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**'EVERY TIME YOU
READ SOMETHING,
YOU'RE CHANGED'**

SUNAND PRASAD, PRESIDENT OF THE RIBA, came to the UK from India with his family in 1962, aged 12. He studied architecture at the University of Cambridge and the Architectural Association and worked with Edward Cullinan before completing a doctorate in North Indian urbanism at the Royal College of Art. In 1988, he founded Penoyre and Prasad with Greg Penoyre, now a 50+ strong practice based in London. They have just published a monograph of their first 20 years, called *Transformations*.

What role do books play in your life as an architect?

I think they're an extension of your mind. I have no doubt that most people must be writing to actually work out what it really is they think and that's what is so fascinating about books. The best books are those in which thought almost evolves from the page. Even if they've been worked out before, you get an insight into how that thought developed. Our capacity for insights and logic is one of the most incredible things about being human. It's hard to imagine the world without it. It's just one of the greatest of all pleasures, and it changes you. Every time you read something, you're changed.

So you read to work out what you think?

You write to work out what you think. You read to help you think and to loosen your mind, because your mind can settle into patterns and you need to open it up again. By reading, what you realize is that somebody else has written that to work out what they think, so it's a kind of big economy of people working out what they're doing. It's a huge, rolling conversation and you can go back for ever.

At the top of the list of books that you said have influenced your thinking was MVRDV's *Farmax* and Colin St John Wilson's *Architectural Reflections*. Why these?

I love Sandy Wilson's writings because I've never heard somebody investigate so honestly why architecture makes you feel the way it does. When he's genuinely asking those questions, it's a very generous and open-minded enquiry and convincing as well. To be intrigued by a real, everyday problem like 'why do I feel the way

