

Karl Singporewala: Architect

"It's what I want to do with my life – I absolutely love it." Karl Singporewala, 24, has an enthusiasm for architecture that is infectious. Other professions may allow for successful projects to be realised in hours, days or months, but for architecture – where buildings are the final product – the increment of choice is years, and it sure helps if you're keen.

Karl's passion has begun to pay off. This 24-year-old from Crawley, West Sussex, has barely begun his career – the earliest he will qualify as an architect is two years from now – yet he has already won a string of awards from, among others, the Nagoya University of Arts in Japan, the University of Brighton and steel manufacturer Corus, as well as having his drawings shown at Euston Station and The Royal Academy.

The project which marked out Karl from his shortlisted competitors for a 4Talent Award was his team's (which included Jonathan Talley and Louise Knights) work on a proposed series of flood defences for the River Thames. In the proposal, eight crystalline structures are spread across the width of the river, 500m downstream from the Thames Barrier. These piers act to dissipate the force of tidal flow hitting the barrier, thus extending its workable lifetime. Currently the Thames Barrier is predicted to cease being a useful guard against flooding in Central London by 2030.

The project drew upon diverse sources of research: from archive engravings of Old London Bridge to lab-based physical modelling which explored the dynamics of waterflows. This study suggested that the piers should feed energy derived from slowing tidal surges back into the grid: "There's a compelling irony that the consequences of global warming can be used to power large areas of London."

Against the background of the floods of this July, the Olympic development in the Lee Valley, and large-scale

housing projects mooted for the Thames Gateway, Karl's speculative project is timely. Rather than delivering a fully-realised solution, the team has laid down a challenge and some intriguing prepositions.

Its proposals have some of the flights of fancy that student projects allow, but with a depth of research and resolution not immediately apparent in the presentation drawings. The drawing process used a combination of old rendering programs to inject an element of visual 'noise' into the images, lending the complex forms a welcome feel of roughness.

After finishing his postgraduate diploma course at Brighton, Karl landed a job at Ian Ritchie Architects, well-known for its Dublin Spire and RSC Courtyard Theatre. It's here that Karl will complete the final part of his formal architectural training.

And the work? Despite being full of enthusiasm, Karl somehow remains tightlipped, explaining that discussing what he is working on would contravene the confidentiality agreement he signed upon taking the job. But with Ian Ritchie's reputation for large transport and infrastructure jobs, not to mention clients such as EDF, London Underground and Crossrail, it's likely that Karl will cut his teeth on projects which share the themes tapped in his student work. Let's hope he retains his passion and rigour when – eventually – he gets down to the serious business of making buildings.

Judge: James Pallister, *The Architects' Journal*

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