



Journey to the East

Working as a teenager in the northern Bangladeshi village of Rudrapur, changed Anna Heringer's life. Over the next decade, annual visits turned into a story of intercultural exchange, with Heringer, the village community and Western volunteers together creating one of the best-loved buildings in the humanitarian architecture world. The METI Handmade school, the first step in Heringer's ongoing journey re-making this most sustainable of materials' image and popularity from the earthy ground up

ANNA HERINGER, the still young architect from the German-Austria border town of Laufen in the far South Eastern tip of Bavaria, is on the phone, and she doesn't sound like an architect. I had met her nearly eighteen months earlier on a crisp December day, arriving on a local train from the near-by Austrian city of Salzburg, and she didn't seem like an architect then. She turned up at the station on her bike, completely unassuming and unaffected. Putting my rucksack on the back of her bike, we walked back across the iron cast river bridge which divides the town into two, each country's half on either bank, before stopping to buy cheesecake; returning to her almost completed loft flat

– earth wall on one face, electrical wiring sticking out of the walls of various secondary rooms. There, while her small baby slept, we talked for two or so hours, before time was up and I returned to the station to continue my train journey. Over the phone, there is a warmth, informality and emotional concern that lulls me into forgetting that this is a professional, successful and effective international architectural player who is influencing her generation and beyond into making steps towards adopting a more humane approach to architecture. Again and again, I come across people, admittedly young, who profess how knocked out they were when they first saw photo's of her multi-award



Captions for both photos