



"Long Life, Low Energy: Designing for a Circular Economy," RIBA, 2022-2023 © vvb.



Cradle to Cradle

Long Life, Low Energy: Designing for a Circular Economy explores the impact of a looped system of architectural design. Curated by Pete Collard at the RIBA's small gallery the show has been divided into three sections: "demolition," "retrofit" and "circular economy" in a clear and approachable manner.

The exhibition strikes a nice balance between famous examples and approaches, such as Park Hill or the recently refurbished Battersea Power Station, and small-scale examples, such as Alma-nac's House-within-a-House or 16 Chart Street by Ian Chalk Architects, highlighting the all-round importance of sustainable architecture. It also presents us with new materials and technologies for a circular future in areas such as salvage, material passports, plant-based construction and more. Through six case studies we get to understand these new approaches toward a desired net zero architecture, giving us a promising glimpse into a future in which buildings no longer follow a linear lifespan.

The exhibition design by U-Build supports and enhances the visitors' experiences. The plywood display structure presents an opportunity to get up close with a building system (developed by Studio Bark) that creates an effective second skin to the original exhibition space, further helping with the clarity in presentation of a complicated matter. This structure can easily be disassembled and returned to the supply chain and the exhibition frames, repurposed from previous RIBA exhibitions, follow a similar approach. This all helps to lessen the impact of temporary exhibitions such as this one. However, we only get to hear about this near the end of the exhibition in the section "designing for a circular exhibition."

It is in this final section that we are also briefly informed about the RIBA Youth Forum who assisted with the exhibition install. Since this forum is set up to help young people with the skills, knowledge and resources to start a career in architecture it would have been good to hear more it within the context of learning and teaching eco-conscious design. Let's hope we can admire their work and these same display structures in many future RIBA exhibitions.

vvb.

Review

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Royal Institute of British Architects,
Architecture Gallery, London

United Kingdom

11/08/2022-04/29/2023

curated by Pete Collard