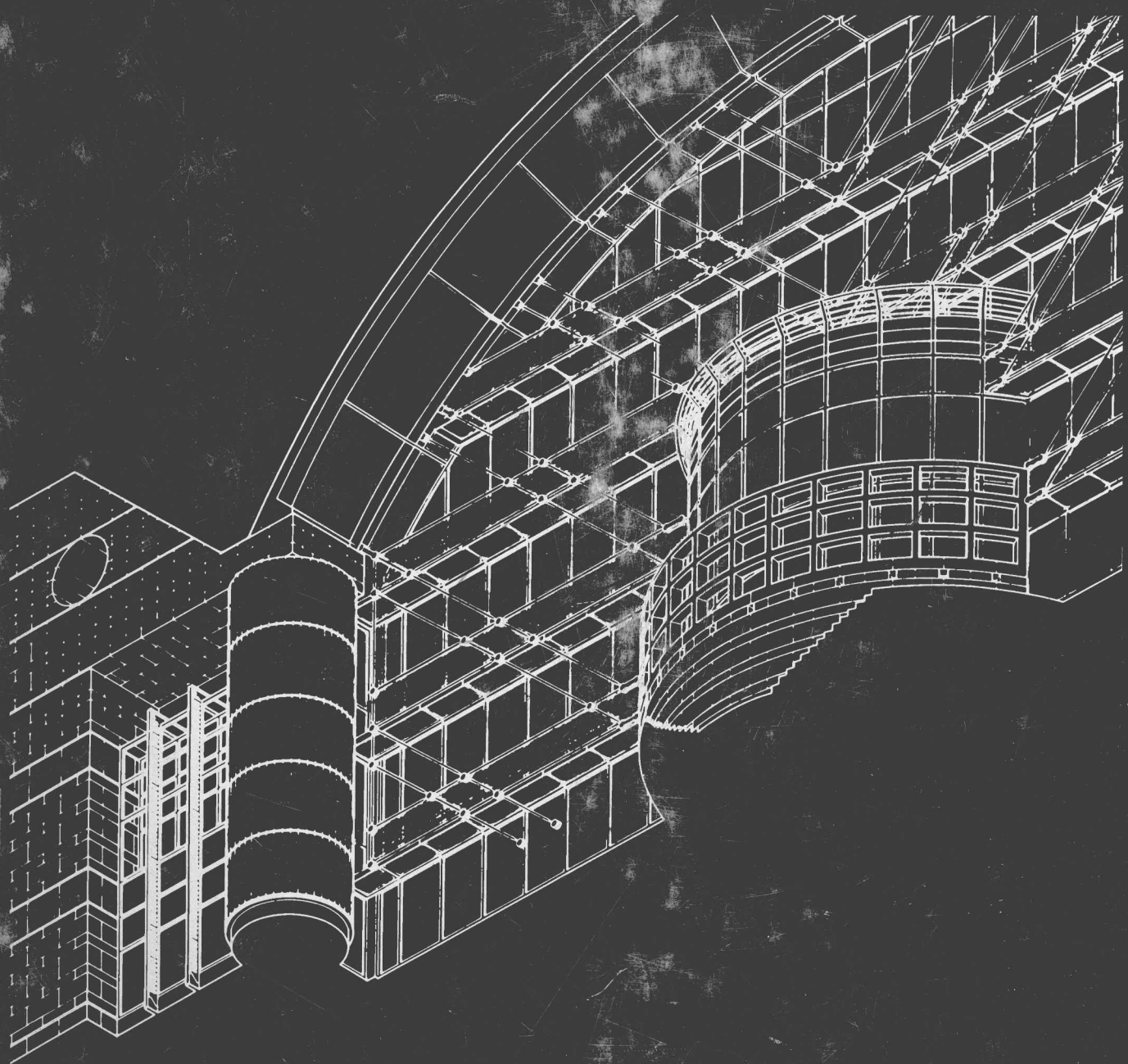
特里·法雷尔

TERRY FARRELL

当代世界建筑经典精选
Selected and Current Works



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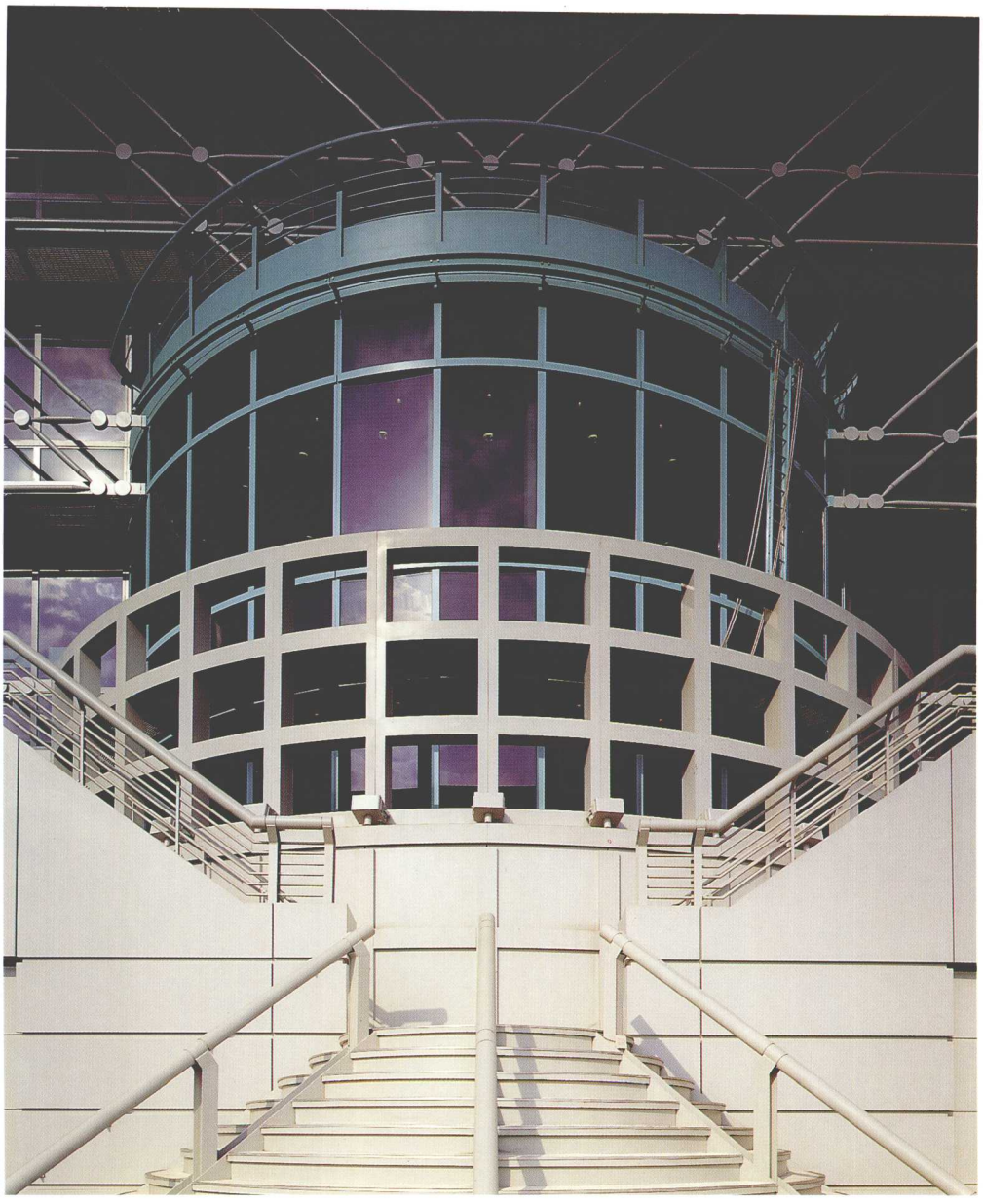

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An Interview with Terry Farrell
by Clare Melhuish

You trained at Durham University and in the USA, and subsequently worked in the USA for a short period. What influence has your American experience/perspective brought to bear on your work, and do you believe it sets your work apart from that of other architects in this country?

