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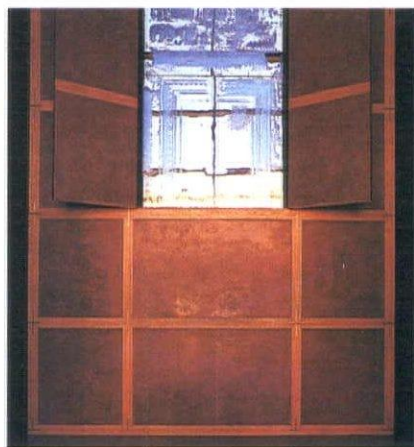
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Library visions: MacCormac in Lancaster (p64) ... and Perrault at the Très Grande Bibliothèque (p77)

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- 34 COLIN ST JOHN WILSON & PARTNERS British Library Photograph by Martin Charles

Some believe that libraries are becoming redundant. They argue that the electronic media are now so efficient, so ubiquitous and so economical that they will make the storage of paper unnecessary.

Yet the electronic media have had no very great effect on reducing the volume of books and other paper publications. More of these are printed now than ever before, and almost none of them has an intelligently recorded electronic version. And it will always be impossible economically to record electronically all the pages of all the books that have ever been made. 'Splendid', say the electronic enthusiasts, 'why on earth do we need so many dusty and crumbling files of paper held between boards?' They argue that many books go out of date within a short time of being published: the data they contain are superseded, and electronic media are in every way a much more appropriate means of providing transient information than paper – who wants an outdated reference book? And it is not just data that have become outmoded. For instance, who would now think of reading the huge and solemn volumes of sermons that Georgian and Victorian clerics published to establish their credibility? When were authors very popular in the nineteenth century like Samuel Smiles or Lord Macaulay last consulted? Is it worth keeping most of the products of pulp fiction publishing houses, no matter how sought after they once were?

Of course, the answer to all such questions is that anything ever published anywhere ought to be preserved somewhere. The society which destroys or wilfully forgets its published past is on the road to barbarism as the Nazis so clearly demonstrated. Each country, each community needs its great warehouse of books, because we cannot predict what future generations will want to refer to, nor can we usually afford to record books in any more compact form than the original. (Indeed, the original paper form is often of great importance, particularly in the case of illustrated publications like this and many others.) Hence the need for the great national repositories like the British Museum (p34), the Royal Library in Stockholm (p82) and the Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt (p59). And for those great scholarly collections in our own discipline, those of the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Avery Library of Columbia University.

Having ensured that such great collections will continue to grow, and so safeguard the permanence of at least one example of every printed product, do we need other libraries? Electronic enthusiasts often argue that the Internet or various forms of CD will provide all data necessary for the efficient life.¹

At any level above the everyday, this proposition is crass. We do not live in a world driven only by facts. While knowledge of such matters as the most up-to-date price of pork bellies, or the means of adding a new chip to a computer may be of vital importance at

various times in our lives, it does not make us into civilized people. Civilization, from which all human progress has stemmed, depends on consciousness which is largely gained from understanding not just information, but the opinions of others about facts. Science is based on formulating and testing hypotheses. In rather less dramatic fashion, all other branches of human endeavour are based on critical analysis of past opinions. Human development has in a sense been enabled by extremely complex forms of textual criticism.² Because we cannot record most past publications electronically (and indeed fail to make electronic versions of all but a tiny percentage of contemporary paper products), to remain civilized, we need not just huge national repositories, but libraries at every level, from state down to school.

All living libraries have to grow. This means that they become full of books and papers, then either have to expand physically, or decide to locate parts of their collections in other places (what librarians call *outhousing*).³ Both remedies for the problem are full of pain, are spasmodically applied and never complete cures for the condition. Now, problems are exacerbated (to a relatively small extent) by repeated explosions of new media: microfilm and fiche, and a whole spectrum of electronic recording and publishing devices, which do not of themselves take up large amounts of space but have special needs for storage and display.

Readers to books or books to readers?

In any serious reference library, *outhousing* will always be needed in the end, and whether it is provided near the existing site,⁴ or elsewhere. It would of course be possible to locate great libraries on remote greenfield sites so that they could grow with little restriction. But a key principle of librarianship should surely always be that it is more important to get the books to the readers, rather than the readers to the books. Hence the very sensible insistence of for instance the French (p77), Swedish (p82) and British (p34) governments that the great national library stays in the heart of the capital, which in practice is always the easiest place to reach by public transport from all parts of a country.

Once in the library, there are two main ways of organizing space to relate readers and books. Colin St John Wilson spells out the alternatives in his excellent little book which celebrates the long-awaited completion of the first phase of the British Library. 'In open-access reading rooms, the average visit is of short duration, the visitor on the move much of the time, and (relatively) few reading places such as are required are therefore located round the edges of the book collection in "flexible" space'.⁵ In contrast, visits to closed-access reading rooms are of long duration. 'The reader spends most of that time at a single desk and the material consulted

BOOK CASES

Libraries, though they will be radically affected by electronic media, will continue to be needed and the buildings in which they are housed will keep on evolving so that they can cater for ever more diverse societies.

is mostly delivered to it from safe storage elsewhere.⁶

The closed access system is clearly one that is applicable to reference libraries only. Here the architectural task in a contemporary society made up of individuals is to ensure that not only can the materials arrive as expeditiously as possible at the right points, but that a variety of places is offered for study, each with different ambience, to avoid making such spaces into utilitarian research plants.⁷

The open access version is not only used (sometimes – but not always in Wilson's suggested configuration) as part of a great reference library, but is also the basis of all the lending libraries in the world – the engines which fuelled so much of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century lust for education (and frivolous literary pleasure) in northern Europe and North America. These institutions can still have a most important civic role, as is shown by the splendid new Malmö library by Henning Larsen (p52). Here, a major addition and alteration to a nineteenth-century institution has reinvigorated and re-established it as part of the conversation of the city.⁸ The building shows that inventive librarians can be offered the opportunity to involve electronic media as well as paper ones in creative interaction with community – the essential critical interaction of our generation with the past, and individuals with society in general.

