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## A Day in the life of an Architecture Practice

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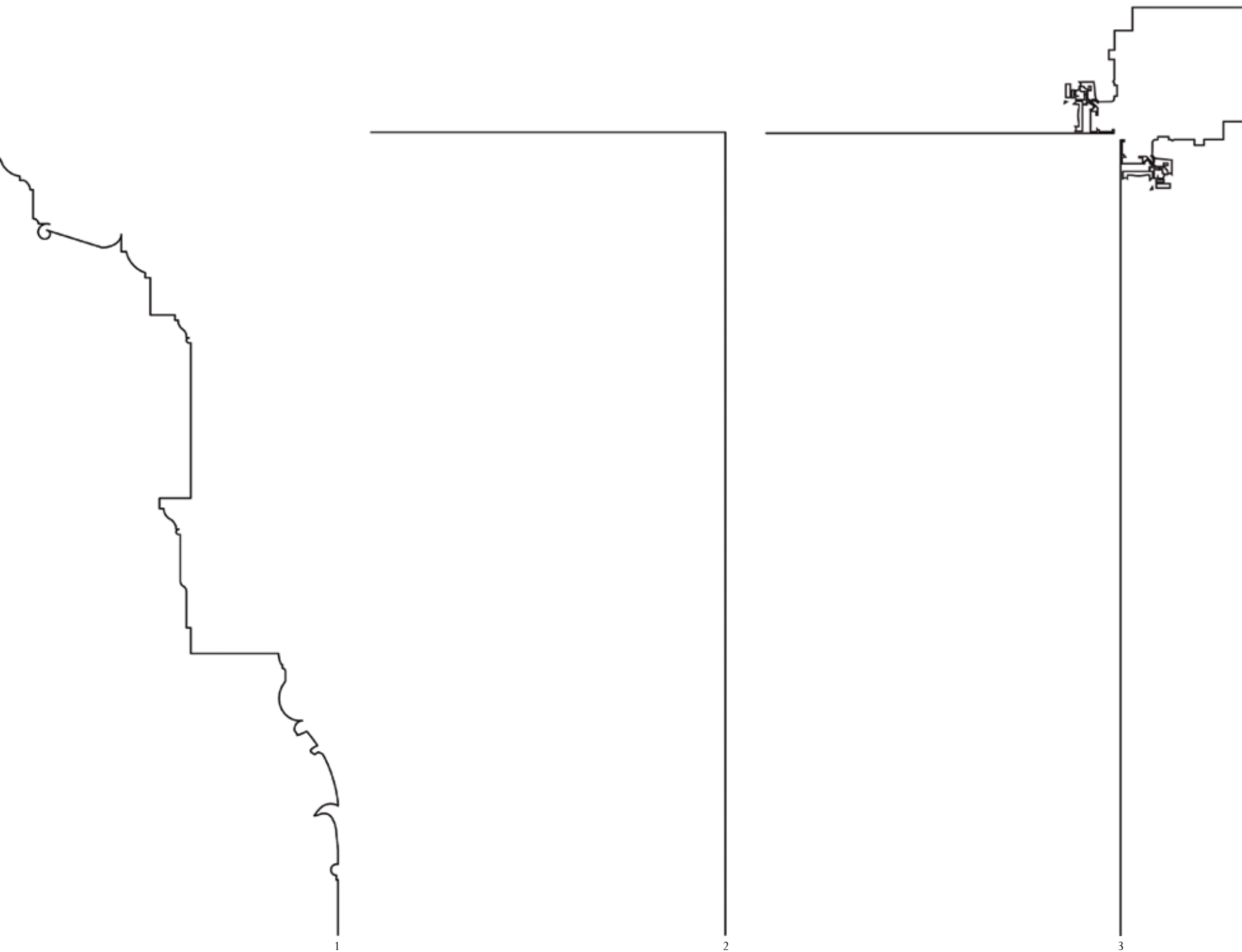
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assembled rather than crafted. However, the appearance of this logic is neither necessary nor effortless; it demands a new hierarchy of visibility to present itself. Today, man-work – the evidence of hand fixing – recedes, to allow machine-work – the factory-produced panel – to advance. Shadow-gaps and flush-fittings are enjoyable because they bury the evidence of fixing – rails, dabs, services, cisterns, etc. - allowing for a fantastic exchangeability of our products.

Architecture appears by organising labour, and is political as it is aesthetic. Architecture establishes policies that create a *distribution of the sensible*<sup>1</sup> – a system of sensible facts that disclose the existence of something in common and define the respective parts and positions within it. Architectural policies establish the terms of work employed by building, and determine the relative visibility of that work, awarding some work a public appearance, and other work obscurity. Historically, architecture has given pride of place to the finesse of decoration over the utility of building, the fantastic image of the machine-work over the evidence of the handcraft, and to the free-floating component over its deflating fixing. Architecture often makes claims concerning its transparency – about its ability to immediately make manifest work as work, without an intervening hierarchy of visibility – claiming to simply present the immanent logic of some kind of material, distribution, fabrication, assembly, maintenance or demolition. However, this appears to be precisely what it can't do; in organising construction, resolving building junctions, architecture can't help but put one kind of work before another.

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Continuum, 2004



1. convoluted junction: Internal corner profile, section, Corinthian capital, architrave, frieze and cornice.
2. direct junction: Interior corner profile, plan/section, Villa La Roche/Jeanerret.
3. involuted junction: Interior corner profile, plan/section, Velfac 200 rainscreen, interface for steel frame and aluminium cladding.