I was in America at a time when cultural events in America were of great interest not only to the British but also throughout the world. It was a very strong time, when modern art, particularly the pop art movement, produced an original American culture, and when many writers and thinkers about the city, such as Louis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, or, in the field of ecology, Rachael Carson, were questioning the changes in our world produced by technology and urban growth. It was also a time of questioning in architecture at a more fundamental level than the Europeans had recently done. Buckminster Fuller, Louis Kahn and Bob Venturi were the three major contemporary figures that I was most interested in. These were all reasons for me to go to America, but I don't think that I brought back an American approach to architecture any more than did, say, Norman Foster and Richard Rogers, who were both students in America at the same time as I was, or Jim Stirling, Colin Rowe, and Alan Colquhoun, who were all visiting and teaching there. We each brought back our own different interpretations, and I think that what I brought back was an interest in a broader appreciation and understanding of art and architecture than the deliberate cultivation in Britain of art as an elitist concern. I also felt that there was a much more soundly based interest in technology in America, although while Bucky Fuller, Louis Kahn, or Mies in his later years looked at American technology and its potential, there was not the same little boy's love affair with technology that I would say identified the British attitude to it, and has gradually become more and more noticeable in British architecture. But the most profound influence on me, I think, was my learning experience on the extremely good urban design programme at the University of Pennsylvania, in an architecture and planning department run by people such as Louis Kahn. At the same time, Ed Bacons' work for the City of Philadelphia itself was a learning tool and experience, typical of the interchange between practice and education which takes place so readily in America. It was an enormously rich field of learning experience.

In conclusion I think that my feelings about America and my interpretation of America actually began before I ever went there. I think being at Durham University meant that I wasn't as influenced as people from London were by European traditions, particularly Le Corbusier, or the social engineering aspect of architecture that was so popular at London schools such as the Architectural Association. Durham was much more interested than southern schools at that time in Scandinavian architecture—the almost revisionist Modernism of Alto and Asplund—but also in American Modernism, such as the work of the west coast architects during the forties and fifties, plus Louis Kahn, of course, and others in the sixties. In addition I had an interest in a classless society which I think grew from my roots in the north of England, while the south still has a very strong class problem. This is visible in its elitist approach to architecture, embodied in the roles of the Arts Council, RIBA and Royal Fine Arts Commission. Going from Durham to America was a logical thing to do.

Your formative years were the 1960s, a time of great upheaval both in architectural and urban thinking and in society at large. Who, both in and outside architecture, were the most inspirational figures for you and your work; and what vision for the future of architecture did you have at that time?

Louis Kahn was an extraordinarily fine teacher, by far the greatest architectural educationalist I have ever come across. The experience of being with serious people in Philadelphia, such as Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and meeting Bucky Fuller several times was very inspiring. What I liked about Bucky was not only his interest in high-tech, but also his radicalism, his pioneering, one-man-band kind of radicalism. It was quite different to the European cult of radicalism, in which, in order to change things, you had to form a group like Archigram, the Mars Group or the Fabians. In America you get highly individual, not actually eccentric people, who really ploughed their own furrow. But my greatest interest in the fifties at architecture school and ever since has always been Frank Lloyd Wright, whom I consider the major architect of the last 100 years. He was outside all the major schools or extremes, yet he was greatly influenced by all that was going on in the world around him: he just re-interpreted it in a personal way. I also like the work of Saarinen and I was fascinated by the work of the students of Frank Lloyd Wright, such as Bruce Goff, Herb Green and many of those mid-west organic architects.

I came back and worked for a brief time for Colin Buchanan, and found his kind of very common-sense, simple approach to town planning fascinating. I particularly liked the excellence, and the quite beautiful presentation of books such as *Traffic in Towns* and other reports which he was involved in at the time. This use of the visual aid as a means of explanation in town planning and urban design has always been a great lesson to me. Other interesting characters were Archigram, Stirling and Gowan, and Cedric Price, and it was a very exciting time, but it was less that there were real individuals who were changing things, than a great mood of change, more like an atmosphere or an environment, that we were all part of. There is no doubt that both at school and in practice, my greatest interest was in formulating ideas about change and being outside the mainstream.