In his great book on building types, Pevsner quotes Vitruvius who said that the libraries of the ancient world were built '*ad communem delectationem*', which he translates as 'for the enjoyment of all'.⁹ And Pevsner points out that when the Empire and civilization started to collapse in the third and fourth centuries AD, libraries closed: '*sepulchrorum ritu in perpetuum clausis*' – sealed for ever like

tombs (Armmianus Marcellinus c375).¹⁰ We cannot as a species afford another succession of Dark Ages. Libraries, metaphorical and literal are vital to civilization, and we must go on experimenting with forms of building in which they can be housed. P.D.

1 Clearly both have enormous potential: for instance last year two of the best architectural publications of any kind were *The Works of John Ruskin* and *Le Corbusier: architecte/artiste*, both on CD Rom. The first is a complete record of the text of the Victorian sage's formidable complete works, totally interrogable electronically. The second is a new kind of reference device which allows the user to make a personal choice of analytical paths through the work combining, as needed, data on the buildings and projects, chronological information on Corb's life and times, the writings, the paintings, and even the spoken word (see AR December 1997 pp90-92). But virtually none of the excellent books published during the year is available electronically.

2 In our field, the texts are not only written but drawn. And, as Aalto so properly pointed out (p14), built. But criticism of buildings must inevitably, at least in the first instance, be in the form of words and images, and based both on empirical data and precedents and examples from the past.

3 All librarians hate outhousing. First, it disrupts the seamless flow of knowledge which they (most honourably) believe that they ought to be able to offer to readers; second, it is expensive and time-consuming to administer; and third, it throws on them the responsibility of having to choose what to outhouse. What criteria are to be used: date, subject, frequency of use?

4 Or under it, as the Swedish Royal Library has done with so much effort and expense, but as our reviewer points out (p82), even the huge new caverns will sooner or later be filled.

5 Wilson, Colin St John, *The Design and Construction of the British Library*, The British Library, London, 1998, p19.

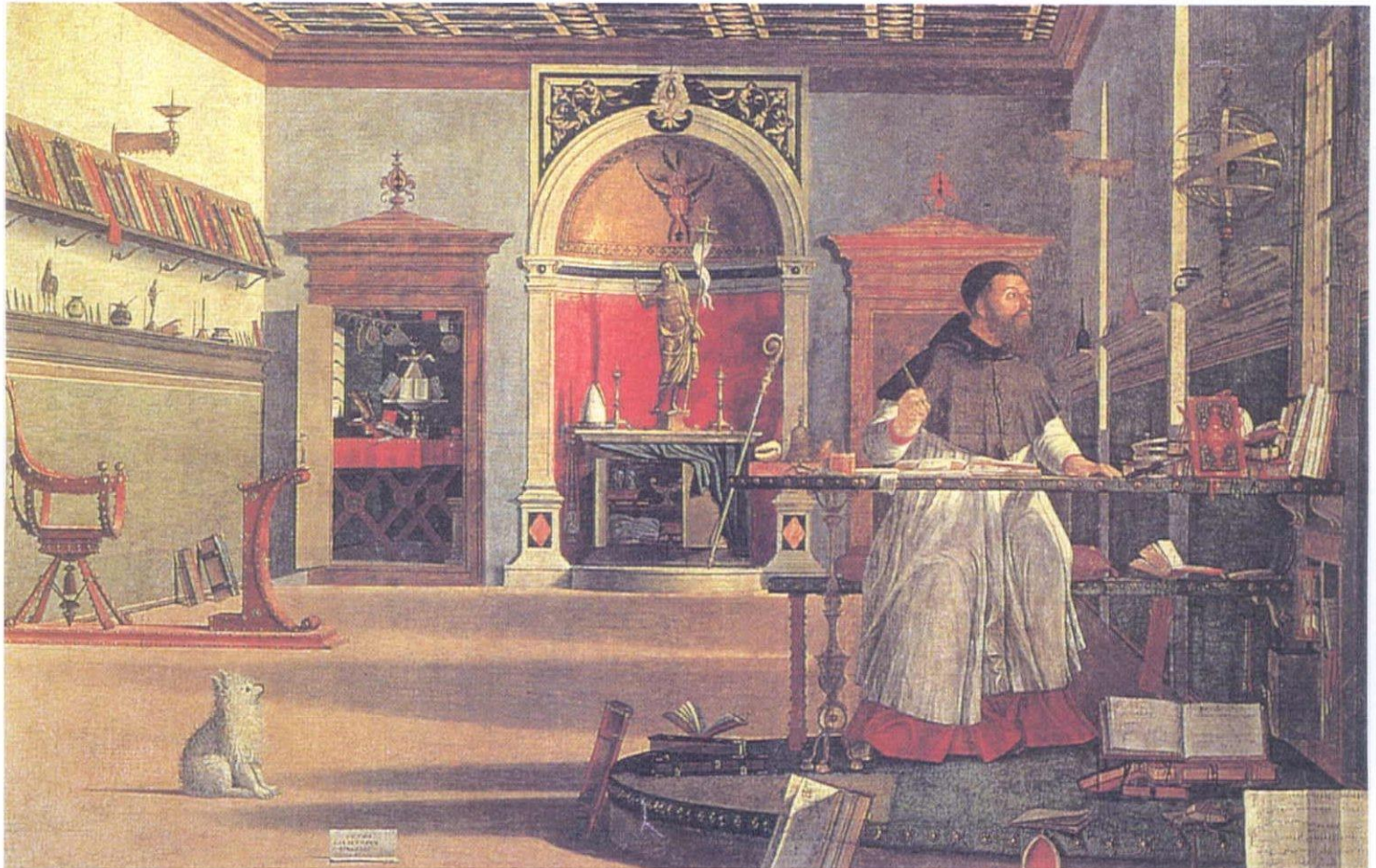
6 *Ibid*, p20.

