

**Allford  
Hall  
Monaghan  
Morris**  
**The Founders'  
Statement**



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Peter Morris



**This statement, by Simon Allford, Jonathan Hall, Paul Monaghan and Peter Morris, published at the start of our thirtieth year in partnership, describes the aims, values and ambitions which underpinned the practice at the point of its foundation and which have evolved within the practice over its first three decades of operation. With the transfer of the majority shareholding to an Employee Ownership Trust, these must continue to be essential guiding principles.**

**The statement is set out in three parts:**

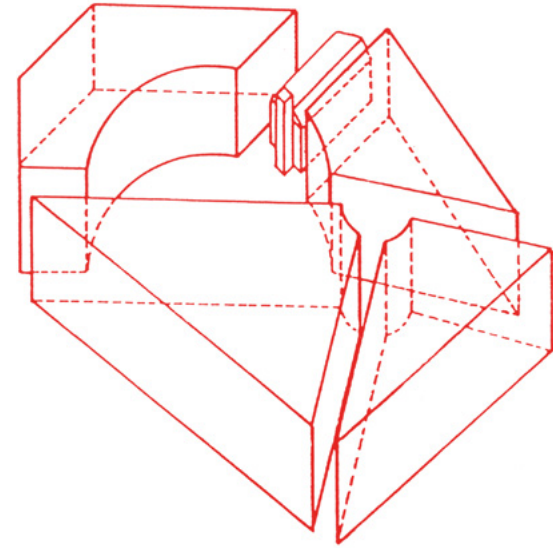
- 1 Architecture**
- 2 Alliance**
- 3 Ambition**

**The statement is embedded within the Trust Deed, and it is against its precepts that the Executive Board of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris Ltd – now and in the future – will hold itself to account, and be held to account by the AHMM Employee Ownership Trustee on behalf of the beneficiaries of the Trust, the employees of the practice.**

**December 2018**

# 1 Architecture

## What brought us together



**The Fifth Man project is predicated on twin beliefs.**

**First, it is in the field of everyday building rather than public building that modern architecture has failed the city.**

**Second, that functional programme alone is not sufficient to generate an architecture.**

**The Fifth Man  
Bartlett School of Architecture, 1986**

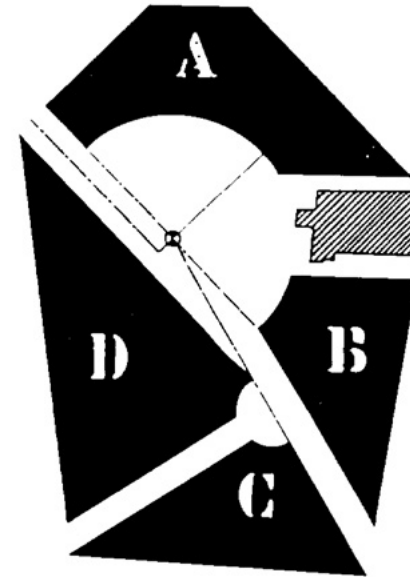
This is an extract from the introduction to the Fifth Man, the diploma project which we co-authored in our final year at the Bartlett School of Architecture.

From our earliest collaboration at university to now, more than thirty years later, our alliance has been based on a firm commitment to the design of buildings of economy, elegance and delight: buildings that reflect a continuing belief in the ability of outstanding architecture to last through time; buildings whose success is defined not just by the use for which they were commissioned, but by their ability to adapt to different uses; buildings that aim to make a positive and lasting contribution to the city around them; buildings that form the backdrop to the city and the theatre of everyday life, but that can be, in themselves, extraordinary.

The principal focus of the practice, therefore, has been the design of everyday buildings in the city. It is our belief that such buildings can, through intelligent design and a professional methodology, be made extraordinary. If our will to see them realised means embracing challenging new forms of procurement, then we have chosen to do so.

## 2 Alliance

How we work





**No rules or theories of architecture were established. The site plan, the individual buildings and the collective character they created were developed through the technique of collaging drawings together at regular intervals and criticising each stage as we confronted it.**

The Fifth Man  
Bartlett School of Architecture 1986

This further extract from the introduction to the Fifth Man describes a method of working that allowed the individual to pursue particular architectural concerns within a developing collective scenario. The method was explicit, because at each stage decisions taken were mapped out, continually reinforcing the rationale for the project while developing the critical framework upon which it operated.

