

no2self

no, 2 self

the journal of an architect

<http://rob.annable.co.uk>

smashing

It beat me.



Back in 2002 I spent what felt like half my life experimenting with the modelling tools used to create [Half Life](#). My goal being to create a virtual model of my building that the viewer would have complete control over. The first time I sat in front of the game and lifted the crow bar (the basic weapon provided near the beginning of the game), my thoughts turned to destruction rather than creation. I dreamt, for reasons that are still unclear to me, of modelling the [Farnsworth House](#) and then remodelling it with few swift, deadly swings of my virtual arm. In the following months, during my [e/index.html">Pigs in Space](#) period, I began to work up [a model for my final thesis project](#). Tom Barker from b-consultants was developing models using the same technique at the time and I visited his office so we could share notes. But in the end it beat me. Time ran out, the model proved too complicated to finish and I wasted too much time modelling, ahem, myself, as you can see above. I shelved it and got on with [the real work](#). Happily, it hasn't beaten everyone and I was delighted to find a discussion forum a few weeks ago showcasing some fantastic models of MVRDV's VPRO building using the very same technique. It's all been collated at [Arch-life](#) (thanks to thingsmagazine.net for the heads up) and as well as shots of VPRO you'll find a map to download of the exquisite (in Real Life at least) [thermal baths in Vals by Peter Zumthor](#). Now, where's my crow bar? notes:1. or [is it Tracy Island?](#)2. Recently Mies' grandson [got to do that for real](#), but on the wrong building.UPDATE 2005/08/17: flat ericAlmost forgot. I did some work

with the Quake modelling engine too. The eye-level of the view point is a little too high for domestic scale work though. Say hello to Flat Eric and his machine gun. on/28473695/" title="Photo Sharing">



Full set [can be found at flickr](#). Believe it or not, this one actually got built. Eventually.

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latest discoveries: via [del.icio.us](#).

[B o S h: The London Nobody Knows](#)'...I found it in the gutter ... I picked it up, intrigued by the title: The London Nobody Knows, by Geoffrey Fletcher...' [BBC - Radio 3 - Architecture on 3 Programme Archive](#) '...Browse through our archive of interviews, features and investigations into architecture...' (via [Christopher's tags](#)) delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

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spin on this



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[File Format Converter Project](#)'...The Long Now Foundation (www.longnow.org) is beginning a kind of Wikipedia for file format conversion as part of our larger Long Server Project...'delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via del.icio.us.

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seminal texts

ArchNewsNow provides a [link to an article](#) about how '...Markus Breitschmid's book, "Der bauende Geist. Friedrich Nietzsche und die Architektur," or "The Building Spirit. Friedrich Nietzsche and Architecture," has been selected by the Institute of Philosophy in Karlsruhe-Germany as one of 14 seminal texts...'. The rest of the list makes for a useful resource to add to your wish lists. In his book, Breitschmid, assistant professor of the history of architecture and design at Virginia Tech, inaugurated a reinterpretation of the noted German philosopher Nietzsche, namely that creative thought, and "building thought" in particular, fundamentally determines the world of Nietzsche. The book is recognized for the study of the modernist transformation of space in the architectural thinking of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The other books selected by the Institute of Philosophy were: Leone Battista Alberti, "De Statue;" Aristotle, "The Categories;" Aristotle, "Metaphysics;" Aristotle, "Physics;" Rudolf Arnheim, "The Dynamics of Architectural Form;" Le Corbusier, "The City of Tomorrow;" Jacques Derrida, "Chora;" Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking;" Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art;" Johannes Kepler, "Harmonices Mundi;" Jean-Francois Lyotard, "The Inhumane – Reflections on Time;" Plato, "Timaios;" Vitruvius, "Ten Books of Architecture."

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alpha tower



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latest discoveries: via del.icio.us.

[Stan Allen: Object to Field](#)'...The assumption here is that architectural theory does not arise in a vacuum, but always in a complex dialogue with practical work...' (via [Javier's tags](#))delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via del.icio.us.