7 In a sense, Smirke's London Reading Room, and Labrousse's in Paris were both such, but the grandeur of the spaces overcame the quotidian: nowadays, such grandeur is denied us this side of fascism.

8 Up to a point. The building would make much more sense as a living part of the city if Larsen's original plan of having the public cafeteria at ground level in the entrance drum had not been subverted by a penny-pinching municipal estates department, which moved it to the top floor so that it can share kitchen facilities with the staff canteen. The error can be corrected in the second phase of the project.

9 And obviously for the benefit of the whole community.

10 Pevsner, Nikolaus, *A History of Building Types*, Thames and Hudson, 1987, p91.

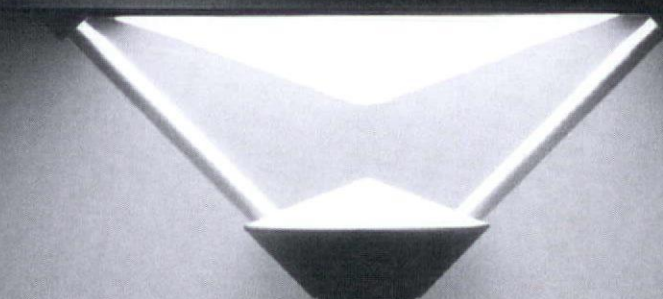


St Augustine's Vision, painted by Vittore Carpaccio at the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice between 1502 and 1504. The way in which we work in libraries has not changed in 500 years – the computer would fit easily (both physically and metaphorically) into this ideal Renaissance study – though it would add a visually ugly note.

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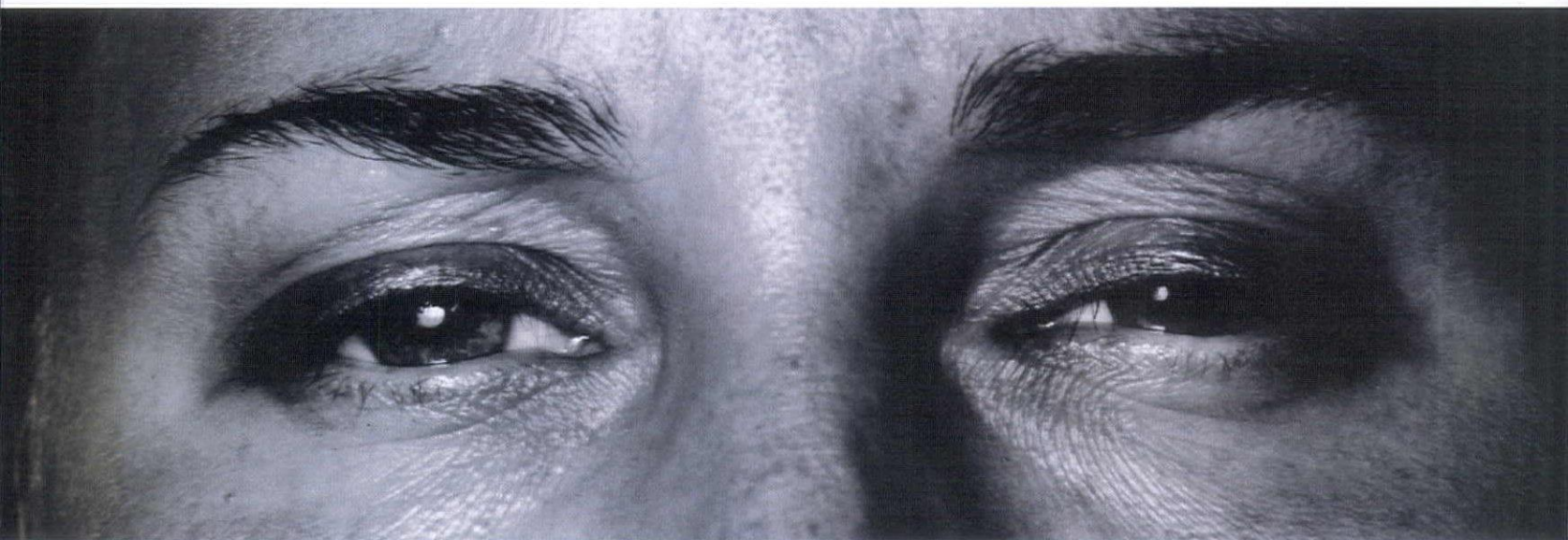


