

Building Blocks

Alan Jones has been elected the next President of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Alan will take over the two-year presidential term from Ben Derbyshire next year (1 September 2019); from 1 September 2018 he will officially become RIBA President Elect.

The role of RIBA President was established in 1835 and is the highest elected position in UK architecture. The President is chair of RIBA Council, the Charity Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the conduct and development of the Institute.

Alan Jones is a chartered architect, director of his own architecture practice based in County Antrim, Senior Lecturer at Queen's University Belfast and the RIBA's Vice President for Education.

Below we have asked Alan to chart the timeline of events, both global and personal, that contributed towards him becoming Northern Ireland's first RIBA President.



1964 - I was born in Altagevlin Hospital, Londonderry, the first hospital built after the establishment of the National Health Service. My parents are John and Ann Jones.



1969 The Battle of the Bogside took place in the centre of L'Derry and is generally recognised as the beginning of the Troubles.



1969 The Jones family moved to their second home in Blackburn Crescent, L'Derry. Photograph - Joe Laverty



1971 My grandfather Jones was an air conditioning engineer and I spent summers meddling in his garden workshop.



1964 Our first family home was in Strathfoyle, near the port of Londonderry. Over the next years my sister Hilary and brother Brian joined the family. Photograph - Joe Laverty



1967 Aged three.



1970 I started my education at Carlisle Road, Primary School, L'derry - at the end of the Craigavon Bridge, one of the few dual-decked bridges in Europe.



1971 My father bought the first family Canon camera and began to show me how to use it. Years later I almost studied photography rather than architecture.



1972 The Jones family move to their third home of the Ballycairn Road, Coleraine. I attended D H Christie Memorial Primary School, (part of The Honorable The Irish Society group of schools) and first year of Coleraine Academical Institution.



1974 The family caravan was initially located in Cushendall and then moved in 1977 to the Cushendun Park, with its amenity centre design by the well-known local architect Robert McKinstry, and the Clough Williams-Ellis buildings in the nearby village.



1977 The family moved to Ballymena, close to the RIBA Award winning County Hall. Attended Ballymena Academy 1977-1982. The family moved again in 1981 to Templepatrick.



1983 Commenced studying architecture at Queen's University. Final three years were spent living at 15 Lorne Street off the Lisburn Road, Belfast.



1983 Dr Robin Wylie and Seamus Ward (as a guest tutor) taught and inspired me at Queen's University. Others who also taught me included Raymond Davis, Austin Peter Fawcett, Desmond FitzGerald, John Trewsdale, Arthur Acheson, Dan O'Neill, Harold Meek, Conal O'Cathain and Raymond Gilfillan with guest studio critics including Chris MacDonald, Loren Butt and Peter Moro CBE.



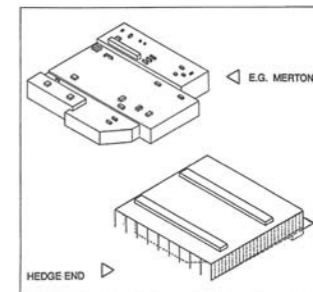
1982 I met Laura Johnston on the school bus to Ballymena. Two years later when she came to Queen's to study dentistry the romance started and upon completion of my part 3 final examination we married - with both our children born in London - Isaac 1994 and Gideon 1996.

KENNEDY FITZGERALD ARCHITECTS

1985 Year out was with Kennedy Fitzgerald, Belfast.



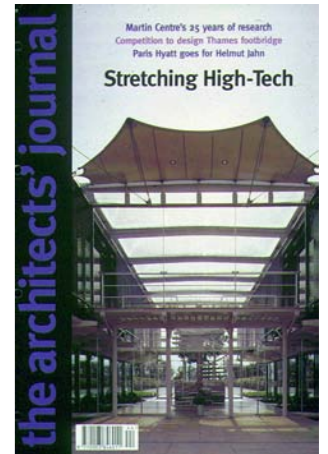
1987 Exhibited in the Royal Academy Summer Show, London and joint first in the student category of the Irish Timber Council competition. My final year thesis project explored security and privacy, flexibility and commercialism within the health sector - through a pharmaceutical research institute located on the Lisburn Road, Belfast, next to the City Hospital. Both my part 1 and 2 projects were submitted for the RIBA Presidents Medals.



1987 Worked the summer in Michael Hopkins & Partners, London. A small team of Michael Hopkins, Bill Taylor and Alan developed a new supermarket configuration for Sainsbury's at Hedge End near Southampton, causing Sainsbury's and others to adopt the now common arrangement of canopy and glass front with checkouts aisles and parking perpendicular to the façade.



