Catalogue Three | 50 photographs of recent works
As the name implies, this is the third in a series of catalogues about our work. While Catalogue 1 divided projects into their component parts (bathrooms, bedrooms, living and so on) and explained the narrative threads that ground our work through essays, Catalogue 2 was the opposite. There we presented our work as full-page photographs and no text, with only a key at the end.

The concept for our third book is to use photography as a starting point to speculate on the nature of our completed work. The publication is conceived as an exhibition catalogue to a show of 50 images chosen by Gareth Gardner, a photographer who has recorded many of our projects, working with designer Junko Fuwa. We wanted to present the full spectrum of our work in a simple but considered way. This is not a monograph, but more of a snapshot in time. There are two short essays that further articulate our position.

The result is certainly a highly edited overview of our work. In choosing the images together, we found we were drawn to those that were rich in detail, texture and colour rather than more normative descriptive images showing the whole project or space. Perhaps this interest in the fragment allows the viewer to zoom in and inhabit a corner of our work, rather than to try and understand it as a whole. We began to feel comfortable with the idea that one or two photographs could communicate the essence of a project. The act of editing hundreds of pictures down to 50 was inevitably intuitive. This reminded us that being intuitive is an important and under-estimated aspect of architectural production, because it signifies that design is something felt as well as rational.

We are therefore delighted to present our work in Catalogue 3 and would like to say thank you to all the photographers we work with.

Christopher Ash and James Soane
Project Orange
Plate 03: Field Street, London – View along Field Street
Plate 07: Whitechapel Art Gallery, London - View of dining rooms
Plate 08: Judd Street, London - View of bedroom enclosed by PVC curtains
Plate 09: Monsoon Arndale Centre, Manchester – View across double-height entrance
Plate 12: Redcliffe Square, London - Folding louvre shutters in master bathroom
Plate 13: Whitecross Street, London - View from Fortune Street Park
Plate 15: Fitzwilliam Hotel, Belfast – View of guest bathroom with folding shutters
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Plate 17: Field Street, London – Interior view of typical apartment
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Plate 22: The Park Hotel, Navi Mumbai – Night view of south façade
Plate 23: Judd Street, London – Detail of customised PVC curtains
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Plate 28: Farnham Estate, Ireland – View of cellar bar
Plate 29: Eynsham Hall, Oxford – Corner view of conference room
Plate 30: i-bar, Bangalore - Panorama of hotel lounge bar
Plate 31: Chiswick Moran Hotel, London - View of Globe Bar
Plate 32: Glossop Road, Sheffield – Detail of external balconies
Plate 33: Chiswick Moran Hotel, London – Perspex screens within restaurant
Plate 34: Eynsham Hall, Oxford – Corner view in hotel bar
Plate 35: Judd Street, London - View of polyurethane washbasin
Plate 38: Field Street, London – View of building looking across Underground and Thameslink tracks
Plate 39: St Paul’s Place, London – View of main bathroom
Plate 40: Farham Estate, Ireland – Detail of historic stone stair with carpet runner
Plate 41: Jerwood Art and Design Building, Oakham – Central atrium
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Plate 45: Orange Cottage, Lavenham - Open plan living area
Plate 46: Judd Street, London - View of hallway
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Plate 49: Fitzwilliam Hotel, Belfast – Detail of lobby seating area
“Photography and architecture use each other. Photography encounters architecture specifically as a means of representation and dissemination.”

In a fraction of a second, an image is captured that may serve as the consummate single expression of years of design. This compression of a huge investment of time into a single click carries with it a great deal of significance. Much rests on the results.

There is an ongoing debate about the value of refined and aesthetically-framed views of buildings, spaces and places. Are they real enough, authentic enough, truthful enough? While I would agree with the notion that image-making can be purely concerned with the photograph-as-art, I think it is disingenuous to discredit the value of a composed and controlled view. After all, when looking at a recipe in a magazine, the image whets your appetite, though you cannot taste it. Likewise the architectural image may transport you to a place or space, although you are not able to touch it, feel it or see around the corner. It therefore stands as a cipher; a clue to a possible experience but not a facsimile. What, therefore, might remain contentious about the nature of architectural photography and why, in a book of images describing our own work, am I interested in the tension between the space as depicted in the image and the space as experienced?