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U2 on tour

The Edge: "Touring will always be a very important aspect of what we do. When we're in the studio, getting close to finishing a song, you inevitably start thinking about how it's going to be performed. A song you don't think you'd play live, that's not a good song." Interesting. That's exactly what I was thinking about when The Killers left the stage and U2 came on at [the recent gig in Cardiff I went to](#). How could The Killers have ever imagined they'd be supporting U2 when they were writing Hot Fuss? The quote is from [an interesting piece in Wired by William Gibson](#).

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latest discoveries: via [del.icio.us](#).

[Skate like a girl!](#) Skateboard decks + Classic furniture icons graphics = perfect present for me this Sunday. delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

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side bar

Rob Annable wrote: >> Hi John, >> Well done for spotting [the pole/poll](#). I guess I gave >> it away with the title. >> Spotting myself in [your sidebar](#) has also reminded me >> that I've been >> meaning to do an entry about my bloglines >> subscriptions. It's unfair of >> me to not publish details about who I read and since >> I've never got >> round to adding it to my site, this seems like a >> good way to go about it. >> Here's the list: >> <http://www.bloglines.com/public/eversion> >> I think I need to add a few from your sidebar. >> Regards, >> Rob

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happy birthday to me!

Early birthday present (I don't reach 30 until Sunday), all I have to do now is work out how to play it.



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reflect on this

Frozen infinity pool being used for ice skating? Or ...



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poll

What is it?



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guitarchitecture

Buildings that rock funk: Architectural dream no. 654 To make a building whose entrance is as flawless as the beginning of Stevie Wonder's Superstition. Walking in the door and down the hall during the first [thirty seconds](#) would put a spring in everyone's step. (see previous [dream no. 1256](#))

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latest discoveries: via [del.icio.us](#).

[Pamphlet Architecture](#)'...an opportunity for architects, designers, theorists, urbanists, and landscape architects to publish their designs, manifestos, ideas, theories, ruminations, hopes, and insights for the future of the designed and built world...' (via Daily Dose)[Smart City: Home](#)'...Smart City is a weekly, hour-long public radio talk show that takes an in-depth look at urban life, the people, places, ideas and trends shaping cities...' (via Anne Galloway)delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

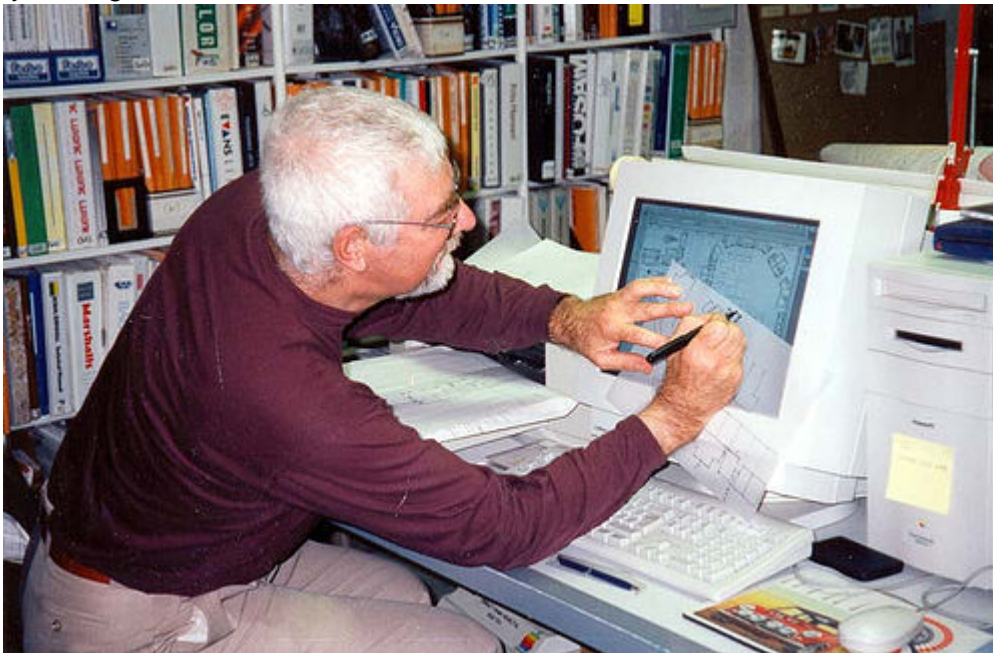
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death of a drawing board