1990 Our wedding was in the Egyptian Revival 1st Antrim Presbyterian church, followed by a honeymoon in Paris.



1990-1992 Worked intensely on the second phase of Schlumberger Cambridge Research, with ferroconcrete permanent formwork and the second use of ETFE in the UK. RIBA Award.



1992-1995 Soon after the competition win, I started the detailed design and technical development of the Inland Revenue Nottingham project - assisting with the precast concrete and leading on the bespoke façade and internal lighting.



1995 Moved to David Morley Architects, helping complete the Cricket School at Lord's and project architect on the new headquarters for the ECB, completed 1997. 2 RIBA Awards.



1999 My extension to a farmhouse at Cranfield, Co Antrim was published in the RIBA J and received a RIBA award.



1997 Led the fast track design and construction of the new shop at Lords. Third installation of ETFE in the UK. RIBA Award.



1999 Ran final year of part 1 for five years and my 10-14 day study trips were run ahead of the start of the semester typically to Berlin, Munich, Bregenz and Basel - from where visits to Ronchamps by Corbusier were made.



2003 My Office for a Coffee Importer Belfast was well received in the Architectural Association of Ireland 2004 Awards with a Special Mention and positive support from international judge Aaron Betsky.



2000 Visiting Zaha Hadid's Firestation at Vitra near Basel made me move away from singularly orthogonal architecture.



1998 In early 1998 I left London and returned to N Ireland.



2000-6 My annual return to Switzerland reinforced my belief that N Ireland can have its own culture for architecture.



1998 I accepted the offer from Queen's University to work with them and continue to practice.



2002-2007 Having won the competition jointly with Glenn Howells Architects and Alan Jones Architects designed and created what has been described as "the best wee theatre in Ireland". RSUA Design Award 2008

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST Teaching Award



2000 Received a Teaching Award from Queen's for my Harland & Wolff masterplan project which was exhibited at the RIBA.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOW-HOW & KNOW-THAT
FOUR FACES - THE DYNAMICS OF ARCHITECTURAL KNOWLEDGE
20TH EAAE CONFERENCE STOCKHOLM-HELSINKI 2003

2003 Through this conference paper I began to explore how knowledge and skill are both essential to being an architect and creating architecture.



2004 AJA's addition to Straidhavern Primary School was reviewed by Patrick Lynch for Architecture Today.



2005 This house I designed near Ahoghill for a couple from Washington DC was featured as an exemplar in the new rural design guide for Northern Ireland.

Stop doing & start thinking
The Unthinkable Doctorate
Discussing design based research
Conference Brussels 2005

2005 Explored the need and benefit of structured thinking and reflection on and through the design process in this conference paper.

Re-engage Re-search
Research to survive
European Symposium on Research in Architecture and Urban Design
EURAU 2004
Marseille

2004 In this conference paper I explored how research is essential to being an architect and creating architecture.



2005 This house I designed near Ahoghill for a couple from Washington DC was featured as an exemplar in the new rural design guide for Northern Ireland.

Placing low energy Architecture in a low cost economy
Passive & Low Energy Architecture
Annual Conference Geneva
PLEA 2006

2006 Documented in this conference paper how low energy architecture, often considered expensive, can be located in a low-cost economy such as Scotland and N. Ireland.



2006 My work was cited by international Wallpaper* magazine in their guide to 25 architects from around the world.



2006 New Dwelling Randalstown received a RSUA, an RIBA Award and a RIBA Manser Medal shortlisting. The project was published across the world - including Vision (China), Domus (Italy), RIBA Guide to Insitu Concrete and Daily Telegraph 10 Top Notch Architects. E Heathcote of the FT described it as being faced in "urban armour" and Charles Rattray, in Modern Ulster Architecture (UAHS) described the project as one of the five most important buildings in Ulster since WW2.



2007 After admiring David Brett's book Plain Style, I collaborated with David to jointly author and create this exploration of designing and building architecture for Northern Ireland. The review in the Architects' Journal hinted that a second volume should be created.



2007 My design for a house, north of Ballymena, received planning permission.



2011 A multi tenancy building in Seoul, South Korea. One of many buildings seen during numerous RIBA Validation Board visits to architecture schools across the UK and beyond. Co-authored the criteria for schools that were applied from 2007 to 2011.



2008 Was the invited international judge on the panel for the £20,000 RIAS and Architecture Design Scotland Andrew Doolan Prize.



2008-2016 As Director of Education (Architecture) was the joint head of Architecture at Queen's University, leading it to its highest ever place, of 5th, in the Guardian league table in 2015.