The answer lies in the way Project Orange practices and our collaboration with the photographers who have visited and recorded our projects, in particular Gareth Gardner, who is also curator of Catalogue 3.

Our own work embraces a broad spectrum of styles and aesthetics, which is evidenced in this collection of images. The current orthodoxy in architectural cataloguing tends to separate the outside of a building from the inside. It also predicates stylistic consistency, which results in a critical response that favours similarity over difference. We do not fit into this mould. Here we celebrate the differences that define photography’s relation to architecture. Some of the pictures show traces of occupation, such as Judd Street, while others remain more abstract and poised, such as the Chiswick Moran Hotel or Oakham School. A lot depends on aspects out of our control: the weather, the time we have, our own moods and how the project has been inhabited. Some of these may be pre-empted, while others are constraints to be worked within. In the end, while the architect is the creator of the subject, it is the photographer who is the creator of the image or object. It is this joint authorship which is critical.

For us the process of briefing and discussing possible outcomes is a mirror to the briefing process with the client. With the project realised, the recording of it is handed to the photographer whose lens serves as the eye of the majority, that is, those who will never experience the place in person. Thus the image becomes loaded precisely because it purports to tell so much with so little. Yet even if we were to make a film, the story would be incomplete. How many times have you been to a space and found it different by day and by night, when it rains or is sunny, when it is cold and when it is warm, when you feel good or feel low? All architecture is contingent on our own realities and perception.

I therefore see this collection of our work as another kind of snapshot; one that creates a dialogue between projects and ideas that come together as a product of this particular publication. They talk to each other in a new way, and the production of it has made us reflect upon our own working practices, from beginnings to ends. I enjoy the sense in which this feels less like a retrospective and more of a preview.

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The process of architectural photography says as much as the resulting images as about the work being photographed. This experience has remained remarkably consistent during my 20-odd shoots with Project Orange, despite the apparent breadth and eclecticism of the work being captured – not to mention the different ways that the photographs themselves have been taken.

Some architects like to drive from the back seat, making frame shapes with their hands and telling you where to plant your tripod. Others have no desire to attend the shoot, leaving the photographer to second-guess their intent and hopefully deliver images to their liking. Is it coincidental that these are usually situations where the architect and client have fallen out, and communication has broken down? However, working with Project Orange is a more rewarding experience, usually involving the participation of at least one member of the studio. From a photographer’s point of view, this fosters genuine dialogue about the work being shot. Project Orange is comfortable around photography and photographers.

The result is a body of work – of which the images reproduced here represent a snapshot of recent commissions – spanning one of the most significant revolutions in the history of photography. It wasn’t long ago that projects were captured on film with a large format camera. The received wisdom was that architects would never abandon the clarity and precision of a five-by-four inch transparency. Over recent years, the advance of digital cameras has brought truly breathtaking, and arguments about image quality and expediency have been won. In particular, digital SLRs offer unprecedented flexibility. Stylistically, architectural photography has yet to embrace fully these possibilities to create a new paradigm that replaces the formal and static conventions developed as a result of using huge cameras – little-changed since Victorian times – and slow-speed film.

There is much talk – and some visual evidence – that architectural photography will relax and include people in the frame, thanks to the superior light sensitivity of digital sensors. This is being influenced by documentary photographers, who have become increasingly interested in the built environment, offering a more spontaneous and natural aesthetic.

While curating this project, I was prompted to question why people appear so rarely in the photographs. Partly it is because of conditions on the shoot – there might be few other people around – but it is also because Project Orange delivers schemes that are rich in colour, texture and references. There is no need to ‘pad out’ an empty space within the frame, or attempt to provide some dynamic interest with the creative use of blurred people. The experience is full enough already.