I enjoyed the early work at Farrell Grimshaw because it challenged the thinking of the day. In Britain in the fifties and sixties there was such a reliance upon heavyweight precast concrete brutalism, pretending to be very pro-social and changing society for the good. I thought it was basically anti-social, particularly the concrete housing estates and schools, the so-called rationalisation of the architecture of the welfare state, and I find it quite a disgusting period. What I enjoyed was proposing a different approach. When I got disenchanted, as I gradually did with the work of the high-tech school during the seventies, it was because it was becoming accepted as mainstream, but in the process becoming a businessman's architecture on the one hand, with buildings such as Willis Faber Dumas, and the industrial sheds of Farrell Grimshaw, and a cult architecture of taste on the other. It changed from being a servicing tool and a way of thinking to a much lesser thing. I particularly liked Ehrenkrantz's work at the time, which was almost anti-architecture, in comparison to the Pompidou Centre, which was an iconic thing, much more a

statement of style. High-tech became very much something for the building owner to covet, with scant regard for function. I regard Lloyds and Pompidou as sublimely impractical buildings and the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank as an astonishingly extravagant statement for an office building. I am as much influenced by things I react against as I am by things that I am attracted by, and in this respect I like to see myself as much more a follower of Frank Lloyd Wright than a child of the sixties in the high-tech groupie sense.

You set up your partnership with Nicholas Grimshaw in 1965, and it lasted for 15 years. Both you and he are now recognised as two of the most prominent figures in current British architecture, but during the eighties your work seemed to diverge in entirely different directions. What were the common interests which united you both during the sixties and seventies, and what were the differences which eventually drew you apart?

I think there are many misunderstandings about the work I was doing during the sixties and seventies in the Farrell Grimshaw Partnership. I was fascinated by the power of mass production on the one hand, and on the other its potential for personalisation and greater individual freedom, and how to make this contradiction work. I wasn't in love with the mass-produced object as many high-tech architects have become. I believed mass production could provide the means for achieving great adaptability to context and a very personalised response to the user. It was these ideas which lay behind the projects for the student hostel, Park Road flats, and the timber-framed housing during the sixties and early to mid-seventies. It was really the extent to which the partnership diverged between these two interests, of architecture as product design on the one hand, and my approach on the other, that began the split. So the development of my own work has been quite consistent and natural over the years. I believe that many who appear to be working exclusively in one particular idiom do so because their palette has not changed, when actually they have radically changed their principles. By contrast, I have changed the palette, the materials, and the kind of programmes, moving from housing to large urban projects and master planning, but my principles have remained the same, based on a belief in the potential of technology to enrich the context and use of buildings.

During the eighties, after the realisation of TVam, your name became virtually synonymous with Post-Modernism in its British form. Post-Modernism itself has now been pronounced by some critics as "finished", implying that it was little more than a transient fashion. What, for you, were or are the virtues of Post-Modernism, and do you feel British criticism of the movement was unjustified?

Post-Modernism is interpreted totally differently from place to place and from critic to critic, and the nature of these categories and labels is not of particular interest. What is of interest is what the work represents. My work has never been close to American Post-Modernism, but rather to that of some European Post-Modernists, such as Jim Stirling, Hollein, or Rossi. There is a lot of confusion in Britain because of the strong anti-Americanism of the cultural establishment, which is very deep-rooted, going back before the war, and often accounted for, I think, by the fact