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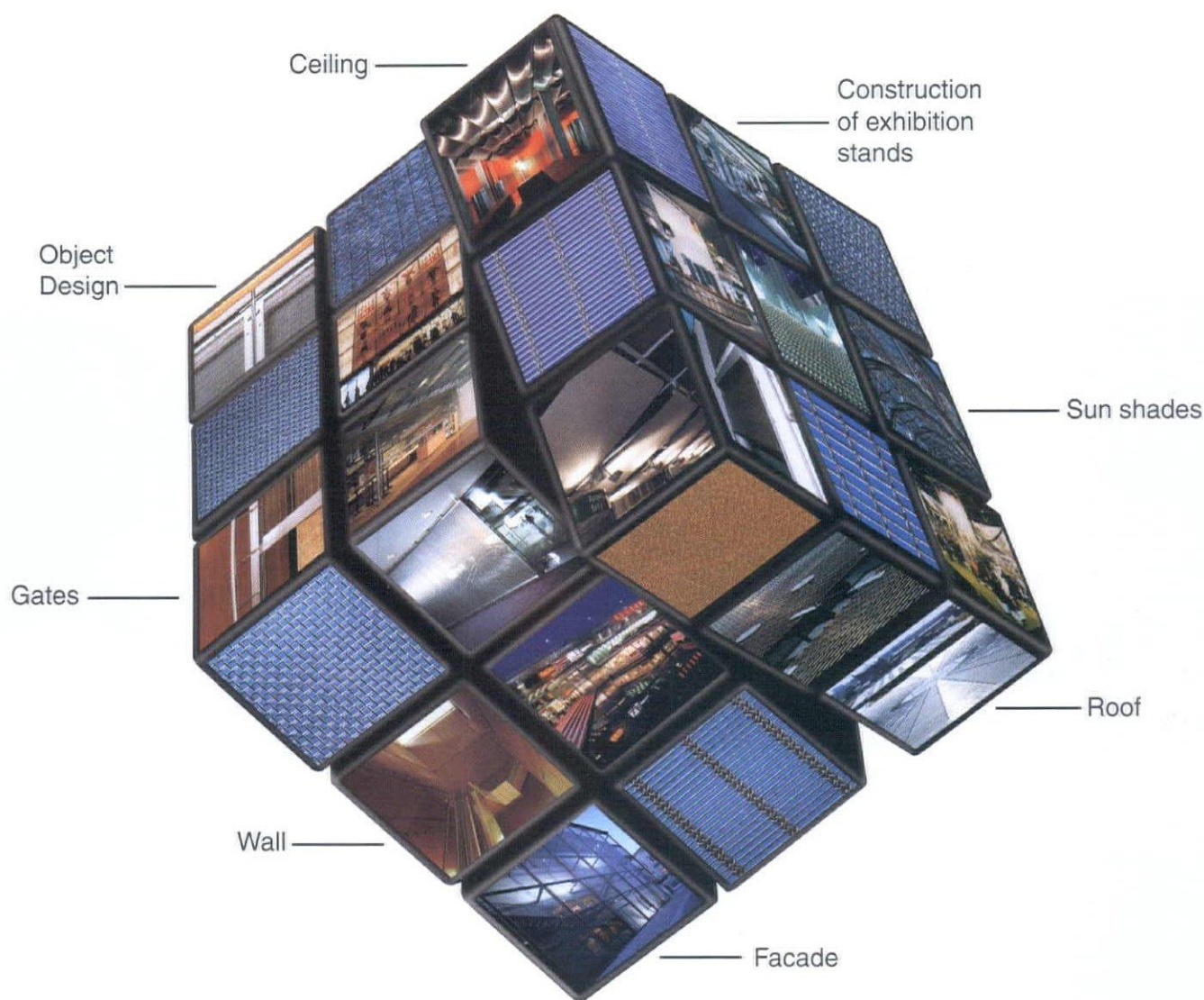
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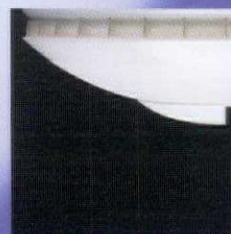
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Aalto's centenary

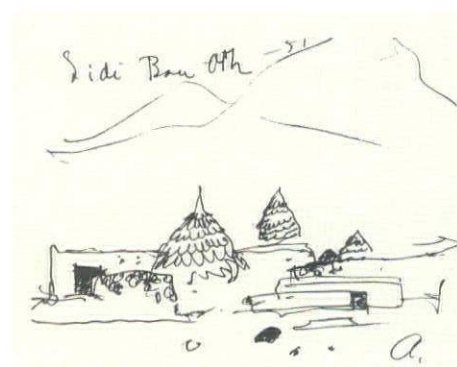
This year is the centenary of Alvar Aalto's birth, an event worth celebrating, for it is more and more clear that the Finnish master has a very important role to play in the development of humane and environmentally appropriate architecture. As part of the centenary celebrations, a selection of Aalto's key writings and lectures has been translated into English, so for the first time, non-Finns can have some notion of the thoughts and personality behind the buildings. We survey the book here, and follow with a look at the exhibitions of his work in New York and Helsinki. We shall return to Aalto later in the year.

ALVAR AALTO IN HIS OWN WORDS

By Göran Schildt, New York: Rizzoli, 1998, 288 pages, 100 b/w illustrations, £40

Of the five conventional hero architects of the first half of the twentieth century, Aalto has been an enigma as thinker and writer. Every word (no matter how trivial) that Frank Lloyd Wright ever wrote or spoke has been reverently collected. Le Corbusier was such a prolific journalist and anthologizer of his own work that he sometimes appeared more powerful as polemicist than as architect or artist. Gropius was verbally articulate in academic fashion. Mies seems to have kept largely mum, apart from one or two famous epigrams.

Outside Finland, Aalto was rumoured to have written and spoken quite prolifically, but few could find out what he said for, on the whole, he spoke in Swedish (his mother's language but largely inaccessible to most Europeans), and he wrote mostly in Finnish, the daunting slopes of which have been conquered



Sidi Bou, Atlas Mountains, 1951. Aalto's sketches are used throughout Göran Schildt's book.

