

Anything icon do, we can do better

ARCHITECTURE You don't need to build big to be noticed. Just look at Lincoln, says **TOM DYCKHOFF**

Little old Lincoln. There it sits, on its own, south of Scunthorpe on the road to nowhere in particular. Great cathedral. Nice sausages. Er, that's it.

Lincoln's been on its uppers since its wool-trading heyday in the 14th century. Now it needs to reach for the fairy dust. But unlike other cities, there are no grand projects here – no soaring monuments of glass and steel, no makeovers and definitely no icons. Which is why you'll hardly notice its new multimillion-pound civic-history museum, the Collection. They don't want you to.

"Doing (almost) nothing," yells the front cover of *Volume*, a modish Dutch magazine part-sponsored by avant-garde architecture's high priest, Rem Koolhaas. Its contents call on architects to do just that – as little as possible. In what it calls our "maximal-

ist" age, where everything is fast and furious, including architecture, perhaps radicalism today lies in "a subtle touch" rather than in big fat monuments to egos.

The icon project, while not dead, is suffering well-deserved ague. We'll always need the truly exceptional –

'There's often an MDF quality to contemporary British architecture'

just in the right place (ie, not everywhere) at the right time (ie, rarely). Clients – cities, developers – rightly worry about such Ozymandian extravagance. Among younger architects, too, there's a prevailing wind towards what

might be called the anti-icon: architecture without bells and whistles, but with intelligence and sensitivity.

The inspiration for anti-iconism comes in part from the late Cedric Price, who famously prescribed not a house but a divorce lawyer for a bickering couple seeking his services. Sometimes, said Price, architecture is not the answer to your prayers.

Price and the postwar architecture supergroup Team 10 – with their mantra of repairing, not demolishing, blitzed cities – are inspiring a growing post-high-tech generation of architects. One French firm, Lacaton & Vassal, when asked to propose "embellishments" for a square in Bordeaux, said no, it's beautiful enough as it is.

Panter Hudspith, the architectural practice behind the Collection, has a similar approach. The practice cut its teeth patching up gaps in British cities with design that rides effortlessly the false divide between old and new, the kind of everyday good architecture we need a lot more of but that doesn't hit the headlines. The Collection, says the project architect, Hugh Strange, "reveals itself gradually".

Icons isolate themselves from context by their freakiness. But this museum's parts – auditorium, galleries, café, shop, etc – have been separated

Should Terry Wogan have been included in the Arte Power 100?



then reassembled as a city woven into a city, designed to patch a gap in the urban fabric between Lincoln's workaday Down Hill and the posher Up Hill, caused when the council, in leaner, stupider times, blighted the space with plans for a dual carriageway, which, fortunately, never came.

This city in a city covers only one block, but packs inside a

stunning progression of spatial experiences, mimicking the dense, shadowy medieval city beyond: passages, dead ends, gateways and tottering roofscapes, to be explored inside and, crucially, out. When the museum's shut you can still clamber over and under it: particularly successful are the east and west façades, which shuffle and tumble downhill, allowing the

The Collection, Lincoln's civic-history museum is anti-iconic in its modesty and quiet simplicity

passer-by peeks inside through the cracks.

When it's open you can explore a thrillingly complex but rarely confusing interior: dark, concrete caverns stabbed with skylights, copper ceilings, rugged Lincolnshire stone walls, huge windows throwing the eye out to the city, elegantly framing the cathedral in one case — a sensual feast.

"There's often an MDF quality to contemporary British architecture," says Strange. "This, I hope, has got gravitas. It's no flash in the pan."

No, it's mature, intelligent, solidly built, humane, and — that old-fashioned word — beautiful.

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of Nazi friends in South America. How far will she go?

It is considered by many to be the "perfect" Hitchcock movie with a powerful script by Ben Hecht, and Grant and Bergman at the peak of their physical charms.

