

The Guardian Top 10 architecture of 2019

by Oliver Wainwright Tue 17 Dec 2019

It was the year that council housing turned community-minded, King Arthur got a swishy new bridge and the Lake District harboured a gem

10. The Auckland Project by Purcell & Niall McLaughlin

Looking like a medieval siege engine ready to breach the castle walls, a new wooden lookout tower marked the grand reopening of Auckland Castle in Bishop Auckland this year. Designed by Irish architect Niall McLaughlin, the spiky-tipped tower rises above the new visitor centre for the rambling neo-gothic complex, seat of the mighty prince bishops of Durham for over 750 years. Conservation specialists Purcell worked their usual restorative magic, returning the interiors to their original gaudy colour schemes, including a lilac antechamber to a pink throne room, offset with blue and crimson curtains. Read the full review.

9. Marmalade Lane by Mole Architects for TOWN

A place designed with the lives of its future residents in mind shouldn't be remarkable. But, in a market ruled by the conventions of volume house builders, places such as Marmalade Lane in Cambridge are all too rare. Designed in collaboration with a co-housing group, the little development of 42 homes is an exemplary model of low-energy community-led housing. The streets of simple brick houses are accompanied by a shared common house, with a communal laundry, gym and workshop, as well as three guest bedrooms and a yoga and ping pong room. Cars are banished to the corner of the site, meaning the street has become a kid-friendly playground. Read the full review.

8. Charlotte Perriand exhibition at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris

Finally dragging the multitalented French designer out of Le Corbusier's long shadow, this exhibition gave Charlotte Perriand the recognition she has long deserved, as one of the defining creators of the 20th century. Bringing her work to life in the form of full-size reconstructions of some of the interiors she designed, the show allows visitors to loll on her famous loungers and spin in her chrome-plated swivel chairs – providing brief interludes from touring the four floors of galleries filled with her dazzling prototypes, drawings and photographs. *Until 24 February*. Read the full review.

7 Tintagel Castle bridge by William Matthews & Ney + Partners

A slender carpet of slate slung across a rocky ravine, the new footbridge to Tintagel Castle in Cornwall was a magical arrival to the place of Arthurian lore this summer. Designed by William Matthews, chief architect of the Shard under Renzo Piano, and Belgian architect and engineer Laurent Ney, the bridge is an elegant essay in minimal engineering, touching the hallowed site as lightly as possible. The two cantilevered sides extend out from the opposing

cliff faces, not quite meeting in the middle, leaving a tantalising gap for visitors to cross over from the realm of reality to legend. Read the full review.

6. Weston visitor centre by Feilden Fowles

Part building, part land art, the Weston visitor centre nestles in the landscape of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park like one of the works on show. Visitors are greeted with a rugged brown concrete wall like something sliced from the earth, and led into an airy wooden world, where a cafe enjoys sweeping views out over the park. The gallery space is topped with dramatic concrete roof lights that plunge down from the ceiling, while a clever environmental approach means that temperature and humidity are regulated by a hidden labyrinth of 10,000 unfired bricks, avoiding the need for air conditioning while still allowing the gallery to display precious loans.

5. Cambridge Mosque by Marks Barfield



Cambridge Mosque. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

A forest of tree-like columns sprout from the prayer hall of the new Cambridge Mosque, branching out as they rise in clusters of sinuous tendrils that weave and intertwine to form an undulating ceiling. It is one of the most striking interior spaces completed this year, a little like standing underneath a supersized wicker chair. Designed by the architects of the London Eye architects, Marks Barfield, the building is a highly original conception of what a British mosque might look like, channelling abstract arabesque motifs without descending into pastiche. It feels light and open, with a publicly accessible garden, all designed with the ambition of social integration with the wider community.

4. McGrath Road by Peter Barber

Looking like the lovechild of a Victorian railway viaduct and a Georgian terrace, with the air of an exotic casbah thrown in for good measure, McGrath Road in Stratford, London, is one of the most inventive housing developments to be completed this year. It is the work of Peter Barber, whose work revels in reinventing traditional housing types like the terrace and back-to-back, and mixing them into a characterful new cocktail – crucially, to make truly affordable housing for local authorities. With generous arched entrances, roof terraces and a hidden inner courtyard, it has the neighbourly air of a place that's been there for years. Read the full review.

3. Windermere Jetty Museum by Carmody Groarke

One of the stealthier visitor attractions to open this year, the new Windermere Jetty Museum in the Lake District is barely visible as you approach from the lake. It stands as a cluster of dark hangars, huddled at the water's edge, with the look of a group of agricultural barns. As you get closer, its special quality becomes more apparent, the dark cladding revealed to be patinated copper, and chunks of the sheds sliced open to reveal the boat enthusiasts' mecca within. From Beatrix Potter's rowing boat, knocked together out of old floorboards, to majestic Victorian steam launches, it houses a wonder world of waterborne history, the building as finely crafted as the vessels on show.

2. MK Gallery by 6a Architects

A shiny metal monument to the maligned postwar new town, the MK Gallery in Milton Keynes is a welcome big box of culture for the land of big box retail sheds. Designed by 6a architects, the building cleverly riffs off what makes Milton Keynes so Milton Keynesian, taking the modernist language of the shopping mall and the town's quasi-mystical geometry of grids and circles, and fusing them into a witty new whole. It's worth making the trip to see the eye-popping interiors inspired by a 1970s Habitat catalogue, with stairwells painted candy pink and canary yellow, and loos in peppermint green and chocolate. Read the full review.

1. Goldsmith Street by Mikhail Riches

Winner of the RIBA Stirling Prize for the best building in the UK, the terraced homes of Goldsmith Street in Norwich have already become a beacon for the unlikely revival of council-led housing – a phenomenon that finally gained enough momentum for national recognition this year. The designs were inspired by the proportions of the nearby Golden Triangle of Victorian terraced streets, but updated to stringent low-energy Passivhaus standards, saving council tenants around 70% on their fuel bills. With generous windows and handsome curved brick corners, the terraces back on to a shared landscaped "ginnel" with communal tables and benches, giving the place a true community feel. Developed by the local authority and let on secure tenancies at fixed social rents, it shows that high quality council housing is eminently possible, given the political will