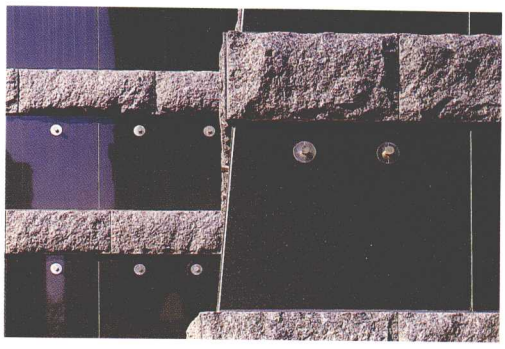
that Britain has always associated socialism with Modernism, and American capitalism as something of an enemy. Associated with that is the issue of working in the private versus the public sector. This gives a particular bias to readings of architecture in Britain which I find extremely tiresome. Basically I have always said that Post-Modernism is a way of seeing things, and recognising that the era of Modernism is over. It's "After-Modernism", not Post-Modernism, as a style that interested me. My work during the eighties represents a range of hybrid solutions, some of which are really quite high-tech. In some ways I was a pioneer during the eighties of many new materials and methods of construction and still am. Many a European and American critic has said that they can't understand why British critics have labelled me as a Post-Modernist because they see many parallels between my work and the typical British interest in construction.

The importance of the Post-Modernist era was to change the rules, to question the rut that Modernism had got into, and the idea that Modernists had that contemporary architecture could only be good if it was socially based or concerned with construction as product. In both cases these were only limited truths and I think that the eighties changed all that, in particular the understanding of the city and of urbanism, which Modernism had no grasp of at all. It did not have the scope to associate itself with Urbanism, because Urbanism involves context, and context involves the past and history, and it was the continuity of the past which was the very tenet Modernism set itself against in the 1920s.

So now, as Michael Graves said recently, we are all Post-Modernists: the spirit of Post-Modernism has influenced all architects and their work and in that sense it conquered all. I believe very strongly that the work of architects now has been enriched by the questioning that went on in the late seventies and eighties. I never really liked Post-Modernist style itself, but then I don't like any cult of a style; it is an individual's interpretation of what's going on around him which is much more interesting. It is this which makes Jim Stirling one of the most interesting so-called Post-Modernists, while Mario Botta, Hans Hollein and others also produced very exciting work which wasn't stylistically based. I think the identification of an American-style cult was just a way of labelling Americans; in fact it was a commercial phenomenon. It generated a lot of second-rate work in London, but then there is always second-rate work, whether it is Modernist or Post-Modernist or anything else.

Your interest in decoration, anthropomorphism, and the visual statement during this period clearly relates to your interest in the Arts and Crafts movement and Art Nouveau, which you state were inspired by the way things were made. How is this connection between visual appearance and technology developed in your own work?

My main aim is to try and design from the inside out as well as the outside in. My work is fundamentally based upon construction, use and function, as well as the influence of the context of the people and the place. At Charing Cross, Vauxhall Cross, or any of the other buildings there is a strong integration of the internal programme and the outer context. An architect's task is to develop form which follows function but also form following context. It is not a question of choosing between the two,



but of doing both, which requires more skill and creativity. It produces a more hybrid language and a cross-cultural type of building, but to try to produce an architecture which follows only one rule, whether constructional or functional, is simply escapist. It is partly a preoccupation with style, but it is also a way of over-simplifying a problem: making it so easy that a very major part of the equation is actually eliminated.

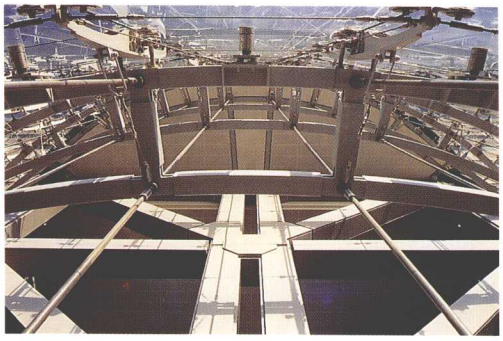
You have been closely involved with the rise of interest in conservation, the re-use of buildings and the exploration of low-tech. What is it about your work, in contrast to that of most other architects doing new architecture in a contemporary idiom, that has appealed to the conservation lobby in Britain, and led to your being appointed master planner for the new Paternoster Square scheme at St Paul's Cathedral, in which Prince Charles has taken some interest?

