



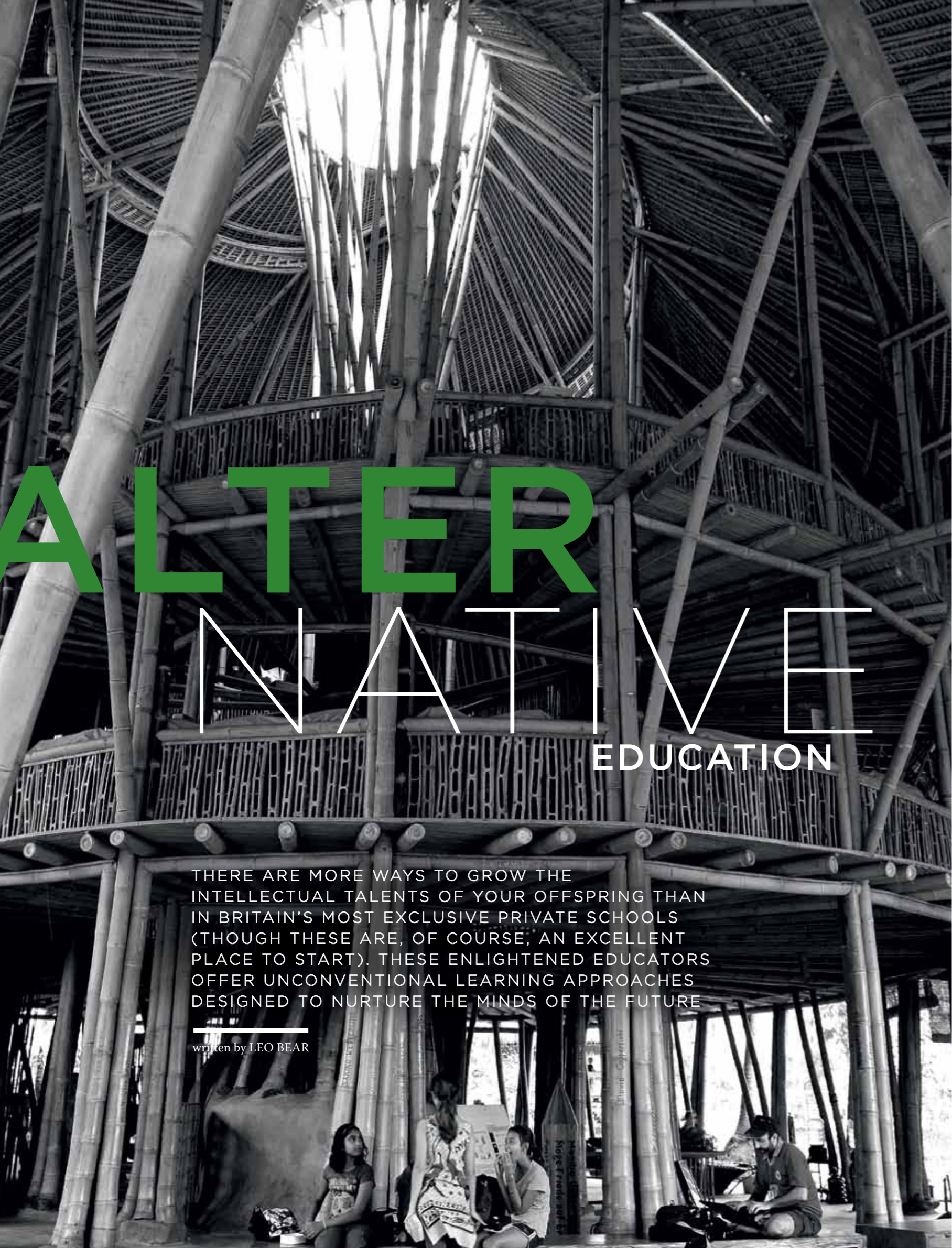
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UNCONVENTIONAL
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Q U I N T E S S E N T I A L L Y

WEIRD & WONDERFUL · THE CLASH · MAKING THEIR MARQUE
METHOD MAN · BREAKING THE PATTERN · BUILDING OUTSIDE THE BOX
THE SUITS ARE OFF · TIME WAITS FOR NO MAN · OUT OF THIS WORLD BEAUTY





ALTER NATIVE EDUCATION

THERE ARE MORE WAYS TO GROW THE INTELLECTUAL TALENTS OF YOUR OFFSPRING THAN IN BRITAIN'S MOST EXCLUSIVE PRIVATE SCHOOLS (THOUGH THESE ARE, OF COURSE, AN EXCELLENT PLACE TO START). THESE ENLIGHTENED EDUCATORS OFFER UNCONVENTIONAL LEARNING APPROACHES DESIGNED TO NURTURE THE MINDS OF THE FUTURE

written by LEO BEAR



“There is nothing as powerful as an idea whose time has come,” is a quote attributed to the French poet Victor Hugo, and in the fast-changing world we live in, the statement has never been more apt – especially when it comes to educating the citizens of tomorrow.

Gone are the days when Eton, Oxbridge or the Ivy League were the best means of giving your offspring a competitive advantage. Today, the truly enlightened send their progeny to educational institutes with an unconventional approach to learning.