Furthermore, their projects communicate intuitively. There is no need to attempt to explain how something works, by showing people using a space. While all practices claim to design for the end user, this is something that Project Orange really achieves. As a result, clients are often enthusiastic for internal use. According to photographer David Cowlard, architects favour the ‘hero shot’ for publicity rather than a more informal image.¹ For Project Orange, the digital revolution has manifested itself in images that simply wouldn’t be possible – or would be incredibly difficult - with old-style equipment. In some cases, I think it has resulted in a less formal, more spontaneous and dynamic aesthetic.

Publishers – especially within the trade press – enjoy less power and freedom than their forebears. In the UK at least, little photography is commissioned by architectural magazines. Commercial pressures and stylistic pluralism also mean that publications take a less polemical and single-minded view.

Meanwhile, architectural practices commission images with the motivation of attracting new clients through PR and marketing, or more simply to record aspects of a project for internal use. According to photographer David Cowlard, architects favour the ‘hero shot’ for publicity rather than a more informal image.¹

The ambition behind the latest Park Hotel was to create an iconic, 80-room hotel for New Mumbai. The beamied ceiling throughout reinforces this theme. The palette for the interior is a combination of soft pink, mauves and grey, with a highlight of bright red. We also introduced a layer of pattern through the use of wallpapers and textiles. At the Arndale centre in Manchester, the design challenge was to connect two floors of flagship retail in a ‘mall environment’. This was achieved by creating a double-height entrance zone with a linear staircase rising up behind a two-storey copper-clad wall. A glass balustrade to the mezzanine gives views of the upper retail area, and is inhabited by mannequins casually looking down on the shoppers below.

Plates 09
Monsoon Arndale Centre, Manchester, UK
Client: Monsoon plc
Completion: 2005
Photography: Gareth Gardner

Project Orange originally developed a lofty concept to add personality to the retail box. The beamied ceiling throughout reinforces this theme. The palette for the interior is a combination of soft pink, mauves and grey, with a highlight of bright red. We also introduced a layer of pattern through the use of wallpapers and textiles. At the Arndale centre in Manchester, the design challenge was to connect two floors of flagship retail in a ‘mall environment’. This was achieved by creating a double-height entrance zone with a linear staircase rising up behind a two-storey copper-clad wall. A glass balustrade to the mezzanine gives views of the upper retail area, and is inhabited by mannequins casually looking down on the shoppers below.

Plate 14
 Fitzwilliam Hotel, Dublin, Ireland
Client: Fitzwilliam Hotel Group
Completion: 2005
Photography: Gareth Gardner

The penthouse at the Fitzwilliam in Dublin is situated in a new-build 160 sq m two-bedroom suite, designed with a masculine but luxurious sophistication. A moody selection of materials sets the scene of an exclusive members’ club. Travertine, fired acacia wood and deep claret Chinese lacquer. An elegant peerless bar sits in front of a red lacquered wall, behind which is a kitchen.

Other spaces include a master bedroom lined with silk and cream leather. The adjacent master bathroom is designed as a travertine haven for two. A fully-equipped shower room is provided en-suite to the second bedroom. A striking sculptural ceiling unites all the rooms.

Plates 19, 32, 36
Glossop Road, Sheffield, UK
Client: Private
Completion: 2006
Photography: Gareth Gardner

Work to this Grade II listed house in Islington, involving the partial building elevation, internal alterations, complete refurbishment and interior design. A key objective was to improve the quality of space on the lower ground floor, enhancing its connection to the garden. In addressing this problem, Project Orange relocated the kitchen within a new extension, creating both formal and informal dining areas. Upstairs, a new set of deluxe rooms was created in harmony with the rich detailing of the listed main building, creating a new extra-floor suite for the site.