I am fascinated by an architecture that can raise a response of support, applause and love; by buildings that can bridge the gap between the elite and the populist causes. This is what Frank Lloyd Wright, Rennie Mackintosh, Boromini, Michelangelo, Soane, Wren and all the really great and enduring architects achieved. But in this century, perhaps because so many more people have been educated in the arts, many people have felt a need to set themselves apart and give themselves a sense of superiority by deliberately preferring an art that cannot be understood by others. It is this which started the search for an art of a deliberately limited appeal. I am not interested in that, but in trying to find an architecture which can be supported as much by the serious critic as the person in the street; because architecture is a public art, used by all kinds of people from the janitor on the door right up to the chairman in the boardroom, and there are so many more buildings that are publicly accessible—schools, libraries, art galleries and so on. To address populist issues as well as high culture is a major challenge of the day.

I must add here that the successive RIBA Presidents and the RIBA Director General spoke publicly against the Paternoster Square design, but it has now received, in the USA, the 1994 AIA Award for Urban Design—in my view a striking reflection of the parochial view of British taste.

You have spoken of the need for architecture to have symbolic content. Does this represent a search for the spiritual in an ever more material culture? And what, then, are the implications of cultural context for architecture? You are currently working in the Far East; do you think it is possible for a Western architect to create work rich in symbolic content for Eastern culture, with its very different cultural traditions and value systems?

I think that architecture always does have a symbolic content. What is not sufficiently recognised is that architecture always has a powerful symbolism. This is so often denied by architects, particularly by the Modernist establishment. They seem to have a kind of moral puritanism which sets out to deny the senses, as if by denying sensual experience in form, colour and shape, and exaggerating the importance of utilitarian function or a very limited view of user need, one frees oneself from any possible sensual or symbolic interpretation of one's work. There is much creativity in Britain which comes from the non-establishment and tolerant nature of the people here.



If one recognises that, in Freudian terms, there is always a reason, a motive, behind one's actions, then the symbolic content of architecture should be capable of interpretation in many different ways, some subconscious. Architecture should not be of a limited symbolic value, saying simply "I am powerful", or "I am clever", but a rich and varied thing, reflecting the range of culture and diverse needs of the democratic world that we live in. I have always been fascinated in the deep-rooted symbolic content of architecture, and in this Louis Kahn was a particularly strong influence. I think his fundamental Jewish background gave him a very deeply religious approach to architecture, in the broadest rather than a literal sense.

The basic elements of architecture—doorways, roofs, walls—are eternal and universal, each having a common cultural statement to make. But each gets adjusted and reinterpreted from region to region. For example, as one travels through the Far East, one meets with a different approach to the idea of permanence, so that the conservation movement in the West means something very different in the East. There it is not the built form itself which is handed down through generations, but the symbolic form: the dragon, the urn, the tea ceremony. The Shinto temples are demolished every 20 years to signify that religion is alive even if the temples are taken down and rebuilt. This very overt emphasis on the symbolic is a welcome thing. It doesn't necessarily mean that the symbols themselves are fundamentally different from those of Western culture, but there is a difference of emphasis. It gives one a completely new understanding of things that one has always taken for granted, and a great awareness of the commonality amongst mankind, despite the great differences. The further one travels, the greater perspective one gains on these almost primeval fundamental forces that are the essence of architecture.

In the end one is dealing with gravity, enclosure, climate and social tradition wherever one is, and it is very exciting to look at a train station in Hong Kong or a train station in Lisbon and see what is common and yet at the same time different. There are extraordinary disparities in context but it is the interchange, the interaction, between the general and the particular which is so interesting and exciting in architecture. One of the real issues of our time is the gradual erosion of cultural differences on a global scale, certainly as they are interpreted by mass production and mass culture. But I don't agree that the value systems of the East are fundamentally different from those of the West. Eastern cultures seem to have adapted to Western industrialisation and capitalism in many ways more rapidly and successfully than, say, the working classes of European countries, who were alienated by the 19th century Industrial Revolution.