Avenues, based in New York City, is one such establishment. Calling itself The World School, it opened in 2010 and already has more than a thousand students pounding its halls – Tom Cruise’s daughter, Suri, among them. Designed for an international elite, iPads replace bookbags, the curriculum is stored on the ‘cloud’ and students graduate bilingual in

Spanish or Mandarin – as “architects of lives that transcend the ordinary”, according to the prospectus. In the next couple of decades, Avenues hopes to have campuses distributed worldwide – in London, Beijing, São Paulo and Mumbai for starters – ensuring the children of high-flying peripatetic parents need never miss a beat at school. Co-founded by Chris Whittle, former owner of *Esquire* magazine, pupils are taught in airy state-of-the-art classrooms housed within a stylishly converted warehouse a stone’s throw from Manhattan’s trendy High Line. Desks are arranged in oval formation eliminating the very existence of a ‘back row’, and there’s a café on site for parents to hang out and network in. One of the key values taught at Avenues is not to be afraid. Emotionally afraid. Afraid to ask a question in class. Afraid to be different. And other schools are taking note.

Even in the conservative domain of top-flight boarding schools, unconventional programmes are on the rise. At the Institut Le Rosey in Switzerland (the world’s most expensive school with an alumni including the Aga Khan, Prince Rainier of Monaco and John Lennon’s son), students can sign up to volunteer in hospitals in Ghana, build homes in Romania or swat up on tech start-ups in Silicon Valley instead of sunning themselves in St Barts over the summer holidays. Did we mention the facilities? There’s an equestrian centre, a shooting range and a 38-foot yacht moored on Lake Geneva.



Operating at the opposite end of the scale, Green School near Ubud in Bali, is widely recognised as the world’s most eco-friendly learning institute. Students from kindergarten to high school are given a holistic-style education, soaking up knowledge within cathedral-style ‘bubbles’ thatched from local bamboo. White-boards are made from upcycled car windscreens, school lunches are cooked on sawdust burners and wild vegetation runs right up to the walls of the open-air classrooms. Now in its ninth year of operation, Green School has 385 students from more than 35 countries, learning everything from organic rice growing to Balinese mud-wrestling, alongside the usual literacy and mathematics.

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE PAGE: The Heart of School at Green School in Bali; Jane Goodall with a Green School graduate; Heart of School entrance space; hands-on learning at Green School



“AN UNCONVENTIONAL EDUCATION ALLOWS YOU TO SPEND YOUR TIME LEARNING HOW TO THINK; HOW TO PUT FORWARD YOUR IDEAS...”

Some parents have started building eco-homes on the fringes of the 20-acre campus so they can walk their kids to class each day, and the school's founder, John Hardy, dreams of a fully-fledged green community sprouting from his clever idea – a model village for the future. Why did he do it?

“The world has become much smaller and much more competitive,” he explains. “Unless you're born with a gene that gives you a photographic memory and the ability to get perfect marks on every standardised test, you'll be lost somewhere down the line. An unconventional education allows you to spend your time learning how to think; how to put forward your ideas; how to put together a team of 20 people and run in the same direction. Our students foster their creativity within a world of education, and ultimately they are going to make the world a better place.” Recently two of his teenage protégés persuaded the United Nations to back a campaign to rid Bali once and for all of plastic bags. Impressive stuff.

Eco-savvy global stewards are also being cultivated at Muse, a private day school in California. Describing itself as a 'high-performance learning lab' and beacon of sustainable living (powered almost entirely by Solar Panel Sun Flowers), in the last 10 years, it has gone from being a small family-run kindergarten to a fully-fledged school teaching eco-literacy to pupils aged two to 18. Spread across two campuses in Malibu Canyon, this year sees it becoming a wholly 'plant-based' institution, with kitchen staff preparing 100 per cent vegetarian meals in an effort to further reduce its impact on the environment.

Elsewhere, 'forest', 'beach' and 'bush' schools are popping up in the UK, Australia, Spain and Germany, imparting the importance of nature and survival skills to pre-schoolers. Run as non-profit social enterprises with classes conducted outdoors 36 weeks a year, parents are instructed to drop off their little ones, rain or shine, for activities including tree-climbing, den-building, tool-use, drama and art.

Want in? Learning the unconventional way isn't just for fresh young upstarts. At Taliesin, the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture in Arizona, the average age is 35. Nestled in the cactus-strewn foothills of the McDowell mountain range, the 'starchitects' of the future are currently sketching their way towards accredited Masters of Architecture degrees, taking pointers from visiting luminaries, such as Frank Gehry. The three-year course combines critical thinking with rigorous design practise. As part of a 'learning by doing' approach advocated by Frank Lloyd Wright, over the summer, each student will have to design, build and live in a shelter created themselves on the 500 acres of desert surrounding the campus. They'll fall asleep to the sound of coyotes howling, and rise to cloudless skies buzzing with hummingbirds... What better way to learn we ask? ☺

Quintessentially Education is an educational consultancy and private tuition agency. It offers everything to set your child in good stead for the future, with a child-centered approach that ensures final education decisions are tailored to each individual's needs. Quintessentially Education's pool of well connected and dedicated experts offers a wide spectrum of services, designed to guide parents through the process of educational decision making and assist them in making informed choices for their children's future.

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AVENUES 'THE WORLD SCHOOL' *New York City*
avenues.org

INSTITUT LE ROSEY *Switzerland*
rosey.ch

THE GREEN SCHOOL *Bali*
greenschool.org

MUSE PRIVATE DAY SCHOOL *California*
museschool.org

TALIESIN WEST, FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE *Arizona*
taliesin.edu

ABOVE:
The 'Miner's Shelter' (left) and '3 Desert Way' (right) graduate projects at Taliesin West, the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture

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