2012-14 Was elected President of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects.



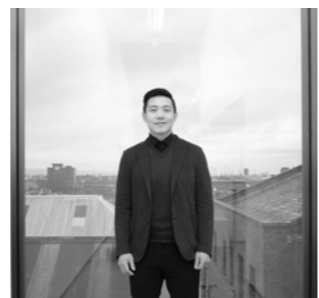
2014 It was during my presidency of the RSUA, that the long standing director of the RSUA, Frank McCloskey, decided to retire.



2012 Arranged this well attended event to launch my presidency of the RSUA - with a major client, their architect, a researcher and commentator discussing "The value of Architecture and Architects"



2012 "Architecture...but not as we know it" Beyond the recession... organised this seven speaker event at Queen's with over 200 students, architects and co-professionals attending. Speakers such as David Saxby, Neil Baxter, Michelle Fegan came from London, Edinburgh, Dublin and explored the impact and possibilities for architects' practice. (Image - Norman Hutchinson, RSUA President, who I worked with on my year out, listens intently).



2015 Began "STA - Success through architecture" to explore career paths into and through architecture, to help students and graduates find their route and trajectory within the industry. There are now over 100 STA role models, many whose portraits I have taken.



2015 Ran a series of annual networking events in London, with year 2 students meeting graduates working in London and potential employers.



2016 Was surprised by the RIAS bestowing a Honorary Fellowship on me. Later in 2016 I was given one of the new fellowships of the RIBA.



2016 Joined the President election-race in late April and was a close second to Ben Derbyshire. Many encouraged me to run again.



2017 Teamed up with Rob Hyde of Manchester School of Architecture to identify the need, create and edit this book with over 50 contributors - to be published early 2019.



2017 I instigated and collaborated with the RSUA to create the new Professional Insights Programme matching Year 2 students with RSUA members to give a taster of professional practice.



2017 Began to champion social mobility, that opportunity should be available to all, independent of their family and socio economic background.



2018 Ran in the 2018 election with a campaign that many described as professional, relevant and at times humorous. My simple reminder to vote campaign helped raise the level of voter engagement to the highest since 2006.

Comments on Alan Jones' RIBA Presidency Success

Joan McCoy

President of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects & co-founder of White Ink Architects, Belfast
 "...Alan's passion for Architecture is clearly evident in everything he does, but more than this - his passion for what architects can do and the value that they bring to society is key to why he would make an excellent president of the RIBA. Alan sees the possibility of success in whatever route each architect chooses to practice, as shown in his 'Success through Architecture' initiative. He understands that the world is changing and that the RIBA needs to change with it - not only does the RIBA need to support architects to ensure that they deliver the highest quality of design, but it needs to recognise and celebrate the fact that architects' skills and influence in a range of roles can help create an environment for architecture to flourish, thus improving people's lives".

Professor Ian Greer

President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast
 "This is a tremendous honour for Alan, Queen's University Belfast and Northern Ireland. It is a strong endorsement of the important role he plays within the industry. I am proud to see Alan's expertise recognised and wish him the very best in his exciting new role as RIBA President."

Paul Finch

Architects' Journal editorial director
 "Alan Jones is a good architect who should be able to lead a campaign encouraging architects to stand up and be counted in discussions about accountability, design standards and decent housing provision"

Wendy Galbraith

Interim Registrar and Chief Operating Officer of Queen's University
 "At Queen's University Belfast we are delighted to see Alan elected as RIBA President. With expertise in both academia and practice, Alan has a fantastic understanding of the sector. We wish Alan the very best as he takes on the responsibilities and challenges of his new position."

Glenn Howells

Founder of Glenn Howells Architects, London & Birmingham
 Architects of the Market Theatre, Armagh & joint architects with Alan Jones Architects of the Alley Theatre & Conference Centre Strabane.
 I am really thrilled we have Alan as our new President and am confident he will drive through the vital changes he was elected on.

Michael Hegarty

National Practice Leader & Director of Architecture, GHD Woodhead, Adelaide, Australia.
 "Alan Jones and I are the same age and grew up a stone's throw from each other in Derry at a time when that's what the place was famous for - throwing stones. I have every confidence that his understanding of running a practice, educating future architects and working in regional areas and internationally provides the experience base for an excellent presidency."

Joe Fitzgerald

Co Founder of Kennedy FitzGerald Architects (Retired)
 "Alan wrote to us when he was still at school, and I have kept the letter. I also remember giving Alan his first task when he came to work with us; to reorganise our drawings store"