**If it's not drawn it can't be discussed...**

Young Lions Lecture Series  
Royal Institute of British Architects, 1996

This phrase summarises in pithy fashion what The Fifth Man had taught us ten years earlier: that our working culture relies on individual commitment to an idea, expressed not simply through the spoken word, which is too open to interpretation, but demonstrated in tangible form through drawings, models, text or even numbers, so that it can be assessed, compared and evaluated by the wider group.

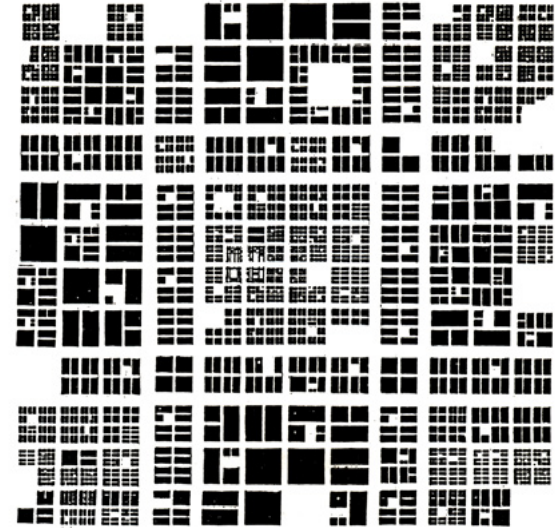
The culture of the practice is founded on strong leadership coupled with an explicit collaborative working method. This depends on first, each person taking on individual areas of responsibility in pursuit of a collective endeavour; second, on the mutual respect and interdependence which this implies; and third on the understanding that the best ideas will be pursued based on their merits, not on their authorship.

Successful collaboration requires leadership within the collective to drive that collaboration to a conclusion – in other words to make something happen, and to ensure that that something is of outstanding quality. The importance of effective leadership is as true for the project architect within the context of each architectural project as it is for the studio director in the context of an entire studio of projects. Indeed, this principle of effective leadership applies to all aspects of the practice, including those projects which are not directly architectural, but which exist to support the business of architecture.

Collaboration also relies on the commitment, professionalism and creative intelligence of the wider group within each project, architectural or otherwise, and on their readiness to take ownership of an individual area of responsibility, making it as good as it can be, and thus contributing directly to a positive process which is inherent to achieving a successful outcome.

### 3 Ambition

## What we believe





**“We make money to make  
architecture, not architecture  
to make money”**

In his theory of obliquity, the economist John Kay suggests that goals are often more likely to be achieved when pursued indirectly. Put another way, the richest men and women are not the most materialistic; the happiest people are not necessarily those who focus on happiness; and the most profitable companies are not always the most profit-oriented.

It has always been our view that, by focusing our energies on the quality of our work and by valuing this above all else, we put ourselves in the best position to be a profitable business. Being a business with financial resilience enables us to make intelligent decisions about which commissions to take on and which to avoid, thus supporting our architectural ambition through the creation of a virtuous circle.

Architectural ambition is the practice's driving force; collaboration provides the means to achieve it; and strong, strategic leadership steers that ambition in a clear direction, in respect of both the design of our projects and the running of the business itself.

**More than thirty years of collaboration has reinforced our belief, as founders of a business, in:**

**the need to invest in and to nurture the diverse talent across all areas of the practice, coupled with appropriate delegation, as a means of sustaining our ambition**

**engaging with and contributing to the wider profession by openly sharing the knowledge and experience we have gained and the lessons we have learned**

**engaging with and contributing to the wider world by sharing our skills and donating our resources in those areas where we believe they will have most impact**

**safe-guarding the short- and long-term needs of our clients and the people who will inhabit the places we design**

**the value of long-term relationships, internal and external, built on honesty, professionalism and fairness in our dealings**

**having a broad plan in place, but one which can flex in response to both challenges and opportunities when they present themselves, and which offers the space to pursue ideas**

**placing importance not only on the quality of the practice's work but on the practice itself**

**the idea that our ambition to make exemplary architecture is underpinned by being a professionally run and prosperous business**

**The same period has similarly reinforced our belief, as architects, that:**

**our work should be driven by a strategic approach to design which recognises that changes in circumstance and context, both during the design and during the life of the building, are inevitable**

**our work should address and enhance its relationship with both the public it serves and the public spaces that surround it, not least by bringing visual delight**

**our work should do more with less; set the best standards of design, regardless of cost or programme; and be open-minded, generous of spirit and ever optimistic**

**we should always aim to build our work – and never build the work of others**

**our focus is architecture – and the endless testing of the boundaries of its application**



**Group portraits by Mel Yates:  
Primrose Hill, London, 1989  
Old Street, London, 2019**

**Drawings from The Fifth Man, 1989**

**Designed by BOB Design**

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