## Office Time | A Day in the life of an Architecture Practice

Foreign Office Architects & Chris Speed

On the 4th of September 2009, a Twitter account was registered by the London office of Foreign Office Architects. The login details were distributed to all staff, and everybody in the office was asked to Tweet on their activities as they changed throughout the day.

The subsequent stream of information chronologically documented the different range of tasks, jobs and processes that supported the work of the architecture practice. Detailed as though it was a monologue from one individual, the variety of activities hints at the complexity of sustaining a contemporary office.

The FOA Twitter feed is compared against the English monastic summers day that was introduced during the early to mid eleventh century (Burton 1994:160).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Burton, J. E. (1994) *Monastic and religious orders in Britain, 1000-1300*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Interior of Gilberts Architects, Edinburgh. Photo: C.Speed © 2009

		1.30 a.m.	Preparation for night office; trina oratio and gradual psalms.
		2.00 a.m.	<i>Nocturns</i> (night office) (later known as matins) including prayers for the royal family and for the dead.
		3.30/4.00 a.m.	<i>Matins</i> (lauds) at daybreak; wash and change
		5.00 a.m.	Trina oratio
			Reading
		6.00 a.m.	<i>Prime</i>
			Morrow Mass; Chapter
		7.30 a.m.	Work
		8.00 a.m.	<i>Terce</i>
			Sung Mass
		9.30 a.m.	Reading
	FOALondon: opened office	09:00	
	FOALondon: checking email correspondence	09:07	
	FOALondon: preparing a finishes list for the qs to price	09:16	
	FOALondon: doing hotel research!	09:28	
	FOALondon: having breakfast in front of the monitor	09:31	
	FOALondon: and preparing prints for meeting later	09:32	
	FOALondon: pick up milk from corner shop	09:35	
	FOALondon: ok back on finishes...	09:41	
	FOALondon: update comments on drawings	09:43	
	FOALondon: talking about water filters	09:53	
	FOALondon: Research hotels for visiting client	09:53	
	FOALondon: reading about world architecture festival	09:53	
	FOALondon: rendering the columns	09:57	
	FOALondon: learning how to use the twitter...	09:58	
	FOALondon: updating the diagrams	09:59	
	FOALondon: moveable walls	10:03	
	FOALondon: discussing the reconfiguration of an art gallery	10:03	
	FOALondon: email correspondence	10:08	
	FOALondon: discuss office cleaning	10:10	
	FOALondon: figuring out how to say something	10:21	
	FOALondon: downloading drivers for external hard drive	10:25	
	FOALondon: finishes again	10:38	
	FOALondon: correspondence to the bank	10:41	
	FOALondon: preparing for meeting	10:47	
	FOALondon: rendering floor mask for color adjustments	10:49	
	FOALondon: meeting client	10:55	
	FOALondon: telephone messages	11:32	11.30 a.m. Sext
FOALondon: countertop to be plywood and smooth finish mdf backing, high gloss smooth polyurethane epoxy floor coating system ISC Garland or eq		12:34	12.00 p.m. Dinner
FOALondon: distribute post, open post		12:47	
FOALondon: how the team will work together		12:52	
FOALondon: drawing very nice sections		13:01	c. 1.00 p.m. Siesta
FOALondon: searching through old powerpoints for sketches		13:08	
FOALondon: organise correspondence in project folder		13:08	
FOALondon: photoshopping		13:19	
FOALondon: having lunch		13:41	
FOALondon: fee discussions		13:43	
FOALondon: lunch time		13:46	
FOALondon: back from meeting on site		13:50	
FOALondon: rendering....		14:12	
FOALondon: telephone messages		14:36	2.30 p.m. None
FOALondon: back to the section after the lunch break...		14:54	Drink
FOALondon: stationary orders		15:25	3.00 p.m. Work
FOALondon: receiving journalists for interview, tea		15:38	
FOALondon: drawing		15:54	
FOALondon: reading architecture blogs		16:00	
FOALondon: email correspondence: invitations, spam, product info, student inquiries, applications, cv's, newsletters, sales, press		16:31	
FOALondon: adjusting the image in photoshop		16:35	
FOALondon: oh yes revolving doors!		16:36	
FOALondon: now some correspondence		16:36	
FOALondon: ok done with finishes finally and back from lunch		16:36	
FOALondon: intumescent paint count!		16:37	
FOALondon: preparing for the discussion		16:37	
FOALondon: waiting for the other rendering to be finished		16:38	
FOALondon: beam take-off's		17:25	
FOALondon: correspondence to AOR and engineer- lets get that work done! coordination time		17:26	
FOALondon: coordinating movable walls with the structure		17:32	5.30 p.m. Supper
FOALondon: another e-mail to the engineer		17:32	
FOALondon: up dating the drawing in panels		17:32	
FOALondon: checking out birmingham from the top on google earth		17:33	
FOALondon: off to the corner shop for sweets		17:37	
FOALondon: redrawing prototype for manufacture in a 2 part cast		17:39	
FOALondon: being relaxed after discussion for a sec		17:44	
FOALondon: thinking about projects with interesting top light, let me know if you know any..		18:01	6.00 p.m. Vespers
FOALondon: 3metres drawn, one to go		18:01	
FOALondon: up dating the presentation		18:23	
FOALondon: correspondence about travel arrangements for a conference		18:42	
FOALondon: signing off and writing personal e-mails...		19:23	
FOALondon: correspondence with intumescent paint sales people		19:23	7.30 p.m. Change into night shoes
FOALondon: prints for discussion on Monday morning and off..		20:00	Collatio
			8.00 p.m. Compline
			c.8.15 p.m. Bed