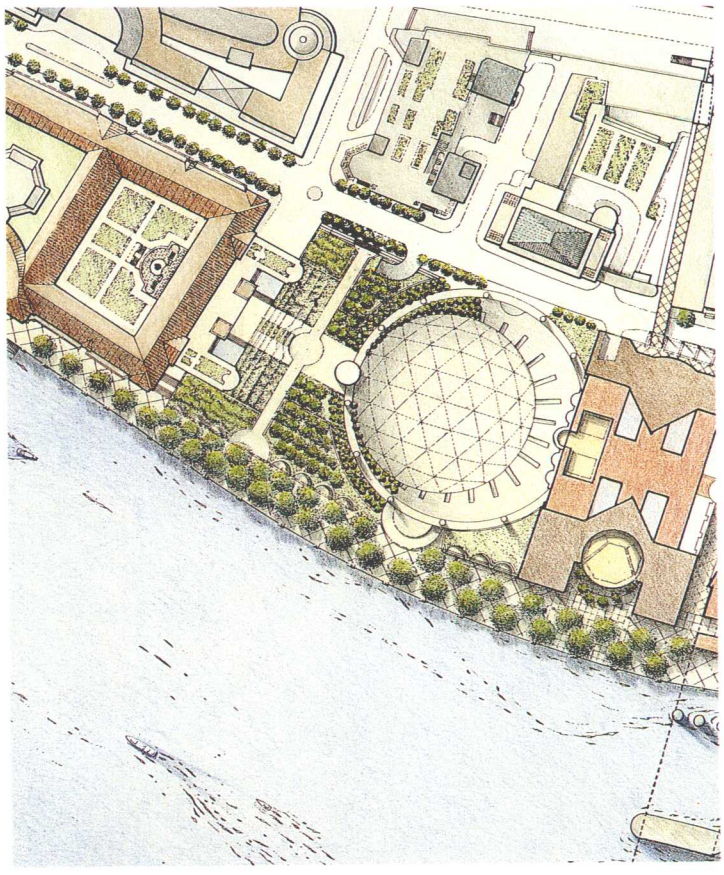
I think one has to consider the implications of instant transmission of images by television, satellite, or film from continent to continent, and rapid transport from one part of the world to another. Sense of place is radically changing; world cities are converging in their characteristics, and world architecture too. This is a great challenge and dilemma for the architect, since although the context remains different in its grammar, traditions, structures, and materials, the real identity is being eroded.

At almost exactly the same rate, people are also trying to grab hold of some sense of continuity and self-identity through custom or tradition. The architect needs to express this need. I am not afraid of looking backwards as well as forwards. It shouldn't be an either-or situation. Hanging onto what is past is not a compromise, but a statement about reality, since 50 per cent of what makes up the present comes from the past, just as the other 50 per cent concerns what is going to happen in the future. To guess about the future of architecture is invariably a mistake. The science fiction dreams of the 1930s, for example, were wildly wrong. The images of future architecture which appeared in films and magazines can now be seen purely as an expression of the time itself, not of the future time at all, and now in the future we simply find them rather amusing period pieces.

You have experienced a steady increase in the quantity and scale of your work during a very low period for architecture in Britain and all over the world. To what do you attribute your success, and what hopes do you have for the future of architecture in Britain?

I think there is depression in Britain and America professionally because of the erosion of the traditional professional protection at the same time as there is a reduction in new projects. I think this is not altogether a bad thing. Frank Lloyd Wright deliberately stood outside the profession, although it tried very hard to seduce him back into the club. Many major modern architects, such as Lutyens, Mackintosh, Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, or Jim Stirling have stood significantly outside the profession and if the rest of them are pessimistic that doesn't necessarily mean anything bad for architecture. The way the business of architecture is organised is being challenged today, and probably quite rightly so—it is healthier for the institution in a rapidly changing world. It is undoubtedly true that many aspects of what an architect thought was his work have been taken away from him by project managers, quantity surveyors and others. But on the other hand, I think that, as we approach the millennium, architecture is becoming increasingly recognised as the major art, and there is a much greater interest in the environment as well, not only in the green sense, but also in the sense of the context and identity of cities. By comparison, both in London and in the rest of the world, painting, sculpture and indeed music have become more moribund of late. I am very optimistic about the high game of architecture being appreciated and understood by a wider audience, and I believe the status of the creative architect is continuously improving, though changing.

