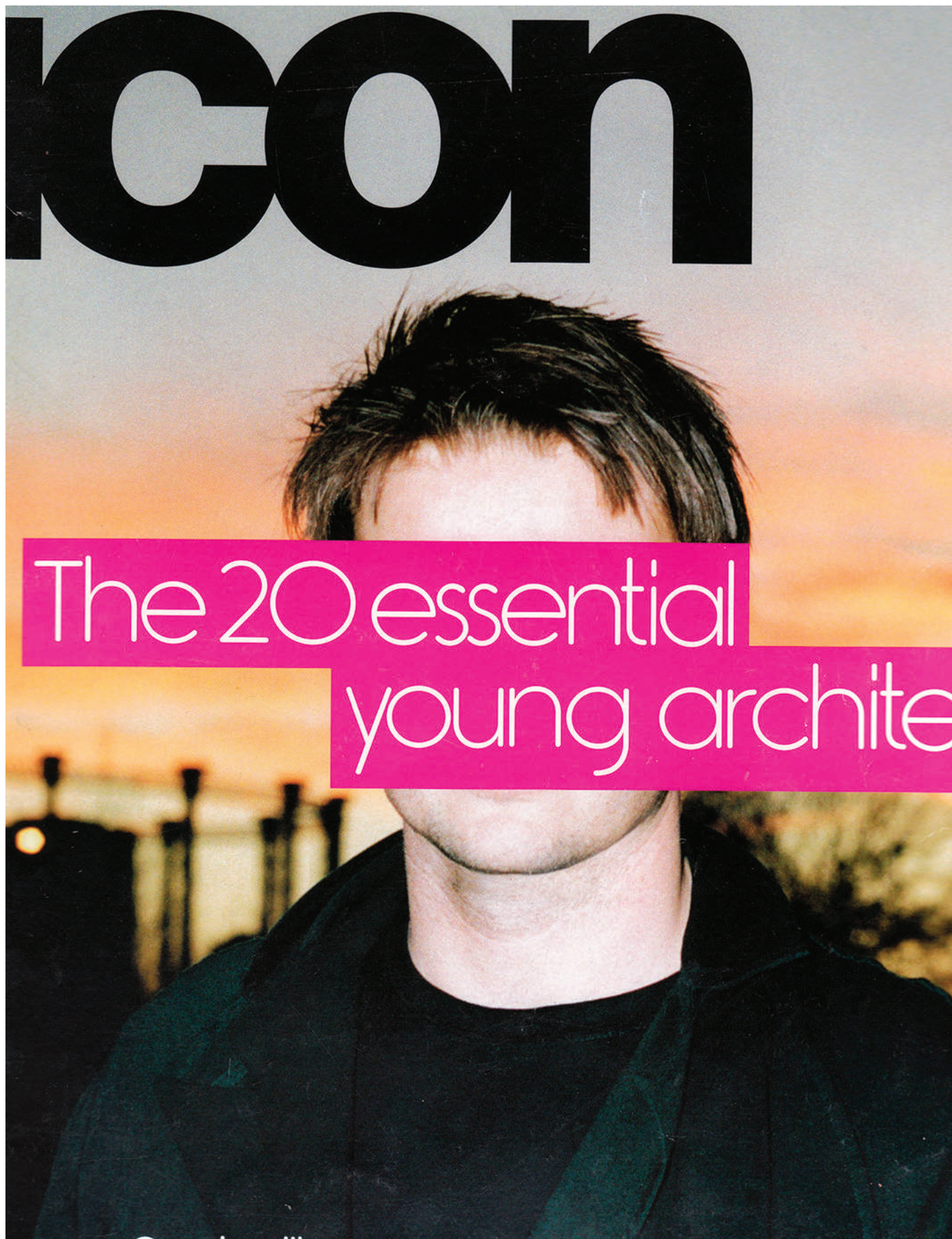
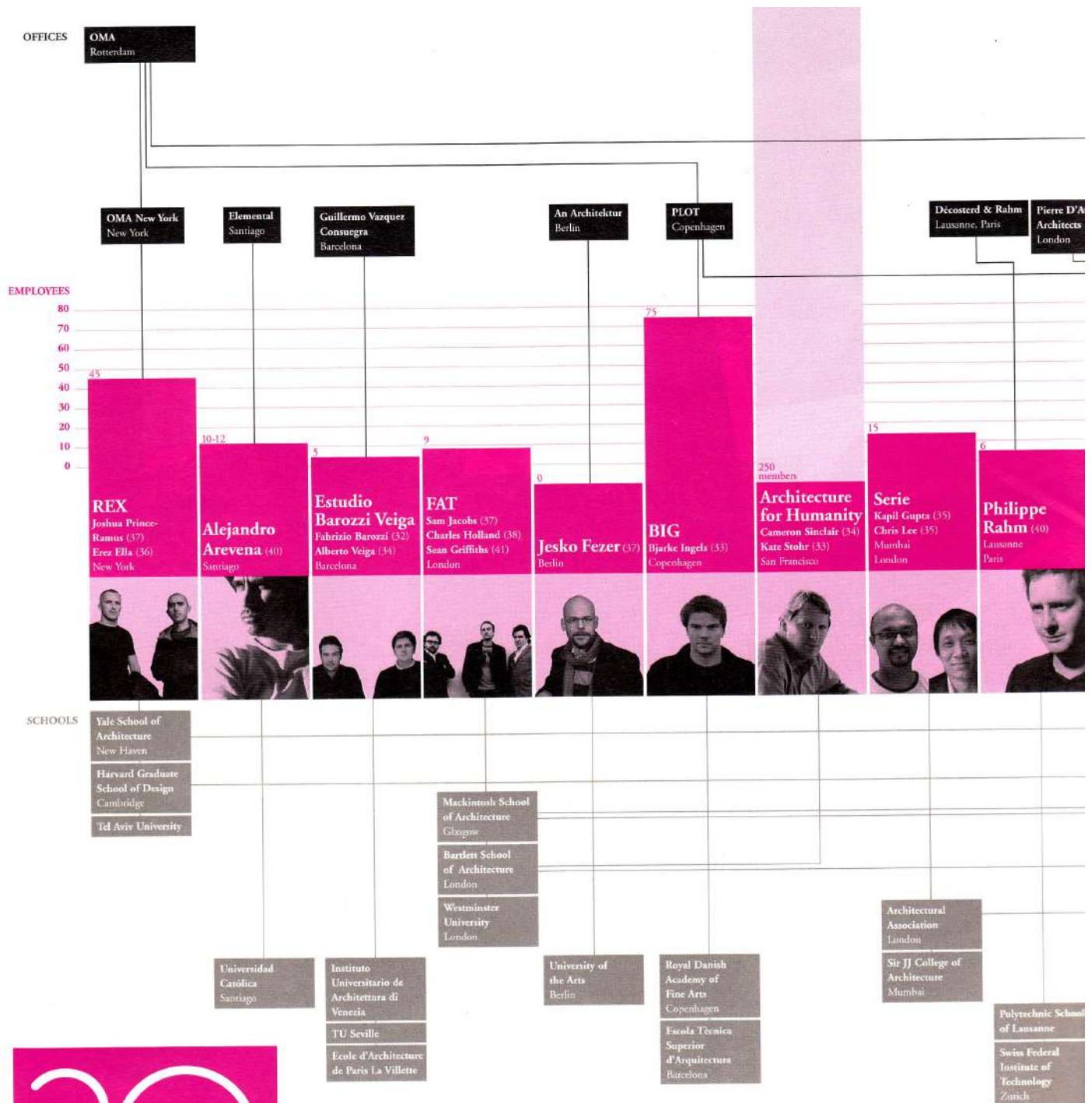


