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Wonders and blunders

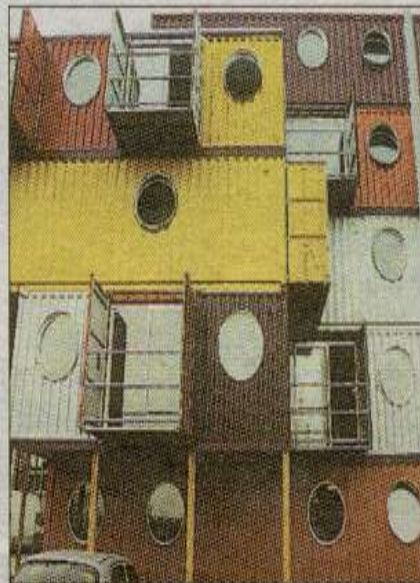
Victoria Thornton

Wonder: Container City, Trinity Buoy Wharf, London

Blunder: Mondial House, London

At Trinity Buoy Wharf, by London's only lighthouse, is Container City – a group of artists' and designers' studios converted from old shipping containers. It was the inspired idea of a developer called Eric Reynolds, who had the vision to realise that this isolated site on the Thames, opposite the Millennium Dome, had enormous potential. He also wanted to help artists and designers to find affordable studios, which is increasingly difficult in the capital.

There are about 12 working units here now, made out of 15 40ft containers. The origins of the containers have not been disguised, but they have been cheered up with



Riverside cheer . . . Container City



Bankside scar . . . Mondial House

orange and red paint. Some people have punched holes in them to let some light in. The whole thing is wonderfully witty and refreshing.

Not every building by the Thames in London is so successful. Some, such as Mondial House near London Bridge, are dire. It looks like three shallow buildings stacked and stepped on top of each other, and it squats by the river, apparently windowless. It feels like a carpark or a prison. No one ever seems to know who the architect was, though it was built in the late 1960s or early 1970s, and it's hard to grasp how anyone allowed it to be put up. So much of the river has come alive in recent years, but this stretch still looks terrible. Mondial House is just a blob, and it scars the riverscape.

Victoria Thornton is the founding director of London Open House, which takes place on September 20–21. Trinity Buoy Wharf opens as part of the scheme. Details: londonopenhouse.org