

The Architect's Journal

Children's Express members introduce the October 1996 edition of The Architects Journal, for which they were the guest editors

What we think about comes down to what we experience in the buildings we use each day. Well-designed places create impressive feelings when you see them. Buildings that are hard to use or ugly are depressing. This is true for everyone.

Quirky designs and spaceship shapes can have the immediate appeal of looking interesting to children. But after visiting it once, do they want to return a second time? There has to be more to it than a gimmick. It is possible that a strange-looking building may not be accepted into the community, and it can feel like an awful mistake has been made.

We hate concrete. We appreciate it can be moulded into any shape, and is cheap and easy to use. It also ages badly, always seems damp and looks like winter - totally grey. There is an over-abundance of mirror, especially on the inside of some buildings. It is as though you want to check on yourself all the time. When an extension harshly contrasts in style with its surroundings, all young people see is a mish-mash of materials.

We do like modern buildings which have a lot of natural light, are spacious, and take into consideration the needs of young people in the design. If it is built in a way that is cosy and seems familiar, we can relate to it. Building something that respects our sense of scale helps too.

When designing a park or community area, try to involve local youth in the planning and the upkeep. Since the word youth seems to equal vandal these days, it makes good sense in ensuring that a new project is a respected part of the neighbourhood.

Consultation is essential. If the doors at school are too heavy, if you are in a public place and get lost because signs are too high, or if you can't see over someone's head at the cinema because the seats don't slope, you are not going to enjoy where you are.

In these circumstances young people feel as if they are treated with boredom and disdain and are likely to return the compliment in their feelings about architecture. Avoid designing buildings as though there are only two generations: under five and over 18.

We appreciate good planning, and there are encouraging signs that our views are being consulted more often. The new Derbyshire Children's Hospital is one project which used the views of young people with great success.

In this special Children's Issue of The Architects Journal, Children's Express journalists have interviewed the children of architects, rated furniture that has been designed for them, and assessed buildings. The aim of the project is to give a new perspective to how a quarter of the British population assess the work of your profession.

About the team

The editorial/discussion team consisted of editors Shahi Ahmed, 14, Senab Adekunle, 14, and reporters Mehrak Golestan, 12, Imran Hamid, 13, Kathleen Dawes, 13, and Ruth Sewell, 11. It was published in the [Architects' Journal](#), in a special youth edition guest-edited by Children's Express.

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