We cast another drawing board onto the scrap heap today, there is only one left in our office now. This one belonged to Tony, our oldest architect, and was probably at least 50 years old. All that remains of it is this scan of the bottom right hand corner.



How times change. Here's Tony's response to computers when they first appeared in our office about 8 years ago.



I found that while we were tidying up around his board today. Old dogs and new tricks? Not true. Here's a picture I took before I left the office this afternoon. otos23.flickr.com/29061155_22ff5a3ba4.jpg width="500" height="375" alt="iTony"> iTony. He's our Photoshop whizz. Before any of you write in and start telling me how one should never turn your back on drawing by hand, calm down; give him a pencil and he'll still out design every one of you. Icon magazine recently ran [an article on the illustrator Jasper Goodall](#). They called him legendary. There's at least one very good reason why Jasper has been so successful - have a guess who his father is...

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latest discoveries: via del.icio.us.

[the eisenman principle](#)"...I'd rather have good look and bad theory. If you can bring them together, fine, but if it don't look good to me, forget it..."delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

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Book Baton

I've been passed a blogging baton. It used to be about music, [then Matt Webb decided to let it evolve into a discussion about books](#). He [passed it to Peter Lindberg](#) and now it has come to rest in my ever expanding list of things to do. I'm not usually a big fan of inter-blog questionnaires, but I think this one has the potential to be productive as well as introspective. I have to recognise the fact that my reading experience has been improved and expanded thanks to the last couple of years of readings web logs. I hope this will give some ideas to others. The bulk of my reading gets done on public transport. This works well until circumstances conspire to force me into my car. The last couple of months has been like that and the nagging feeling that I'm falling behind has begun to return. Before sitting down to write this I started to do some mental calculation around the number of books I usually get through in a year against the average life expectancy of an Englishman in order to work out how many books I'll get to read before I go to the great library in the sky. Mercifully, maths isn't my strong point and I was able to apply the brakes before reaching a conclusion, having decided that the result would be far too depressing. I very rarely buy contemporary books. The reason for this is a rather silly notion I have that makes me worry about the chronological order of literature. Standing in front of the shelves carrying the month's top ten books, I begin to feel the weight of all the books I haven't read yet stacked up behind me. Surely, to have any understanding of today's literature one must have studied all the moments in history it has passed through to get here. Whilst I'm busy flirting with Yesterday, Today packs it bags and runs off with Tomorrow. Books owned On the what's-mine-is-yours-what's-yours-is-mine principle of marriage, the house contains somewhere in the region of 500-600 books. Maybe two thirds of those are mine. Sarah and I have quite different tastes. She solely reads fiction. You probably would too if you were a doctor, escaping into fiction is a useful break from medicine. Unlike Mr. Webb, I can't profess to having any form of rigorous system for the shelving of my books, although I tend to start with the ones that are my favourite on the shelf nearest the nearest chair. The results are fairly haphazard and it's a common cause of argument/discussion in the Annable household, as Sarah likes to see them arranged more neatly - preferring form over usability. Which is rather fitting as if there were ever a theme for this blog, that would be it. Other book related comments worth mentioning to any other guys who are entering a relationship with a doctor are; make sure any text books (particularly dermatology ones) are closed before you sit down to eat, and don't worry, that magazine left open on the page about erectile dysfunction is just a coincidence, not a hint. Last book bought It's been a while. The last full book I bought was inspired by a flickr entry by Rodcorp - a used copy of [Mental Maps by Peter Gould and Rodney White](#). I say 'full' copy because I also bought a couple of [Pocket Penguin editions](#) last week - H.G. Wells' The Country of the Blind and Primo Levi's Iron Potassium Nickel. You can't go far wrong with Wells, and Levi (like his fellow Italian, Calvino) has a wonderful efficiency to his writing that leaves you feeling as if every sentence is honed to perfection. Every word counts. Last book I read As well as worrying unnecessarily about literary chronology, I have a terrible habit of starting other books before I've finished the last one so I need to answer this question in the plural. Books completed this week were: Field Event / Field Space by Kevin Rhowbothom (picked it up again after further thoughts regarding 'loose design' I mentioned in the last entry) Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs (attempted it as an undergraduate some years ago but wasn't ready for it, worked better for me this time round)...and I've also been reading some great essays on globalism suggested to me by Anne Galloway after I quizzed her for ideas to kick start me with a concept for the moblog.co.uk exhibition I've been threatening to do for about a year - there are [links on my wiki](#). Other books currently on the go and dotted about my life are: in the living room: Ted Hughes' Hawk in the Rain ([discovered this in a great restaurant in York](#) - first piece of poetry that ever literally took my breath away) in my car: Edwin Abbott's Flatland (discovered following an entry by Peter) in my wife's car: Goethe's second part of Faust by my bed: Homer's Iliad (remember what I was saying about chronology?), Cullen's [Townscape](#) and a copy of [Angela Hatherell's dissertation](#) Who do they think they are? in the bathroom: E.M.Forster's Where Angels Fear to Tread (a [bookcrossing find](#) in the city) I should point out, especially to the Forster estate, that their location is not a form of critique, merely luck of the draw. > 5 books that mean a lot to me Some of these [have been covered here before](#), one of them at a museum. Interestingly (or perhaps naturally) there are some connections here between myself, Matt and Peter. [Buddhism](#) by Christmas Humphreys [The Brothers Karamazov](#) by Fyodor Dostoevsky [The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy](#) by Douglas Adams [If on a Winter's Night a Traveller](#) by Italo Calvino [Architecture and Disjunction](#) by Bernard Tschumi There are connections between the books too. The book on Buddhism is actually one of several that I could mention on that topic. Another being [Buddhism Without Beliefs](#) by Stephen Batchelor. They are connected to Dostoevsky via a bus journey, a drunk woman, a fat bloke, some

