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1 Diébédo Francis Kéré's installation at the Royal Academy's Sensing Spaces exhibition, reviewed in this issue by Jessica Reynolds (Image: Royal Academy / James Harris)

New insights

With the move of **arq**'s editorial home to Newcastle, *Reviews and Insight* (*R&I*) are undergoing some structural modifications. Each issue's *R&I* will have a theme, of current relevance to both practice and academia. And with this thematic direction, we are also introducing the *Letter From…* : each quarter, an invited guest will be asked to correspond with the journal on the issue's theme in relation to their country of work, residence or origin.

18.1 sees the launch of this restructured *R&I*, with the theme of the political. The state of housing in London is discussed through an interview with Claire Bennie, Development Director of Peabody Housing, through the context of Peabody's Small Projects Panel competition in December 2013. Our *Letter From…* comes from Berlin, from Cordelia Polinna, architect, urbanist and teacher. The changing landscape of housing in 'the Hauptstadt' forms the basis of this first letter from the field. And **arq**'s Jessica Reynolds reviews the political, or rather its absence, in London's Royal Academy blockbuster architecture exhibition, *Sensing Spaces*.

It is an honour to be taking over the helm of *Reviews and Insight* from Charles Rattray, who has established this section's place firmly in the journal's pages since Volume 6. We are immensely grateful to Charles and can only hope we continue *R&I*'s tradition, in a developing form, into the future.

R&I theme 18.1 & 18.2

Portraying the political

With the United Kingdom's government-commissioned Farrell Review of Architecture having just hit digital doormats in March 2014 (slightly too late for a comprehensive review in **18.1**, but earmarked for review in the next issue of **arq**); housing across the UK and Europe are very much on the public agenda; and with a somewhat lacklustre emergence from recession for parts of

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Europe, the political is foregrounded in contemporary conversations. But what of architects' and curators' responses to these questions, and what role does the architect have in rethinking housing in response to market change?

Peabody: creating a Small Projects Panel

London's Peabody housing group remains one of the British capital's most forward-thinking registered social landlords. With a commitment to developing housing of both social and architectural quality, Development Director Claire Bennie has been instrumental in delivering significant developments to the Peabody portfolio. November 2013 saw the launch of Peabody's Small Projects Panel competition, to find teams to design housing schemes of twenty or fewer homes. Launched as a platform to enable emerging practices to have the opportunity to work with Peabody outside the onerous strictures of lengthy bidding and procurement processes, the competition had over 300 entries submitted. Six practices were shortlisted in early 2014, among them Pitman Tozer, a west-London based practice with a growing interest in high-quality housing, both private and social. Pitman Tozer has worked with Peabody before, on east London's Mint Street housing scheme, a '21st-century reinterpretation of the traditional mansion block' on a tight and noisy site.

In a period of massive market pressures on London's existing housing stock, and a growing shortage of quality, affordable accommodation in the UK's capital, Peabody's role as a sustainable provider of affordable and market housing offers an important model for development.

Claire Bennie, interviewed by Edward Wainwright, explains the importance of giving small practices the opportunity to showcase their work and also displays the role Peabody has in shaping the housing landscape of London. This first of a two-part insight into affordable housing and its design and procurement, is published here in **18.1**. The next issue of the journal, **18.2**, sees Pitman Tozer's work on affordable housing in the context of working with Peabody discussed in an interview with the practice partners, Tim Pitman and Luke Tozer.

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