

Chancellor Dharker,

There is a kind of beauty that certain buildings have. Not the sharp glory of a skyscraper, nor the blunt power of a concrete block – things which only appeal to the eye and which come at a huge environmental cost. This other beauty appeals instead to all the senses; it is the product of collective, consultative endeavour; and it is sustainable. Fran Bradshaw, whom we honour alongside Anne Thorne today, has made many buildings with this kind of beauty. Trained at first here in Newcastle's School of Architecture, she was a member of the Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative, a designer and bricklayer within Collective Building and Design, and is now a partner at Anne Thorne Architects and a trustee of the Association for Environment Conscious Building.

In the early 1970s Fran and Anne were part of the same cohort of students at Newcastle. They became friends and allies here. For one project, they formed a group with every other woman in their year. This group then went out to listen to women living in Byker to talk about their use of the built environment. The same concern is at the heart of a book called *Making Space: Women and the Man-Made Environment*, written by Fran, Anne and other members of the Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative. The book offered a pioneering analysis of women's exclusion from the built environment and from the processes of designing and building. With the support of Newcastle's Professor of Architectural Theory and History, Katie Lloyd Thomas, *Making Space* has now been reissued so that a new generation can learn about Matrix's radical aims.

Fran summarized these aims as 'to enable women to make buildings that are like good clothes.' Buildings, in other words, that will 'do the job they are there for, be useful, comfortable, likeable, and then every now and again they should be just a little bit special.' As we move on from today's ceremony –

and its very special clothes – remember these words: are the buildings you use good like good clothes?

But remember also how Fran's summary begins, with Matrix's effort 'to enable women to make buildings', for it is in making the effort to enable people that Fran excels. Often this means finding creative ways to make sure that people are heard. In Angell Town in Lambeth, Fran (and Anne) – now working as Anne Thorne Architects – took on the retrofitting of some sixty units and the design of an entirely new block of flats. It all happened through consultation with their practice's clients. That is, with their real clients: not Lambeth Council but all the residents of the area. The finished buildings are good like good clothes, useful, special, and beautiful: recycled cellulose insulation sits inside FSC timber frame walls; rainwater flushes the toilets; photovoltaic film on the roofs generates power. And the relationship between the residents and the architects endured well after construction was completed, resulting in a post-occupancy study that helped improve the use of the buildings' features.

Elsewhere in *Making Space*, Fran analysed the triangular relationship between architect, client, and builder – a hierarchical relationship whose class dimensions can easily produce bad outcomes, especially when gender differences are added to the mix. Yet these difficulties can be surmounted. Fran did this when she trained as a bricklayer. Three other Matrix members also learnt building skills. And with such knowledge and practice (which included, in Fran's case, restoring historic brickwork at Hampton court), they could make a deeply political intervention into working dynamics. It becomes a question of bringing people together, of sharing knowledge, skills, and craft. Take the Eco Hub in Tottenham, for example. Residents here not only contributed to the design of this 300m<sup>2</sup> single-storey community centre, with its wooden beams and deck, and artfully tangled galvanised grills, they also helped build it themselves: volunteering to stack the straw bales that formed

the walls of the Hub. One volunteer told Fran that they thought this building was beautiful.

There is another straw-bale construction of Fran's in Norfolk, whose union of high-tech work (like the installation of triple-glazed windows) with the low-tech use of lime and clay and straw also produces something special and good. Visitors see a house in harmony with its garden, a musician comments on the rich acoustics, and everyone feels comfortable in rooms whose temperatures resist the variations of the weather.

That weather gets more extreme each year. As Fran's work with the Association for Environment Conscious Building recognizes, our world is changing and so must we. Buildings account for 35% of global energy consumption and improving them is an essential part of humanity's response to the climate crisis. Things like Newcastle's own Hub for Biotechnology and the Built Environment contributes to such improvement, while the University as a whole has pledged to be carbon neutral in eight years' time. We honour Fran's work today in part because it aligns with this institution's commitment to sustainability, but also because Fran's work – as an architect, a bricklayer, a trustee – merits recognition from us all for its creativity, for its consultative spirit, and for its care.

Chancellor Dharker, for her contribution to an architecture that is good like good clothes, I present to you Frances Bradshaw as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

*Citation by James Harriman-Smith, Public Orator*

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