

What got you started?

It was pretty random – some books in the school library, moving to Glasgow and seeing the vivid interplay of buildings and city...

Who was your most inspiring tutor?

Eric Parry taught me how to think by drawing.

Which architect have you learnt the most from?

Paul Robbrecht – I spent ten years working for, then with him.

Which living architect do you most admire?

I like the look of Elemental – committed and inventive.

What “great” architecture leaves you cold?

None. The most wrongheaded makes me steaming hot, but still seduces me with its beauty.

What is your best project?

Astley Castle, so far. There are only a couple of bits I have to look away from.

What project do you most regret losing?

They all hurt, then you move on.

What part of the design process do you most enjoy?

Drawing – anything.

What is your Achilles’ heel?

Inability to finish sentences...

Which house would you most like to live in?

I don’t ask for much: no bikes or footballs in the living room, less than three hours from my office (my partner and kids live in Brussels).

What is your favourite city?

London, a “stupendous, miserable city”.

What building would you most like to see demolished?

None – but there are a few I wouldn’t mind ‘adaptively re-using’.

You can work in whichever city you want at any point in history – where and when would you choose?

Milan in the 1950s looks like it was politically and creatively vivid

What is the most important relationship of your working life?

Stephen Witherford. Constant creative tension.

Who is your favourite client?

I have a soft spot for the client for our housing in Gistel, Belgium. Nine years in, they have been sanguine, trusting, courteous all the way.

What would be your dream commission?

We've been dreaming quite hard about building some housing in Britain.

What one piece of legislation would you introduce?

I can't see myself as a lawmaker.

What is your favourite architectural book?

I read Rossi's "Architecture of the City" recently – beautiful, morbid, wise.

What is your favourite novel?

Emile Zola's "L'Assommoir" (The Drinking Den): a tragicomedy of the city.

What are you listening to?

Pulp: "You're a Nightmare".

Complete the sentence: At heart I am a frustrated...

Goalkeeper.

What have you sacrificed for your career?

Impatience in the office, patience at home

What does your family think of your work?

They are bemused but indulgent.

Your child tells you they want to be an architect. What do you tell them?

We were camping in Normandy and had a lengthy tour of the Perret apartment in Le Havre. Afterwards Robert said "if I don't become a footballer, maybe I'll be an architecte": extra football training the next day.

Is it getting easier?

No, just differently difficult.

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