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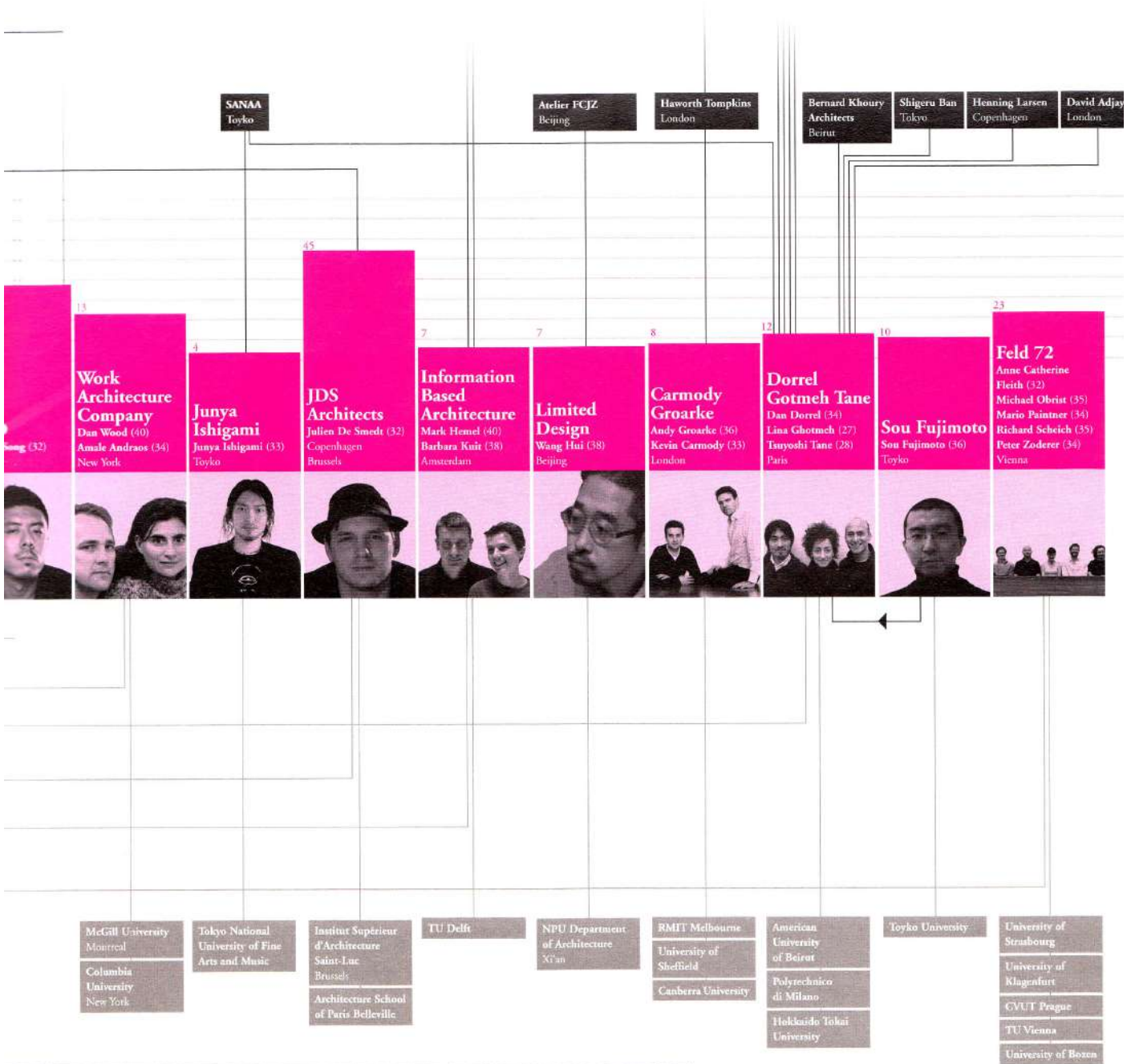
The 20 essential
young architects





