

# UNIT 12

## A matter of time

### The Futuro House

Designed in 1968 by Finnish architect Matti Suuronen, the Futuro house was a classic flying saucer shape – an ellipsoid shell constructed in fibreglass and reinforced plastic, with ellipse-shaped

- 5 windows, door handles, light fittings and even ellipse-shaped power sockets. In theory its design was 'based on pure mathematics', but in fact this seems highly dubious – the project supervisor remembers Suuronen having a much more intuitive approach.
- 10 There were no detailed drawings for the prototype, and he would 'drop by the plant' and make suggestions such as 'take away a bit here, add a bit there'.

- The initial commission was for a ski cabin, which
- 15 could be helicoptered into rough terrain, but manufacturer Polykem hoped that mass production worldwide would follow, and that the basic shell could be adapted for both domestic and commercial use. All looked to be going well until the 1973 oil
- 20 crisis more than tripled production costs; but for this we might all now have one.



- As it is, there are thought to be at least 30 surviving Futuros, including one in Japan, one in the USA and four in Finland. But meanwhile the Futuro
- 25 has been reinvented as an art icon, and found its way back into the glamorous world of parties and spectacle when the prototype was used to house a headline-grabbing installation art project. What is intriguing about the Futuro is that, forty years on, we
- 30 still see this object as futuristic, giving weight to the somewhat questionable theory that it was actually an example of post-modernism before its time.

### Reading 1: multiple choice (Part 1)

- 1 Do you like modern things, or are you interested in things from the past?

2

- 1 Work with a partner. Look at the picture above and discuss these questions:

- 1 When do you think this object was designed?
- 2 What do you think it is used for?
- 3 Does it make you think of the past, the present or the future?
- 4 What type of people would you associate with this object?

- 2 Read the first text to see if your ideas were right. Did anything surprise you?

- 3 You are going to read three texts which are all connected in some way with the idea of time. Choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

- 1 In the first paragraph, the writer suggests that when developing the Futuro, Matti Suuronen
  - A was keen to keep the design a secret.
  - B had a rather poor grasp of mathematics.
  - C was unwilling to trust his project manager.
  - D tended to be more interested in style than precision.
- 2 What does the writer find strange about attitudes towards the Futuro today?
  - A People still think that it looks like a futuristic object.
  - B People fail to see that the design was ahead of its time.
  - C People see it as a work of art rather than something practical.
  - D People in various parts of the world are keen to preserve them.



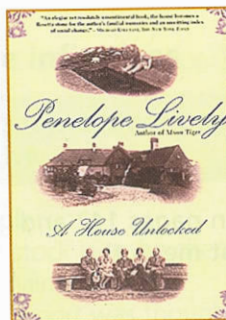
## Watercolours of a history waiting to happen

Years ago David Mandell began to record his sinister dreams. He painted their images, then embellished them with footnotes to add to the details of what he had 'seen'. On 11 September 1996 he dreamed the destruction of two towers. Beside the towers, in Mandell's painting, was outlined the head of the Statue of Liberty. Around the towers the painting depicted billows of smoke. Five years later to the day something remarkably akin to Mandell's ghastly premonition actually happened. This we know, for tucked into a corner of his painting, easy to miss, there was the silhouette of an aircraft.

The salient questions begin with the obvious: are Mandell's dreams a spate of coincidence? Is he a seer able to glimpse future events in his dreams or is he merely a sad old fake? His other dreams included premonitions of other disasters and momentous events – perhaps most remarkable was his picture of the gas attack on the underground in Tokyo. Beside the image, Mandell's notes named the Japanese capital as the venue of the outrage.

The programme scrupulously sought to establish whether or not Mandell was receiving apocalyptic warnings. Each key painting had been photographed by staff at his local bank, in front of a calendar-clock clearly displaying the date by which the painting had been made. Every painting predated the incident it foretold. The shots were examined by a forensics expert who certified them genuine. Mandell passed a lie-detector test, then allowed himself to be hypnotised. One expert thought he was mirroring the laws of probability – but the evidence suggested, given the relatively small number of dreams recorded and his high 'hit-rate', that Mandell was mirroring the laws of improbability.

- 3 What do we learn about David Mandell's paintings from the review?
  - A They have yet to undergo scientific analysis.
  - B They are hard to understand without his written notes.
  - C They may have been painted after the events they depict.
  - D They seem to predict the location as well as the type of event.
- 4 In the third paragraph, it is suggested that
  - A the programme had made exaggerated claims about the dreams.
  - B the expert had been unable to give an adequate explanation for the dreams.
  - C there was insufficient evidence to make any sort of assessment of the dreams.
  - D the programme makers had uncovered the answer to the mystery of the dreams.



