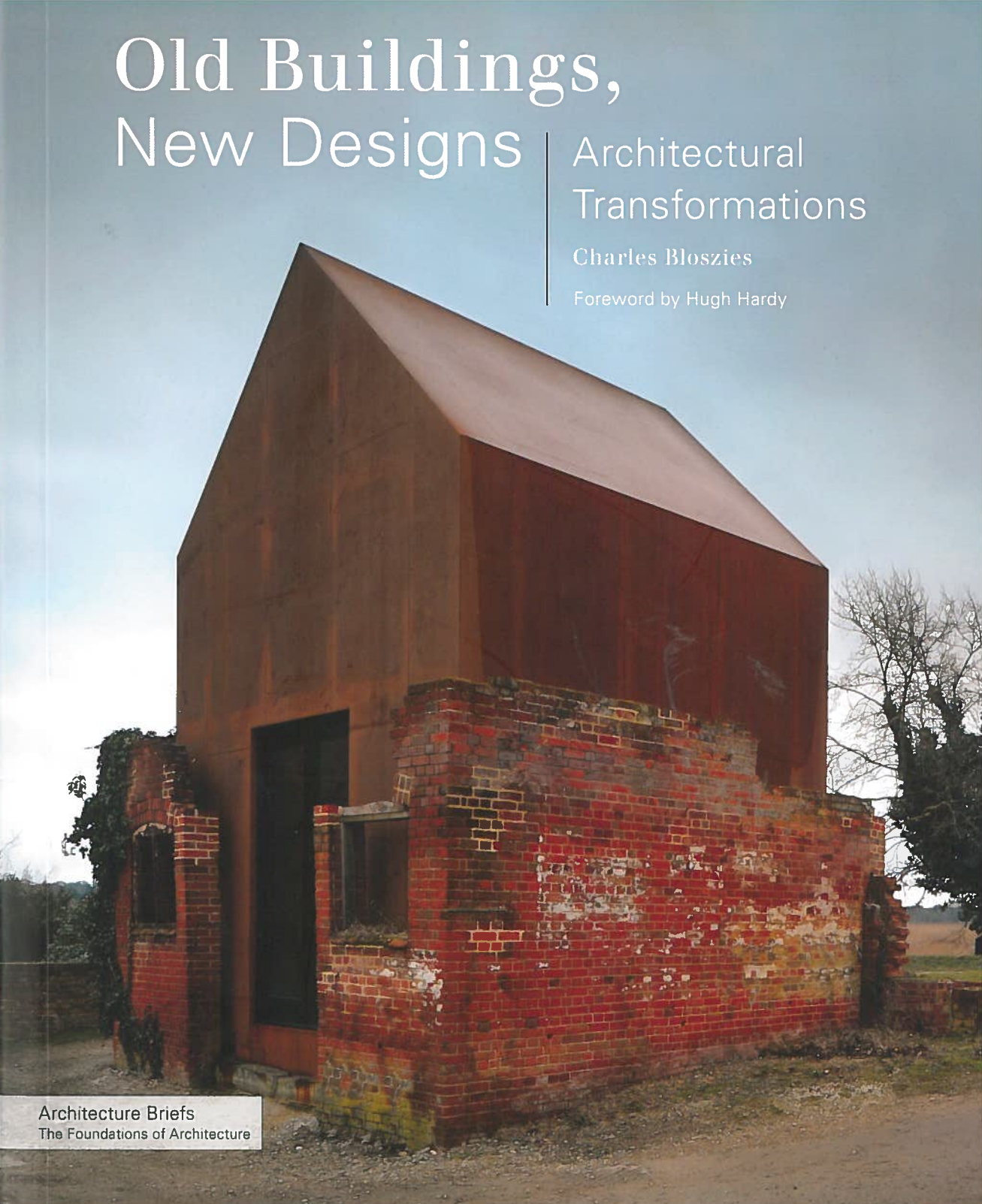


Old Buildings, New Designs

Architectural
Transformations

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Foreword by Hugh Hardy



Architecture Briefs
The Foundations of Architecture

Ozuluama Penthouse

Architects Collective in collaboration with at. 103

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Referential contrast

Aerial photography provided by i-cubed (www.i3.com) and Aerial's Express



Elevation drawing

Courtesy of Architects Collective

The Hipódromo Condesa neighborhood is a formerly aristocratic enclave in the heart of Mexico City. Much of the district's architecture dates from the 1940s, tracing its roots to European modernism. The Ozuluama residence was built by an engineer in 1945 and was converted to an "artist-run space" in the 1990s, becoming a catalyst for the rebirth of culture in the district.¹

Kurt Sattler of the Architects Collective stayed in the servant's quarters, a shack built on top of the building, during an Austro-Mexican exchange developed under the auspices of the Austrian Cultural Ministry. A decade later, he provided the design to replace the dilapidated penthouse. The new addition, in the words of his firm, "was designed to reflect the movements of its transient inhabitants in an origamilike morphology."²

The origami structure is created by folded plates that become both walls and roof. In the penthouse, these faceted shapes make reference to the seamless cement plaster forms of the original building below it. The uniform color of the addition recalls the monochromatic appearance of the modernist building, further reinforcing the referential relationship between new and old.

The Ozuluama penthouse is clearly modern in its use of material, its form, and its spatial definition, yet it fits agreeably on top of a distinctly different base. Rooftop architecture usually consists of a jumble of forms created for various functional reasons; when viewed from a distance, these structures tend to blend into the urban fabric. The penthouse is unique—it is a well-conceived addition, comfortably fused onto a building that connects with its ground-level surroundings, but one that distinctively stands out when viewed from afar as the nomadic form the architects intended it to be.



The penthouse appears like a nomadic structure sitting above the diverse topography of the city.

Courtesy of Architects Collective



The origamilike form, constructed of Corian, stands in contrast to the surrounding urban landscape.

Courtesy of Architects Collective