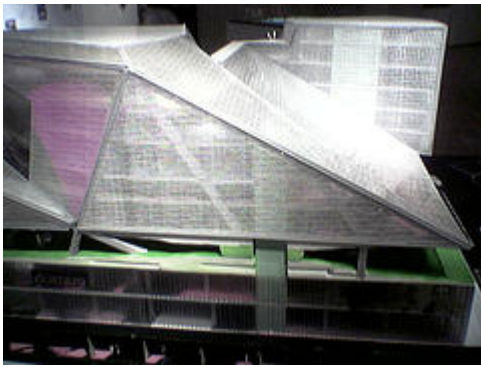
unruly kids and a £1 coin. A story for another entry perhaps. Hitch Hiker's, as any self respecting fan knows, is connected to everything. If on a Winter's Night was my first experience of Calvino. It couldn't have come at a better time for me, in the midst of a tortuous search for some form of *raison d'être* during the beginning of my post-graduate studies. The following quote ([which I also used in an essay at the time](#)) sums it up: How well I would write if I were not here! If between the white page and the writing of words and stories that take shape and disappear without anyone's ever writing them there were not interposed that uncomfortable partition which is my person! Style, taste, individual philosophy, subjectivity, cultural background, real experience, psychology, talent, tricks of the trade: all the elements that make what I write recognizable as mine seem to me a cage that restricts my possibilities. If I were only a hand, a severed hand that grasps a pen and writes... It helped me make sense of the other work I was reading and was one of the many devices I had to employ in order to decipher and understand Architecture and Disjunction. Architecture is problem solving. Tschumi helped me understand the metaphysics of the problem(s). I'm passing this on to... I've lost track of where this has been so far, particularly as many people have already completed the musical version. There may be some overlaps, but I call upon: [Dan Hill](#), [Jack Mottram](#), "<http://www.kryogenix.org/days>">Stuart Langridge, [Matthew Revell](#) and [David Sucher](#). notes: Despite Stuart's suggestion that I've lost any accumulated book review kudos by [daring to be enthusiastic about The Da Vinci Code](#), I continue to maintain a [book category](#). A while back I posted [a list of books I was hoping to read this year](#). I appear to have wandered a little off course. UPDATE 2005/08/04: secret history Stuart has [run his leg of the race](#). He highlights the wonderful Secret History by Donna Tartt. Had there been 6 books on my list, this would have been in there too. UPDATE 2005/08/04: more secret history Jack [pledges his allegiance as a fellow Hitch Hiker's nut and provides a more balanced opinion of Secret History](#).