## Golsoncott

When I was hanging around the nearby lanes as an adolescent, waiting for life to begin, I saw Golsoncott as a place where nothing ever happened. I thought of it fondly, but reckoned that it

was elsewhere that things went on and that in due course one would go forth to elsewhere, with all that that implied. And so I did, but in due course also Golsoncott became a retreat, a haven when rather too much was happening, the stable element in an unreliable world. You could know that it would always be the same, year by year. Absence of event was now the treasured aspect. During the 70 years of the family's occupation of the house no-one was born there, though three people died: my grandfather in 1941, my grandmother 34 years later, and finally my aunt Rachel. Events of a significant kind. To a 15-year-old, things happening means a few ups and downs in daily life, and Golsoncott was indeed fairly immune to that. One calm rural day slid blandly into the next, with only the weather serving up any potent kind of change. And even that interference with prescribed routine was sternly resisted: family ethos was that you ignored weather and simply did what you had intended to do. You went for a walk in the rain; that was what raincoats were for.

- 5 In the first paragraph, the writer is explaining
  - A why she felt trapped at Golsoncott.
  - B why she decided to leave Golsoncott.
  - C how her attitude to Golsoncott changed.
  - D how she came to regret leaving Golsoncott.
- 6 Which phrase from the second paragraph reinforces the idea introduced by the phrase 'with all that that implied' in line 8?
  - A ups and downs in daily life (line 20)
  - B fairly immune to that (line 21)
  - C slid blandly into the next (line 22)
  - D sternly resisted (line 25)

4 Do you think that what happens to a person in the past can influence their future?

Which of the three texts made you think about the relationship between the past and the future most? Why?



## Vocabulary: idiomatic language/collocations

### 1

1 Look back at the three texts on pages 142 and 143. Find words or phrases that mean the same as:

- 1 difficult to trust (text 1)
- 2 when something is made in large quantities (text 1)
- 3 something that represents an important idea in art (text 1)
- 4 adding importance or value to an argument or idea (text 1)
- 5 seeing something briefly (text 2)
- 6 doing something thoroughly to high standards (text 2)
- 7 a record of the number of instances of something (text 2)
- 8 moving around slowly without any purpose, doing very little (text 3)
- 9 eventually (text 3)
- 10 good times and bad times (text 3)
- 11 a philosophy for living (text 3)

2 Now complete the sentences using the correct form of one of the expressions.

- 1 The idea that anyone can predict the future accurately is very suspect – in fact, I think it's .....
- 2 The evidence ..... the argument that there was a town on the site in times gone by.
- 3 Cars nowadays are ..... which has reduced manufacturing costs and made them more affordable than they were in the past.
- 4 His dreams seemed to give him a brief ..... into the future.
- 5 I seem to spend a lot of my time just ..... waiting for other people – it's very frustrating!
- 6 Life is full of ....., highs and lows – that's what makes it challenging.

### 2

1 Look at the following extract from text 1. What does the highlighted phrase mean?

... it was actually an example of post-modernism before its time.

2 Complete the sentences with a collocation with *time* from the box.

in no time    waste of time    at the time  
pressed for time    for the time being  
running out of time    time after time  
in time    kill time

- 1 I think that studying History in school is useless – it's a complete .....
- 2 I decided to go on holiday to India last year. It seemed like a good idea ....., but I didn't realise that I had chosen the hurricane season!
- 3 I'm studying hard, so I've told my friends that ..... I'm not going out at weekends.
- 4 Sue is so quick – she learned how to use the new software .....
- 5 I'm sorry, I can't stop now – I'm really ..... I'll catch you later.
- 6 Peter has been delayed, so I'm going to get a coffee to ..... until he gets here.
- 7 The train was held up by signalling problems, but luckily I arrived just ..... to catch the plane.
- 8 We must reach a decision by 8 o'clock and it's 7.45 now – we're rapidly .....
- 9 I've told you ..... not to do that, but you just keep doing it!

3 Work with a partner. Take turns to describe a situation to illustrate one of the phrases from Exercise 2. Your partner should say which phrase you are illustrating.

**Example:**

A: I had to wait for the bus for ages, so I bought a magazine to read.

B: You were killing time.

## Grammar 1: passives 1

### 1

1 Read the title of the article on page 145. What do you think the article will be about? Skim it quickly to check your ideas. Have you ever heard of a job like this?

2 Read the article again. Rewrite the numbered sentences using the passive form.

**Example:**

(1) ... in which older people from diverse ethnic backgrounds are encouraged to share and record their memories