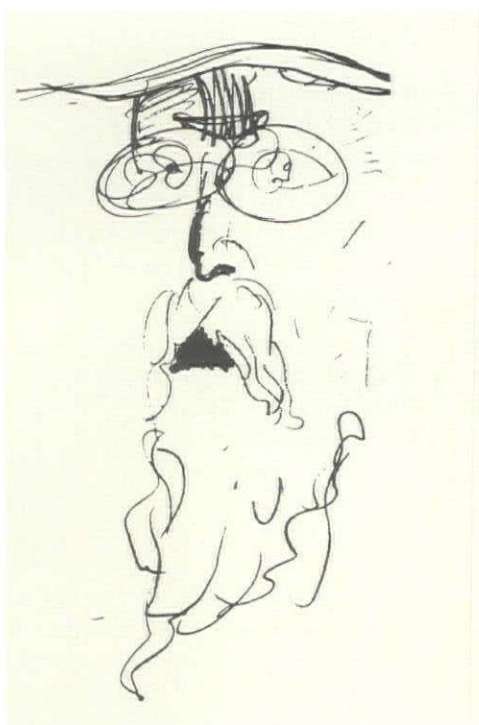
by only a few really dedicated non-Finnish heroes (none of whom has been an architectural critic or historian). Now, Göran Schildt has crowned his loving and extensive biography of his friend (AR May 1988 and AR March 1992) with an anthology of over 75 of Aalto's speeches and essays, all translated or reproduced in English (like most of his countrymen,

Aalto was no slouch at foreign languages and during and after his '40s American period, he sometimes spoke in English – for instance in his 1957 RIBA Annual Discourse).

Schildt has arranged his matter in roughly chronological order, so we start with the young architect patriotically trying to marry his obsession with the Italian Renaissance to his love of the landscape and culture of Finland. Then there is his increasing interest in modernity, industrialization and rationalism, which commenced in the late '20s and, perhaps focused by the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition, began to lead to his first brilliant personal interpretations of European Modernism which started to earn him an international reputation. But as early as 1935, he was already criticizing 'formal functionalism', and arguing that 'objects that can rightly be called rational often suffer from a flagrant inhumanity'.

This was the attitude that led him for instance to introduce bedside lights and radiant ceiling heating for the recumbent body (leaving the head cool) in the Paimio Sanatorium, rather than having central room lights and uniform suffocating heat, as was then the practice in hospitals. He believed at the time (and indeed throughout his life) that technology and rationalism have a huge amount to offer, but they must be controlled. In the RIBA Discourse, he argued that we should 'create an elastic standardization, a standardization that [will] not command us, but one that we would command. Slowly, slowly there is more and more mechanical dictatorship over us ... It does not matter how much electric cables or the wheels of motor cars are standardized: but when ... we come to things that are close to us, the problem is different – it becomes a question of the spirit.' And in a much earlier speech he had emphasized that 'as opposed to a car, a building has a fixed relationship with nature: it is inseparably attached to a plot of land ... A building cannot fulfil its purpose 100 per cent if it is standardized in the same way as a car'.

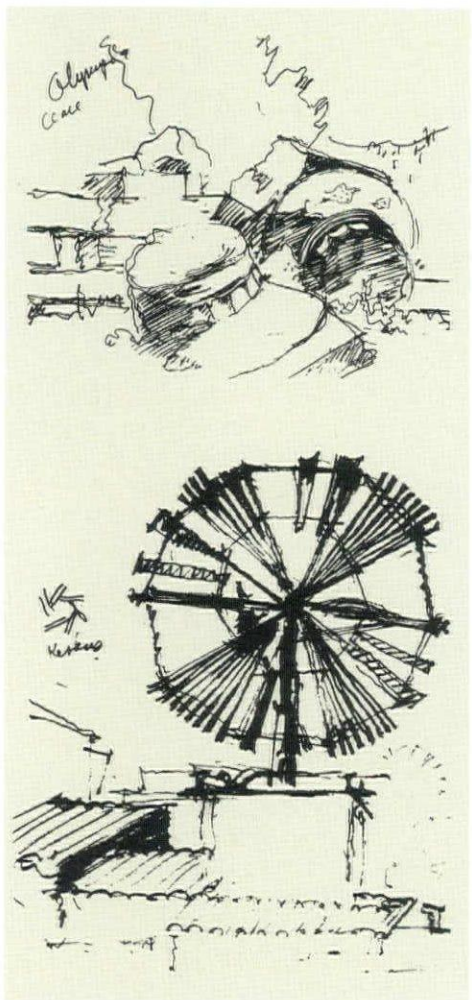
He decried the decline in public architecture: 'the overseas world has gained so much ground that even here in Finland we have built



Old man, Italy, 1924.



San Gimignano, 1924.



Top: Olympia, 1953. Above: windmill, Spain, 1951.

only a handful of truly authoritative public buildings since we gained independence in 1917. Our cities are turning, or have turned, into an amorphous mass'. This was written in 1953, when he still hoped that Finland, and perhaps Scandinavia as a whole, could become patterns for the development of building, planning and architecture throughout the world, and that idealistic architects would be among the leaders of the creation of a better society.

In the early '50s, both propositions seemed plausible. But Aalto's 17-year chairmanship of SAFA (the Finnish Society of Architects) came to an end in 1959. His position was being challenged by a new and iconoclastic generation of architects who saw his long dominance of the profession as dictatorship – and a woolly one, ill-suited to a nation still struggling to overcome devastating results of wars. More seriously in the long run, bureaucracy and big business were starting to undermine the authoritative humanist position of the professions: the proposition, in which Aalto believed so passionately, that all professional people should work disinterestedly for the good of society.