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MADA s.p.a.m

I made a dash across town during my lunch break last week and paid a visit to the [Custard Factory](#) in Digbeth. There was an exhibition of work by Chinese architect Ma Qingyun (office name: [MADA s.p.a.m](#) - strategy, planning, architecture, media) and it gave me an excuse to have lunch with my friend and fellow architect, Naomi, since she works in the same building. Naomi has just come back from a round the world trip and is returning to join her father's practice [Apec](#). Before that, she worked at [Glen Howells Architects](#) and had a hand in shaping a couple of [Urban Splash](#)'s recent projects. She's good, and I've wasted quite a bit of time over the years failing to persuade her to come and work with me. On to the exhibition. This was my first experience of this firm's work and I was much impressed. Multi-layered, rich, inclusive and rigorous. Rigorous but loose. Loose in the way that a suit* has to be loose in order for you to wear it and live in it. It's an idea I've been thinking about [since I went to see Alsop's The Public](#). That there should be sufficient space - physically and metaphysically - between form and programme to allow for the occasional...jiggle. If I ever get round to writing up some notes on the Alsop visit I'll have to try and find a better word. Of course there is the distinct danger that I'm projecting that idea onto the work; there's still lunch to be had and we're in a rush after all. For this same reason I also begin to doubt myself as I start to spot numerous references to, and influences from, European practice. [Koolhaas and his CCTV project](#) is written all over one scheme - the Beijing Rock.





Contemporary architecture in Beijing strives to be contextual. This simplistic and thought-free architecture style ignores, or worse refutes the ever-changing reality of 21st century China. In a context deprived of clarity, as the periphery of Beijing often is, the Beijing Rock is a contextual, driven by prevailing urban forces, not existing urban form. I begin to doubt myself because I realise that I don't have the first clue about Chinese contemporary culture or architectural practice. Europe and the West is all I've got to go on so maybe I'm projecting that too. This needs fixing. Serendipity has caused this entry to be written on the same day as [Dan Hill starting his second series of posts about Shanghai](#). There are further pictures from my trip [over at flickr.com](#). * note to self: the looseness of a suit is defined by it's seams - head back to [a recent post on PLSQ](#) for more.

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hop, skip, jump



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[Philip K. Dick - How To Build A Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later \(Essay\)](#) written 1978, from "I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon" (via Jack Mottram's del.icio.us links) [Welcome to OTHERPOWER.COM](#)!...It's EASY to make your own power FROM SCRATCH!..'Warrenellis.com - Nerd Prom Photo' Animatronic Philip K Dick Weeps Real Amphetamines'delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

