tried to modify the sets night by night, partly because there were people coming to see all the shows in a particular location, and also so that we ourselves didn't get stuck in too much of a rut.

1880: First architectural students' satirical journal, *British Builder and Architecting News*, published



Invitation and flyer for the AA's 1966 Carnival where Pink Floyd performed, just before being signed by EMI



**PROHIBITION**

**AA**

**10 DECEMBER**

**CARNIVAL**

CLIP-TIN BIT

**TICKETS £2 & £4**  
**FROM MARTIN HUNT AT AA**  
**36 BEDFORD SQUARE WCI**



The Wall was driven specifically by Roger feeling that there was an audience out there that felt alienated. A rock festival is as much about the audience being together as it is about what's happening on stage. But if it's just one band playing you feel there should be more engagement with the audience. When you're playing to 80,000 people, you need big things to grab the attention of the people at the back playing Frisbee, and that's why the towers that rise and fall, the giant inflatables and so many of Mark's ideas made such an impact.

Mark really helped establish the standard for today's large-scale set design for rock shows. I went to see a Robbie Williams show with fantastic staging. The sets were as good as anything we ever did. At the time, we were quite peculiar in that we spent so much time on the staging while others concentrated on promoting themselves with just a stage, a few lights and large screens. As we worked with Mark,

ours became more like theatrical events – a bit like Michael Jackson's later shows. The Stones also got into it with huge platforms and moving elements. One time they asked how high our proscenium arch would be so they could make theirs a bit bigger! Mark really was the instigator of these production values, and ended up as the master of the theatrical rock spectacular. He was a brilliant visionary, sorely missed!