

ICON

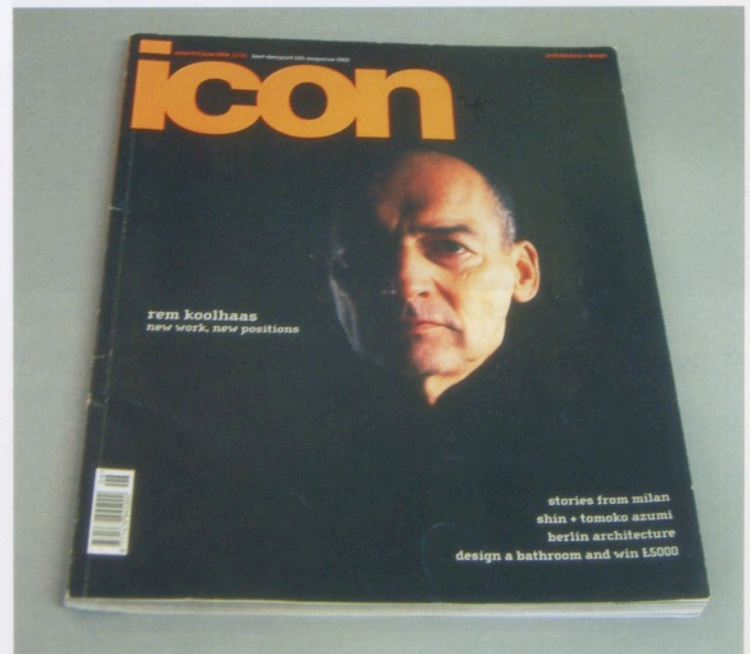
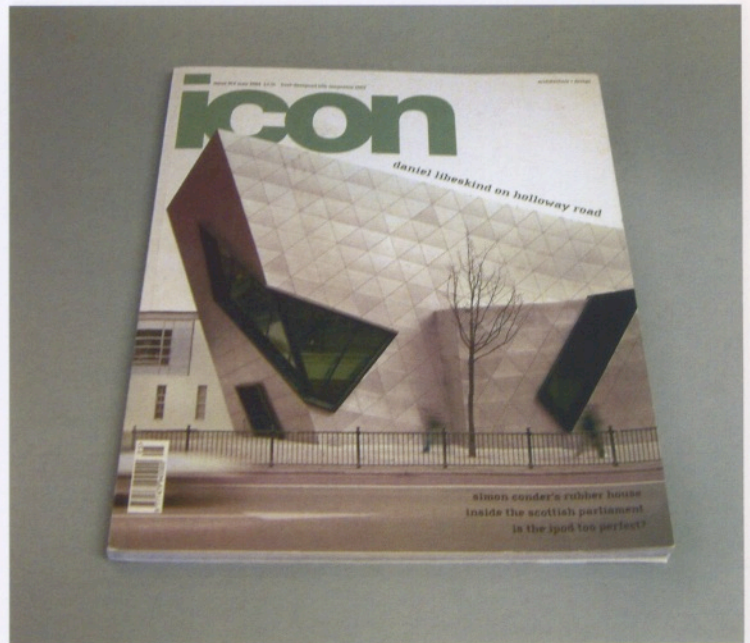
Editor: Marcus Fairs

To launch a new architecture and design magazine is always a risk. How do you compete in the circle of Domus, Frame, Blueprint, Wallpaper and a host of other International magazines? ICON has survived that challenge to celebrate its first year in circulation.

With the editorial finger on the pulse of the design world, ICON covers all the latest projects, debates, shows and interviews. Not adopting the back slapping self-praise or indifference of many uncritical magazines, it has already challenged preconceptions, and some big names.

Exploring such diverse things as tabloids, Alex de Rijke testing an interior with a trials bike, zombie toys, Police graphics, game-space, Russian criminal tattoos, dyslexia and the iTrip, it covers the full spectrum of design and contemporary cultural debate. Typical of the approach is Sam Jacob's article (June issue) on Archigram, where he discusses and unpicks the myth and current lavish praise given to the retired 'bubble commandos'. Like a punk band that ends up on radio 2, it seems the cold hand of the establishment welcomes every 'angry young architect' with time.

Charles Holland's enjoyable disembowelling of the pretence of shopping catalogues (also in the June issue), illustrates the type of critical humour deployed in ICON. M&S's 2004 Design Directory unsurprisingly comes off the worst. Habitat's catalogue, fares little better, as Holland points out, there is one token picture of a child playing in its 227 pages. No messing up a cool interior with a bit of real life.



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The May issue has a tour of the Netherlands to explore the latest design ideas and products. Also in this issue, is a discussion with Daniel Libeskind and a visit to the new Graduate Centre of

London Metropolitan University on the Holloway Road. An ironic exchange of questioning explores the material finish and just how far a metaphor can be pushed or justified by Libeskind. The ►

► approach avoids the typical over reliance on an architect's supplied glossy shots and controlled sound bites.

Architecture is well covered in ICON. Drawings and diagrams are used throughout the architecture features. Small projects like Simon Conder's 'rubber house' in Dungeness are illustrated and discussed in detail. So is the work of various small offices as well as the superstars like Zaha Hadid and Oscar Niemeyer. We are told that Rem Koolhaas translates as 'Raymond

Coalshed' and that he had soggy toast and peanut butter for lunch during the interview. No problem at the motorway services then.

After the tabloids consistently hit new lows in reporting the Scottish Parliament, ICON finds a fresher discussion with Benedetta Tagliabue. The feature lifts the debate and finds a story appropriate to the energy, spirit and commitment of EMBT. The photos of the Santa Caterina market in Barcelona, in a separate article,

show the true brilliance of the late Catalan Genius.

Smaller features are punchy and court controversy. The 'Icon of the month' has featured such diverse things as the AK-47 rifle, and the unloved and now demolished Tricorn Centre in Portsmouth. The gossipy 'icon eye' has some amusing asides.

The 'hello' like celeb shots of the ICON team and friends, the emphasis on London chat and the graphic shadow dance with BLUEPRINT can all be forgiven as ICON evolves, and becomes a must, for all the dedicated followers of design. Well printed and super smooth to touch, let us hope that it will soon be more widely available in Northern Ireland. ●

Paul Clarke

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