Schildt surely exaggerates when he suggests that Aalto thought that SAFA members could be a Nietzschean elite leading Finnish society towards progress, but certainly there were elements of the notion in his approach at the time (as there were in the minds of very many contemporary architects). In a sense, Aalto's later years were darkened by punishment for the hubris of his days of unquestioned international fame and internal influence. Schildt's chronological narrative breaks down in this period, to be replaced by little collections of pieces on particular topics: plan descriptions, interior design, 'In memoriam' – Aalto's obituaries of his mentors and contemporaries, interviews, and so on.

The fragmentation perhaps echoes the mentality of the older man. We have to take the picture that Schildt has given us, which is inevitably partial and heavily edited (and, utterly maddeningly, without a subject index – the publishers are monstrously remiss in this). But we must be enormously thankful to Schildt for what he and his researchers have been able to put together from very scattered and disjoint sources. More comprehensive collections may become available in time, but this is a fine start. Schildt's selection will be a lasting memorial to Aalto's centenary. And it should greatly

improve the quality of Aalto scholarship among non-Finnish writers, who up to now have relied on a few fragmentary English and German texts and extracts.

For me, this is a wonderful addition to the understanding of an architect who wrote to his friend, my predecessor J. M. Richards, that he could not answer his questions in words but 'would answer in buildings. Answering with buildings, however, takes time'. So the need for words. They amplify the genius we already knew through the buildings and drawings, revealing a humanist mind of great breadth and complexity, nobility, tenderness and determination, touched by both hope and tragedy (though lacking the humour which all who knew him speak of). Schildt wisely ends with an extract from Aalto's tribute at Eliel Saarinen's state funeral in 1950:

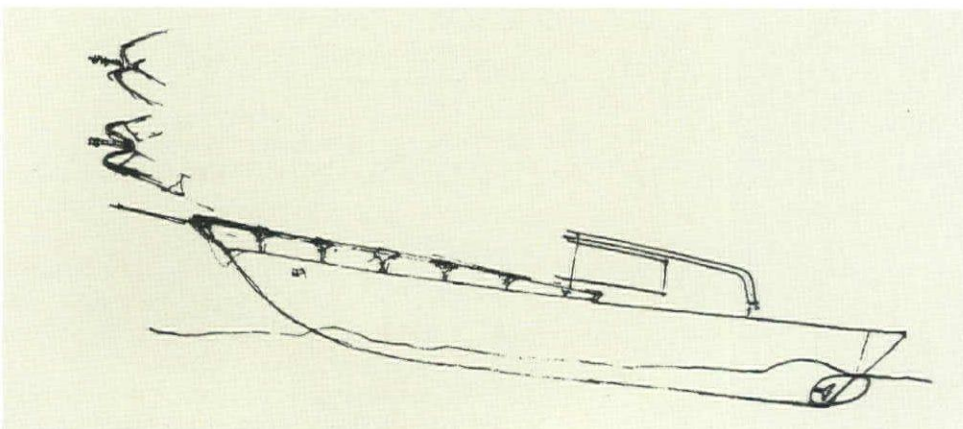
'Regardless of which social system prevails ... a softening human touch is needed in moulding societies, cities, buildings and even the smallest machine-made objects into something positive to the human psyche, without bringing individual freedom and the common good into conflict ...

'For architecture to take a deeper role as a humanizing cultural factor that defends man, we need works cast in matter itself – no words can help. We need to have a monumental force that gives man hope, confidence and self-discipline – we need to have social awareness and compassion for the human tragedy. Architecture must be deeply rooted in place and circumstance; it requires a delicate sense of form; it must support human emotions.' PETER DAVEY

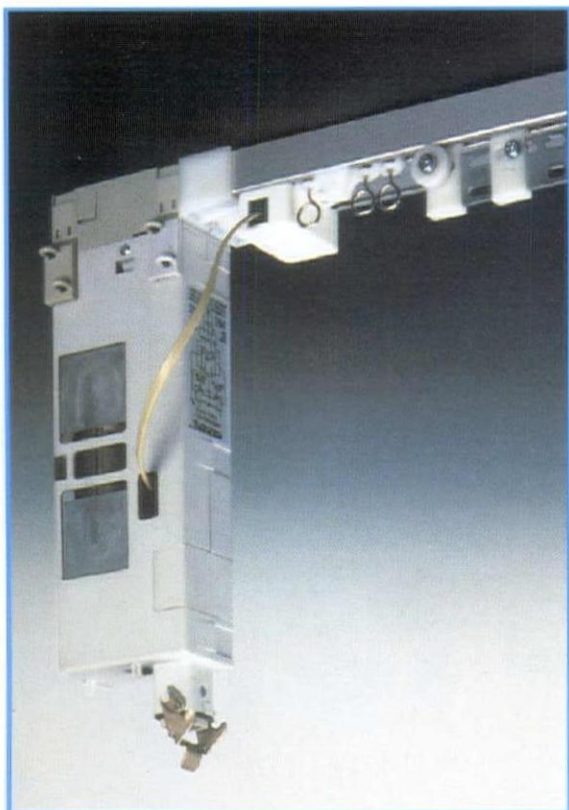
Birthday celebrations

Aalto celebrations are building up in Finland and abroad. Peter MacKeith comments on new Aalto enthusiasm and looks at the two key exhibitions in Helsinki and New York, which will both travel internationally later this year.

'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own county', remarked Christ to St Matthew. Their Latin original rendering was Finnish architect Alvar Aalto's ironically caustic title for his private boat, reflecting his sense of being overlooked professionally during his younger days and then attacked as the 'Establishment' during his waning years. The phrase almost arrogantly haunts this year's centenary celebrations of Aalto's birth. For such is the scale of Aalto's reputation as a master-architect of this century that 1998 is marked by two major world-travelling exhibitions, accompanying



Sketch for boat *Nemo propheta in patria*, 1953.