20 young architects

Is it just us or is the young architect a very different beast these days? For the first time, “young” actually means young, but “architect” may no longer mean architect. This is our list of the most significant rising practices. Like all list stories, you’ll disagree with some of it, but that’s half the fun.



First thing to mention is that the “young architect” is definitely younger than he or she used to be. We borrowed the convention of age 40 as our cut-off point, but at least half of the people on this list are 35 or younger – and one of them is a 33-year-old architect running a practice with 75 staff. Have we moved from the architect of promise to the architect with power? Secondly, the school of thought that says architects need to build things to make their practice felt is losing currency. There are a few on this list who reflect that – these are strategists and networkers who challenge convention and foment debate. Interestingly, of those who do build, by far the most successful in business terms are the

practices who were nurtured by Rem Koolhaas at OMA. Theirs is a world of seismic competition, wins and huge staff counts. But where’s all the rebellion? There’s little sense here of a generation reacting against the ideology of its elders – perhaps that’s simply because we live in apolitical times. In fact, there are few signs of a coherent generation at all, although there are definite camps: the Children of Rem, the quiet but extremely sophisticated disciples of Zumthor and SANAA, the tower builders and the open-network activists. This is a global list in more ways than one. You’ll find three Americans, two Japanese, two Chinese, a Chilean, an Indian and a bunch of Europeans. But increasingly these practices are international anyway, undermining notions of

national architecture – more important a crucible these days are the practices they meet at. Having said that, you’d think a British magazine might put more British architects on the list. But then, the key thing that is giving all these youngsters their big break is the culture of open architecture competitions – and that’s something this country desperately needs.