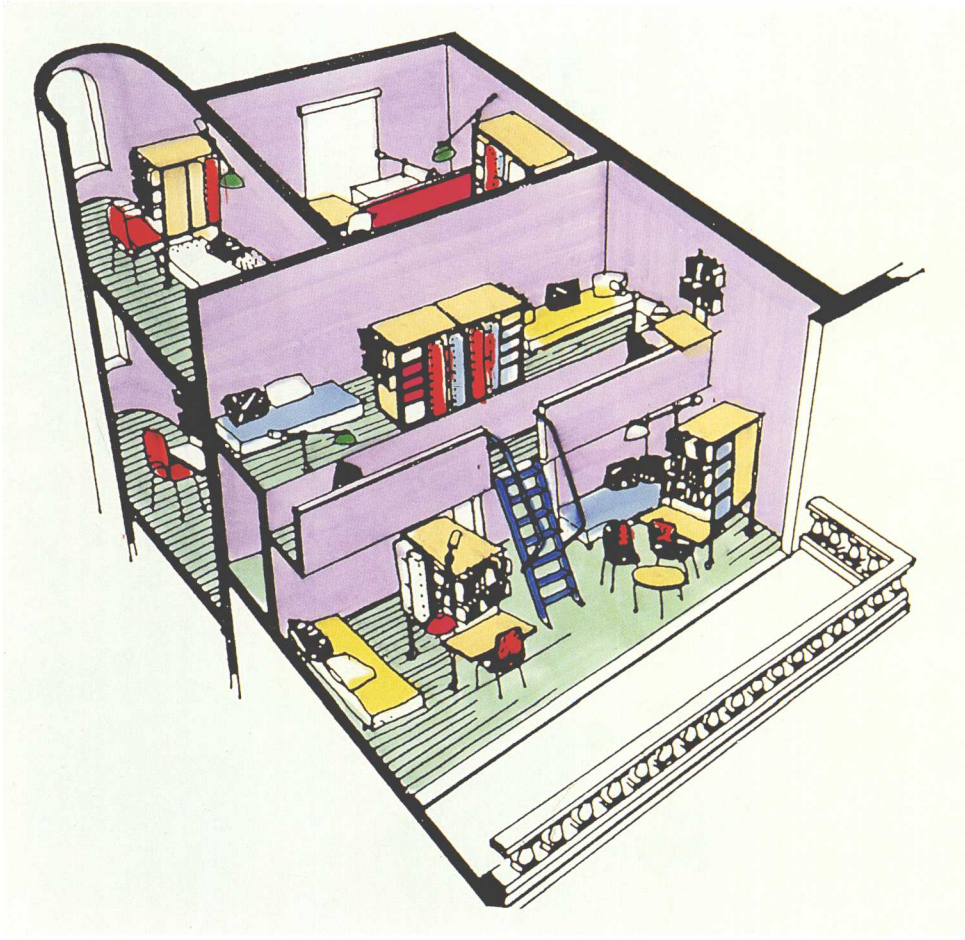
Selected and Current Works



International Students Hostel

Design/Completion 1965/1968
Sussex Gardens, Paddington, London W2
International Students Club (Church of England)
Accommodation for 200 students
Conversion of existing terraced houses
Service tower: prefabricated steel core; glass fibre bathroom pods

This project was for a very low-cost conversion of six large dilapidated but historically important Victorian houses into a Church of England hostel and club rooms for 200 students. All the spaces in the old buildings were converted into student rooms, with new bathrooms and kitchens located in a service tower to the rear. The variety and character of the fine existing rooms were exploited by constructing sleeping galleries at first-floor level, and providing a multi-purpose freestanding furniture trolley which made fitted furniture unnecessary. Attic rooms were also built.



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1 Gallery rooms on the first floor
2 Typical floor plan
3 Section through service tower
4 Student's room