# (Ir)responsible architecture: Social responsibility vs art

**Top speaker line up debate the ethics of architectural education at the Oxford Conference**

Of all the professions, architects have perhaps the most important of all impacts on the way we live and the buildings and cities we occupy. Architects create the skylines of our cities, the faces of our streets, the organisation of our communities and yet they are rarely questioned in any depth about the way in which they shape our world and our lives. We allow them to build their skyscrapers, place new developments on flood plains, give us glass boxes for offices and place us in homes that are unnecessarily expensive to heat. Should it be like this? **Are the priorities of the architectural profession ones we can share in – those of sustainability, affordability, reducing energy consumption and climate change protection?** What are the most important skills that young architects should be taught – social responsibility or art?

In 1958, the original Oxford Conference, chaired by Sir Leslie Martin, set an agenda for teaching in Schools of Architecture that has prevailed for the last half century. At the turn of the new century, a time of unprecedented changes in our societies, economies and environment, and 50 years on from the first meeting, The Oxford Conference 2008 (July 22-23, 2008) will bring together teachers, students and architects from 42 countries to rethink that agenda for teaching in Schools of Architecture and to increase its relevance to the changing circumstances around us.

The 2008 Oxford Conference will raise many of the hard questions with regard to the teaching of young architects that have been avoided for perhaps too long and will include think-pieces from the great and the small of the profession on issues, methods, courses, tools and case studies of best practice.

But most of all the meeting will address the unasked question on whether 'Architecture would be better off without Schools of Architecture' (Oxford Union Debate, 21July 2008, 8pm) and what fundamental ethical stands architects should take in our rapidly changing world.

Speaking for the motion are the neo-classical architect **Robert Adam** and author and thinker **Peter Buchanan** and against the motion **Prof Sir Peter Cook,** founder member of ARCHIGRAM and head of the Bartlett School of Architecture and **Prof Jeremy Till,** Head of the School of Architecture at Westminster and of SCHOSA. You are invited to partake in what promises to be a lively and entertaining evening of debate.

## Notes for Editors:

The Oxford Conference 2008 will take place 22-23 July 2008 at the University of Oxford Examination Schools. The 11 conference forums cover the following topics: Buildings and the Environment; Sustaining Studio Education in a Climate of Change; Human Habitat and Social Responsibility; Refurbishment and Evidence Based Education; Research into Teaching Courses; Urban Design and Sustainable Cities; Schools and Professional Views; Materials and Renewable Energy; Virtual Building and Generative Design; Design Research Courses and Curricula.

The pre-conference Public Debate will take place 21 July 2008 20.00-22.00 at the Oxford Union, Oxford. Entry £5 payable on the door.

Full programme information is available via the conference website at www.oxfordconference2008.co.uk together with a report on the 1958 RIBA conference on architectural education.

Press passes are available for the conference. For details please contact Karen Purvis karen@bluezulumarketing.co.uk

### Diary Information
Please add to your calendar and diary sections.

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| **Conference title:** | Oxford Conference 2008<br>50 Years On: Resetting the Agenda for Architectural Education |
| **Dates:** | 22-23 July 2008 |
| **Location:** | Examination Schools, Oxford, UK |
| **Website:** | www.oxfordconference2008.co.uk |
| **Contact:** | Gill Heaton<br>Conference Secretariat: The Oxford Conference 2008<br>Tel: +44 (0) 1865 373 625<br>Fax: +44 (0) 1865 375 855<br>Email: gill@oxfordconference2008.co.uk<br><br>The Oxford Conference 2008<br>Hillside Cottages, Wheatley Road, Islip, Oxford OX5 2TF, UK. |