Sou Fujimoto

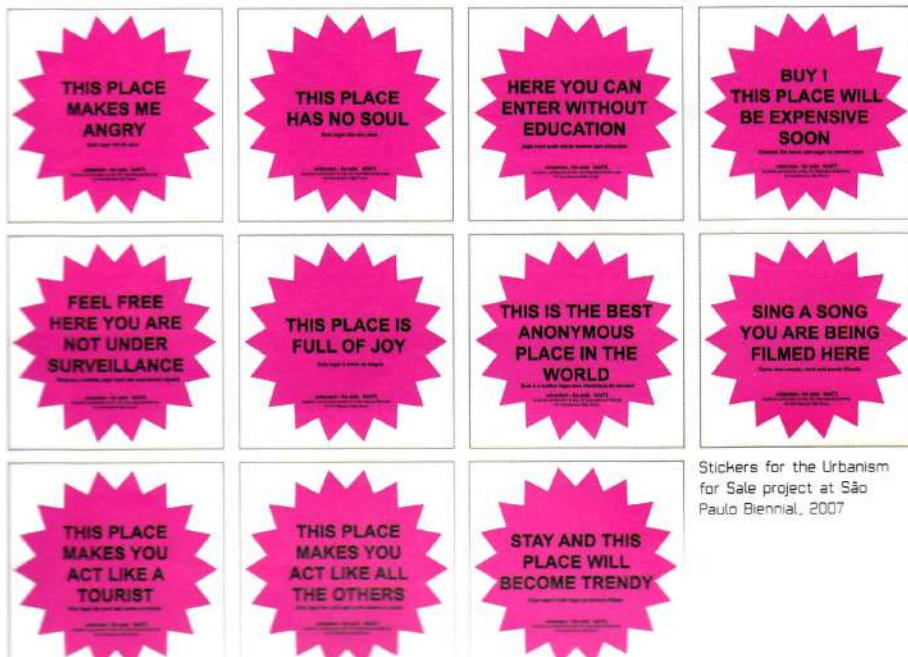
A portrait of Einstein looks out over Sou Fujimoto's studio. The great physicist serves as a daily inspiration for the theoretical ambitions and scientific approach of this young architect's work – an attempt to build a theory of relativity in architectural terms.

A graduate of Tokyo University, Fujimoto set up shop straight out of school. Avoiding the traditional bleeding of young talent at the hands of an established master, his work is marked by a rare independence in a world where patronage and lineage remain powerful assets. He is best known for a series of five interventions developed over as many years for a welfare facility in his native Hokkaido. Like a series of finely tuned experiments, this project formed the test-bed for Fujimoto's functional and formal explorations of the relations

between repeated architectural units. "This method of making, in which elements respond mutually to each other, but without reference to a larger organisational pattern, results in a 'soft order' that is very interesting," says Fujimoto. "It enables useful ambiguities within which individuals can adjust their relation to the collective."

Upcoming projects include an apartment in Tokyo that looks like it's formed from a stack of plastic Monopoly houses, and a library at an art university in Tokyo's suburbs. **JW**

Treatment Centre for Children, Hokkaido, Japan, 2006



Stickers for the Urbanism for Sale project at São Paulo Biennial, 2007



ONE TO WATCH

Dorell Ghotmeh Tane

It's hard to get more international than exquisitely talented trio Dorell Ghotmeh Tane. The three friends from Italy, Lebanon and Japan were working for Jean Nouvel and David Adjaye when they won an open competition for the Estonian Museum in January 2006 (pictured above). The design is a long, low structure clad in roughly etched glass, a camouflaged reference to the site's former use as a military airfield.

"We thought it can be beautiful inside, but outside it needs to communicate something about the country's continued occupation," says Lina Ghotmeh. DTG has since added a masterplan and hotel to

the site of the museum, and back in Paris the studio has been experimenting with projects designing fashion runways and stage sets for contemporary dance.

For such a young practice – barely two years old – its designs show real strength and the high standards of context and precision rise above even the trio's previous offices. "I think it's because we're from three different countries," says Ghotmeh. "There is perhaps a more political side from Dan (Dorell) because he lived in Beirut – a complexity to the way he sees spaces. Tsuyoshi (Tane) is from Japan and from him there is a certain purity, perhaps even idealism." **BG**

Feld72

There is an abundance of laterally minded architecture practices working all over Europe, putting subversive urban acupuncture into action across our cities. Of those, Feld72 has made it onto this list for its particular wit and charm and because it is one of the most accessible in terms of public engagement.

At last year's São Paulo Biennial, the studio took its cue from the city that is famous for its absence of billboard advertising and put T-shirts branded with its messages onto 70 mannequins. Its investigations into public and private space also led it to engage with drivers in traffic jams. "We saw that there were all these people, very close, and they can't connect with each other," says Feld72's Richard Scheich. The solution was to provide a kit with a pen and pencil so drivers could pass their mobile numbers to each other along with a pack including, among other things, a plastic flower, a condom and a water pistol.

In Vienna the practice has been trying to open up its expertise to the general public with YouTube shows and public consultations. Feld72's work is compelling not just because it shuns typical approaches, but for finding strategies that don't just involve building. But, as shown by its Wine Centre in Caldaro – the practice's first building project – it is clearly