Plates 05, 11, 22, 47, 49
Fitzwilliam Hotel, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Client: Grafton Properties with Hotel Partners
Completion: 2009
Photography: Tony Higgins

Located adjacent to the magnificent Opera House in the heart of Belfast, the Fitzwilliam Hotel in Belfast is a five-star, 133-bedroom hotel. Project Orange was appointed to work on the interior fit-out. Our design brief was to create a sense of space, incorporating a linear staircase running up behind a freestanding marble screen.

The three public façades of the building are wrapped in jolly black machines-made brick, challenging the orthodoxy of the municipal red brick vernacular. The floor-to-ceiling windows to the apartments are deeply recessed within the brick skin, and occur at random intervals. The concept of a beams-like building as a metaphor for the client’s business, embracing the paradox of precision, the refined, precious and decorative against a hard-edged industrial townscape.

Plate 39
St Pauls Place, London, UK
Client: Private
Completion: 2006
Photography: Gareth Gardner

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Completion: 2006
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Plate 37
Bolton Gardens, London, UK
Client: Private
Completion: 2006
Photography: Gareth Gardner

An existing mansard-level apartment was reconstructed in a clinker brick Georgian terrace. Ceiling heights were low, and the decision was taken to rebuild the roof to a new structural form, making best use of the volume available within the original roofline. The result is a bright and airy apartment with extensive skylights flooding the space with light. This is used to particular effect in the new kitchen/dining/kitchen area where a linear skylight subdivides into bays projects pool of morning sunlight.

Plate 36
Hospton Street, London, UK
Client: Owen Property
Completion: 2009
Photography: Gareth Gardner

These twin apartments, located within the Bankside Lofts development adjacent to the Tate Modern, were reconfigured by Project Orange. With dual aspect and a loft-style interior space, the large expanses of glazing to the front elevation take in stunning views of the city, while a mezzanine allows a degree of separation for the bedrooms, as well as access to rear balconies. Part of the brief was to maximise the floor space while retaining the double-height space to the front of the apartment. This was achieved by extending the existing mezzanine and constructing new staircases. The master bedroom is located at the front edge of the mezzanine, with a sliding folding screen allowing the bedroom to be closed off for privacy. The high gloss lacquer finish of the screen reflects light and the external view. The brass screen to the staircase picks up the gold. We felt that this dialogue created a sense of the Ocean in order to trade spices, gems and ivory making use of the monsoon to cross the Indian Ocean.

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Plate 35, 17, 24, 38
Field Street, London, UK
Client: The Joint
Completion: 2006
Photography: Gareth Gardner

Field Street is a 1,800 sq m mixed-use development in the Kings Cross regeneration area of London. An existing building, home to rehearsal studios, was expanded and two floors of private apartments constructed above. The new construction perches elegantly on top of the existing roofline. The external façade is clad in oxidised copper ‘rocaille’ that overlap and soften the dominant geometry of the building. The construction of the building presented a number of challenges, thanks to its proximity to the Thameslink railway-line and a need for acoustic separation between the rehearsal studios and private apartments above. The resulting building manages to unify this difficult site and create a new urban block that is striking but simple.

Plate 28, 40
Farnham Estate Hotel, Cavan, Ireland
Client: Roy McCabe / Radisson SAS
Completion: 2006
Photography: Gareth Gardner

Farnham Estate is a luxury 158-room spa destination with global appeal. The existing Georgian Farnham House, located near Cavan in Ireland, is the historic linchpin and acts as the counterpart to the new contemporary new buildings designed by Giklo McManhon Architects. The design of the new building provides a variety of moods and experiences that connect outside with inside. Inspiration was taken from the colours and textures of the surrounding landscape, and a calm and naturalistic palette of materials and colour is used. A dramatic glazed lobby links the old house and the new bedroom blocks. From the reception, a series of enfilade rooms, part of the original house, has been renovated and individually decorated. The bedroom design is characterised by a bull-nosed curved timber wall concealing the wardrobe, as well as a sliding door which can be opened to connect the bathroom and bedroom.