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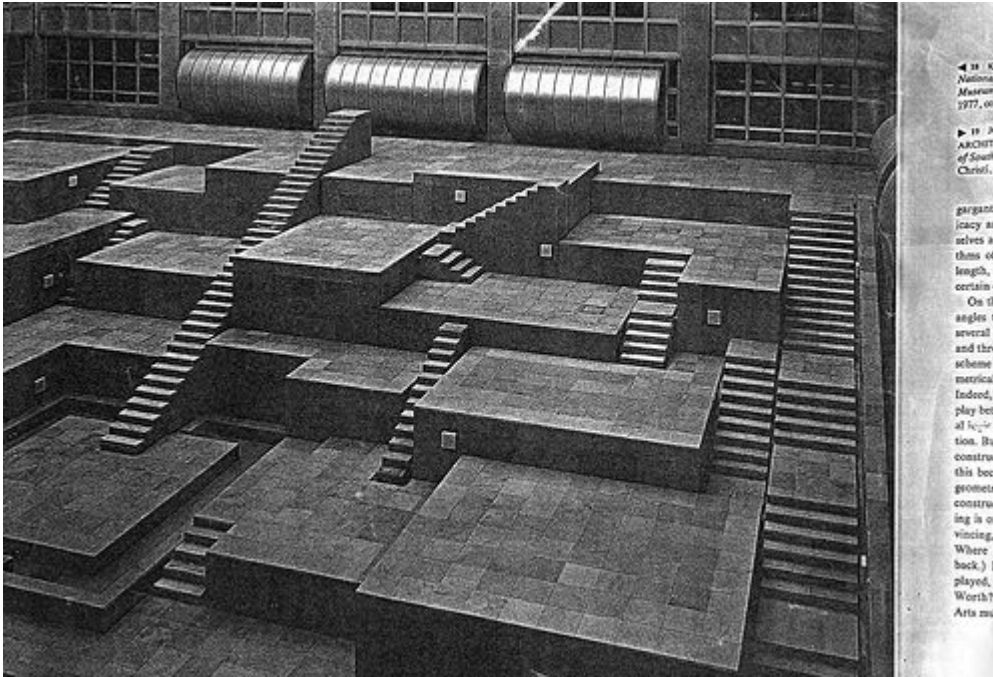
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[Aisle of Averages - a photaset on Flickr](#)'Late night experiments in Safeway.' - I was so disappointed this wasn't result of travelling at speed in a shopping trolley.[The Uncanny and the Architecture of Deconstruction by Anneleen Masschelein](#)'...This article shows how an understanding of the uncanny may be crucial to an understanding of contemporary deconstructionist architecture...' (via tag/architecture)delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

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lost and found

18 KIsNationalMuseum,1977, cou



Tidying the office, looking for a missing drawing, found this photocopy of a book with the annotation just off the edge of the page...my boss can't remember the name of the architect, any takers? Beautiful, isn't it?

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[Why I Bought a Typewriter on eBay](#)'...so I took Thoreau's thoughts on living deliberately to heart...' via thingsmagazinedelivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

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[del.icio.us direc.tor](#)'...del.icio.us direc.tor is a prototype for an alternative web-based rich UI for del.icio.us...' [Alfie on TV!](#)Alfie spent yesterday promoting his new site: <http://www.werenotafraid.com> - if you missed it, here are the interviews.[BBC NEWS: Couple break kissing world record](#)I met this guy once. He asked what I did for a living and when I told him I was an architect he gave me the most unusual response I've ever had. (via understated.co.uk)delivered (almost) daily at (almost) midnight via [del.icio.us](#).

white hole sun



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ISO 216

[The ISO paper size concept](#) In the ISO paper size system, the height-to-width ratio of all pages is the square root of two (1.4142 : 1). In other words, the width and the height of a page relate to each other like the side and the diagonal of a square. This aspect ratio is especially convenient for a paper size. If you put two such pages next to each other, or equivalently cut one parallel to its shorter side into two equal pieces, then the resulting page will have again the same width/height ratio. The ISO paper sizes are based on the metric system. The square-root-of-two ratio does not permit both the height and width of the pages to be nicely rounded metric lengths. Therefore, the area of the pages has been defined to have round metric values. As paper is usually specified in g/m², this simplifies calculation of the mass of a document if the format and number of pages are known. Ah, I see.

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step up



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keep on truckin



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vertigo

U2 gig, Cardiff, June 29th.(They're in that ball of light, honest)



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