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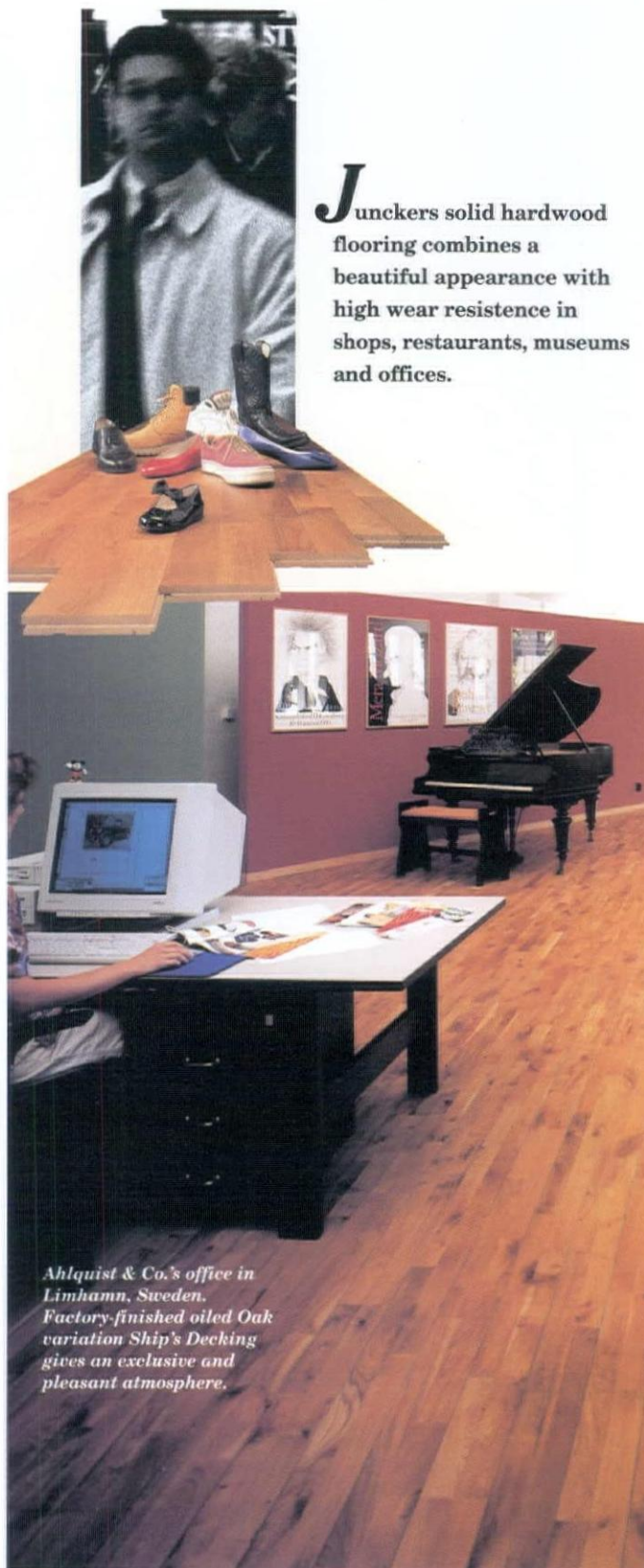
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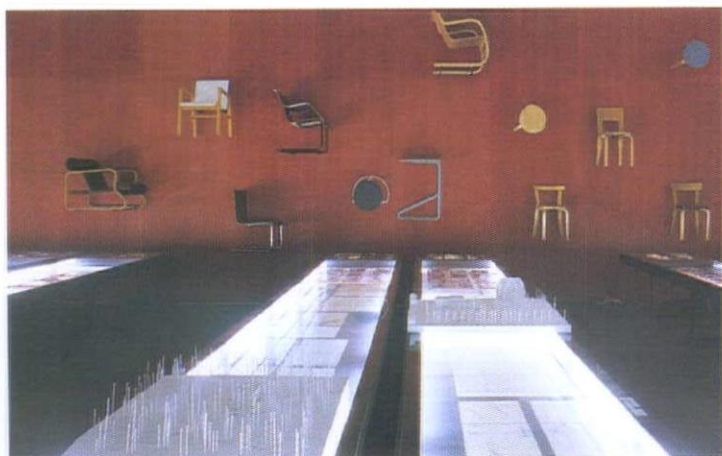


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Aalto in Helsinki, and ...



... at MoMA. Both shows will travel.

catalogues with appreciative essays, a Helsinki City exhibition, numerous books, monographs, symposia, tours, lectures and speeches. The Museum of Finnish Architecture and the Museum of Modern Art in New York have mounted the travelling exhibitions, confirming for larger purposes Aalto's position with regard to Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Louis Kahn, the other masters of the twentieth century.

Indeed an Aalto industry, albeit with certain dignity (no ties and definitely no T-shirts), has been produced for 1998. The Finnish Tourist Board was already recruiting journalists from abroad for a sponsored five-day Aalto tour to Finland in the fall of 1997. A commemorative Aalto coin has been minted, and his preferred Tuscan wine has been especially labelled, as well as a Finnish berry wine. Presumably the wines will be available for service at the intermission of the theatrical production of 'Aalto in Paimio', scheduled for the summer theatre season. Even if the rumoured 'international Aalto-motif patchwork competition' is not listed on the official centenary programme, it is clear that 1998 will bring the architect and his work into the foreground of Finnish cultural life, as well as renewing interest in his built achievements throughout the world.