Plate 26
Station Hotel, London, UK
Client: Private
Completion: 2005
Photography: Jonathan Pile

The design of the new i-talia restaurant and café is an exercise in the celebration of colour. It is a cool and rectilinear combination of faux leather, mirror and mirror. The brass screen to the staircase picks up the gold. We felt that this dialogue created a sense of the Ocean in order to trade spices, gems and ivory making use of the monsoon to cross the Indian Ocean.

Plate 62, 31, 33
Chiswick Moran Hotel, London, UK
Client: Moran Hotels
Completion: 2009
Photography: Gareth Gardner

This 120-bedroom hotel is situated on Chiswick High Street in West London. House in a 1930’s former office building, the concept is ‘West Coast/West London’. The vibe is a contemporary style of accommodation that has been developed to suit the needs of the new millennium. The Globe Bar takes its name from the huge spinning globe that graces the reception and bar. The restaurant features an aesthetic of cool marine, eyelash laminares and crisp green leathers. A striking feature is a series of screens of polished stainless steel and rotating green Perspex ellipses, affording glimpses into the residents’ bar. Bedrooms are coloured according to the themes of surf, turf and desert. Bespoke furniture is a cool and rectilinear combination of faux leather, mirror and mirror.

Plate 44
Raoul’s Notting Hill, London, UK
Client: Michael and Geraldine Leventis
Completion: 2006
Photography: Gareth Gardner

Raoul’s is a chic neighbourhood restaurant in Notting Hill. Entering the restaurant, diners encounter a woman made of damask wallpaper, sparkling mirrors and a polished brass screen that connects the entrance area to the lower level. Reincarnated of Parisian café chic, the décor is maturing with time. Texture and colour is designed to embrace the hectic, transitory atmosphere.

Plate 38
Raoul’s W9, London, UK
Client: Michael and Geraldine Leventis
Completion: 2004
Photography: Jonathan Pile

Having already designed the original café and express store for Raoul’s, Project Orange was again engaged to design the new store. Our interior design provides a variety of moods and experiences that connect outside with inside. Inspiration was taken from the colours and textures of the surrounding landscape, and a calm and naturalistic palette of materials and colour is used. A dramatic glazed lobby links the old house and the new bedroom blocks. From the reception, a series of enfilade rooms, part of the original house, has been renovated and individually decorated. The bedroom design is characterised by a bull-nosed curved timber wall concealing the wardrobe, as well as a sliding door which can be opened to connect the bathroom and bedroom.

Plate 34, 45, 48
Orange Cottage, Lavenham, UK
Client: Private
Completion: 2007
Photography: Jonathan Pile

This new-build 200 sq m timber-frame house is situated in the heart of the picturesque village of Lavenham, Suffolk. All the adjacent buildings are listed. Located behind an existing brick and flint wall, the form of the house, with its steeply pitched roof, is a version of the local vernacular. The street elevation is intentionally laconic, using the simple language of soft oak casements and timbered render over a red brick plinth. To the rear, the composition of central gable, brick lean-to and chimney is more purposeful and modern. This impression is generated by the arrangement of projecting oak frames, full height glazing and oak paneled screens. The open plan ground floor is organized around the curved form of a top-lit winding oak stair. A music room/library and open kitchen are wrapped around a sunken living area. The upper floors contain four bedrooms and three bathrooms. A limited palette of traditional materials informs the interior, providing texture and grain reminiscent of its more historic neighbours, but detailed in a contemporary way.

Plate 21
Cramner Court, London, UK
Client: Owen Property
Completion: 2009
Photography: Gareth Gardner

An apartment on the seventh floor of a Chelsea residential block has been considerably refurbished to create a contemporary three bedroom apartment.

The interior was stripped back to the structure and services in order to eliminate as much as possible of the extensive boxing-out that had accumulated over many years. We were influenced by the period of the building and the design alludes to the inspiration of a luxury cruise liner. Flush timber paneling to the hall provides the main corridor off which all of the rooms are located. The doors have been carefully detailed to align completely flush with the adjacent wall paneling, providing an elegant and streamlined look to this circulation space. The simple materials palette of cherry and travertine provides a warm and homely feel, with added interest being provided by the red highlights of the hall carpet and high-gloss kitchen units.

