



Catherine Burd 'Optimism and opera'

What got you started?

When I was very little I used to make elaborately planned houses for my toy felt mice to live in.

Who were your most inspiring tutors?

Kevin Rhowbotham and David Greene. The realisation that architecture could be about jam-making and picnics changed my life.

Which architect have you learnt the most from?

My dad, who I still turn to for words of wisdom.

Which living architect do you most admire?

Bearth & Deplazes.

What is your best project?

The scheme we're working on for the National Trust at Mottisfont in Hampshire. I'm also very attached to our Forge in Camden because it's on the site of Café Delancey where I waitressed as a teenager.

What is your Achilles' heel?

Still getting excited about doing very tiny (unprofitable) projects. Which house would you most like to live in?

The one Buddy and I will build one day in the Stockholm archipelago or a huge period house in Primrose Hill with high ceilings and a big garden.

What is your favourite city?

London (north, sorry).

You can work in whichever city you want at any point in history – where and when would you choose?

Paris in the late 1980s, where I spent my year-out, was pretty good (early Tschumi, Nouvel and Perrault projects on site: optimism, opportunities, long café lunches... brilliant).

What is your most important working relationship?

My partnership with Buddy Haward.



Stokholm's archipelago, Forge in Camden, and Bearth & Deplazes's school extension in Vella, Switzerland.

What would be your dream commission?

A large public concert hall with an urban context — a brief a bit like the RFH — would be great.

What are you listening to?

Martha Wainwright to do VAT returns, Wild Beasts, James Taylor and Joni.

Complete the sentence: At heart I am a frustrated:

Diplomat/opera singer.

What does your family think of your work?

Mum and Dad love the extension we did for them a few years ago, although they keep ringing me up about problems with the damp-proofing.

Catherine Burd is co-founder of Burd Haward Architects.