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Plate 20
Chiswick Street, London, UK
Client: Private
Completion: 2009
Photography: Gareth Gardner

This client’s family business has occupied the premises at 115 Whitecross Street since the 1850s. The existing four storeys date from the 17th century while, post-war, additional residential accommodation was built over the rear of the site. Our brief was to remove the rear of the site to create a new family home, and upgrade and renovate the buildings onto the street, converting them into rental apartments, while retaining and renovating the existing ground floor business uses.

The result is a bright and airy apartment with extensive skylights flooding the space with light. This is used to particular effect in the new kitchen/dining/kitchen area where a linear skylight subdivides into bays projects pool of morning sunlight.
Photographers
Richard Bryant
Pallon Daruwala
Gareth Gardner
Tony Higgins
Ed Kingsford
Amit Pasrica
Johnathan Pile
Ram Rahman
Ali Rangoonwala

Design/curation
Junko Fuwa
Junko Fuwa moved to London from her native Japan in 1992. After graduating from the Royal College of Art with a master’s degree in graphic design, she worked as a senior designer at a Soho-based creative studio before being appointed art director for Blueprint magazine. She currently runs the graphics/communications design consultancy fuwagardner with Gareth Gardner, as well as working as an independent art director and journalist. Her clients include 100% Design London, the Spanish Embassy, the Royal Norwegian Embassy and Issey Miyake. She has also contributed to publications including Blueprint, Interiors, Fashion Week, PEN (Japan), BRUTUS (Japan) and GQ Japan.

Gareth Gardner
Gareth Gardner is a London-based photographer and writer specialising in architecture and design, as well as one half of graphics/communications design consultancy fuwagardner. He has worked with a wide range of architecture and interiors practices, organisations including CABE and the Design Council, as well as brands including Harrods and 100% Design London. A former editor of FX and features editor of Building Design, he has also contributed to publications including Blueprint, Design Week, Kitchens Bedrooms & Bathrooms and Vogue Living Australia. He has a master’s degree in civil engineering and studied photography at London College of Printing.
Project Orange is an award-winning architecture and design studio based in Clerkenwell, London. It was set up by Christopher Ash and James Soane in 1997. The practice is now recognised as one of the UK’s leading young architectural practices.

We have a broad and original portfolio of work that spans retail, hotel and residential projects. Our work is modern though eclectic. Ideas are generated on a case-by-case basis, resulting in a different ‘narrative’ for each project. We strongly believe in the power of good design to transform lives, from the individual in their own home, to those who move around our cities. Our professional and ambitious approach is collaborative and we like to engage with all our partners to ensure a lasting and sustainable outcome on all projects.

The practice completed its first large-scale new building in Sheffield for a private developer. This consisted of 22 apartments, retail and office space. It won a gold in the 2006 Roses Award scheme, a 2007 RIBA National Award and was named one of six ‘Buildings for Life’ by CABE in 2008. Project Orange was chosen by the Architect’s Journal as one of the ‘40 under 40’ practices to be exhibited at the V&A. We were also named Interior Architect of the Year by Building Design in 2007.

Both directors have been involved in teaching and research. James has taught architecture for nine years at the Bartlett and Kingston University and continues to be a guest critic and lecturer at UCL, Edinburgh, Westminster and Bath. As a writer he is a frequent contributor to the architectural press and wrote a book ‘New Homes’ published by Conran Octopus. Both are actively involved in the RIBA.

Project Orange People: Christopher Ash, Natalia Boguslawska, Rachel Coll, Alesia Jegorova, Ruth Silver, Gaurav Sharma, Cecilia Sjoholm, Robin Sjoholm, James Soane, Barry Stirland, Abi Tuttle, Michael Veal, Helen Woodcraft