On the exact 100th birthday, 3 February, the Finnish Prime Minister opened an exhibition, *Alvar Aalto in Seven Buildings*, in the Helsinki Art Hall. Jointly organized by the Museum of Finnish Architecture, the Alvar Aalto Museum, the Alvar Aalto Foundation and the Finnish Association of Architects, the exhibition is already booked to travel throughout Europe for the next two years. (Already on New Year's Eve of this year, the Alvar Aalto Museum had opened its newly designed permanent exhibition offering an overview of Aalto's career). On 16 February, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York opened their retrospec-

tive exhibition, entitled *Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism*. MoMA has previously only accorded this kind of retrospective for its public for the work of Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright and has never accorded such a place of prominence in its galleries exclusively to Aalto (the Finnish retrospective following Aalto's death was offered to MoMA and it declined for internal political reasons; the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum in New York played the New York host instead). MoMA's 1998 show will also travel internationally, reaching Japan by late 1999.

Re-evaluation

In the exhibitions and presentations following Aalto's death in 1976, the emphasis was on the vitality of his life, on the inseparability of his character from his work. Much of the material concerning Aalto published and exhibited until now has been tinged with either the influence of Aalto himself upon the criticism, or by the strong personal memory the organizers have had of the architect. Over the last decade, for instance, Göran Schildt has carefully written a three-volume biography, drawing on interviews, writings, personal experience and archival examinations. While some observers have criticized the biography for being too appreciative – a hagiography, in fact Schildt's work has been important, for it has cleared the way towards a referenced appreciation of Aalto's career.

The emphasis this year is rightfully on the sheer abundance of Aalto's work, on the process of its development, on its objectives and its significance over time. The passage of time has lessened the influence of the architect's personality; and there is now a generation of architects and scholars who appraise Aalto's work with a rather less prejudiced eye. The establishment of the Aalto Foundation's archival activities over the last 15 years now provides researchers with welcome access to

the design process behind the production.

The centennial organizers are careful to note that these are not simple retrospectives; reflecting the shifts in Aalto research and scholarship, the principal exhibitions and accompanying literature are more analytical, selective presentations. Markku Lahti, the Director of the Alvar Aalto Museum in Jyväskylä, observes that, 'while the exhibitions here are thematic, for the first time we Finns are trying to analyze Aalto's work ... we have tried to understand precisely how to present Aalto to the Finnish public – as everyone certainly knows who he was, but there has been so much negative information recently due to Finlandia Hall's renovations. We now are looking at Aalto as no longer a superhuman figure, but appreciating the work in a critical way'.

The MoMA exhibition, while officially a retrospective, also reflects shifts in Aalto scholarship, according to Elina Standertskjöld, the Museum of Architecture liaison. 'In the United States, Aalto has been known primarily as a designer – due mainly to the popularity of the Artek furniture and the Savoy vase – but the New York exhibition will show him to the American public as an architect.' Intrinsic to the efforts of Peter Reed, MoMA's assistant curator for architecture and design, has been the desire to bring Aalto's buildings and design process to life for the American viewer. The availability of organized archival material through the Aalto Foundation has been essential; Reed and his assistants have spent the better part of two years commuting between MoMA's 57th Street offices and the Aalto Foundation in Munkkiniemi, poring through the archives, selecting drawings, and mapping out an exhibition which highlights Aalto's work through sketches, development drawings, contract documents, correspondence, analytical drawings and models and the process of detailing each building.

PETER MACKEITH

Soler heat

SIR: Your critic says it all when she questions Francis Soler's wisdom in adorning the windows of subsidized rental housing with kitsch reproductions of bits of Giulio Romano (AR May, p64), for 'living at close quarters with such large omnipresent figurative images at every window' must not only be 'oppressive' but down-right disturbing and, in the long run, extremely unpleasant. What might be an amiable after-lunch joke must become a nightmare after a month or two in those poky little rooms.

As your pictures show, the wall photographs well in certain lights from carefully chosen viewpoints. But what justification has this aberration other than gratifying the whim of the architect? Charlotte Ellis tries hard to find excuses by pointing out that 'the decorated glass might ... be replaced - with differently patterned, or opaque glass, perhaps even solid panels'.

Here is yet another example of the French architect's lust to make a gesture at whatever cost to people and even budget. If gestures are inevitable, I'd prefer to live behind the 'muted' facades of Perrault's library, which is silly in its own way, but not as ridiculous as Soler's work.

Yours etc

FRANCIS GEOFF

Toulouse

Green unseen

SIR: Am I alone in wondering what the 10 projects in April's AR on the theme of 'Architecture and Ecology' actually have to do with the subject? True we have organic building, a certain Scharoun-like informality and turf roofs, but are these buildings really addressing ecology?

Let's start with first principles: ecology is about interactions in natural systems and nature, the creation of the maximum of diversity and richness with the minimum of resources, and those resources perpetually recycled. Ecology is a hard discipline for architecture to follow, and as the editor points out, we have a lot of modernist baggage in the way. But it is the culture of architecture which seems to cloud AR's judgement when it comes to sustainability. We have pages of mainly German and French eco-tech or eco-cool architecture masquerading as sustainable design.

Let's get back to green basics and where we cite ecology as a paradigm for design, let's at least follow through the obligations on biodiversity agreed at the Rio Summit. Then I think more relevant examples will follow.

Yours etc

BRIAN EDWARDS

Huddersfield, England

A moral and architectural issue

SIR: 'Life is important not style.' 'We must help generate the biotechnic culture or be reduced to absurd capering.' (AR April 1998, p4). Surely these sentiments are too simplistic. Of itself, style amounts to little but visual literacy remains the bed-rock of architecture. Singular prescriptions about architecture are dangerous as too many architects are insecure about their visual skill and readily jump onto band-wagons. It would be a shame to encourage the crudity of the 'alternative technology' architecture of the '70s. Lepastrier's excellent houses (AR April, p69) are exemplary models of a balanced relationship between architecture and ecology.

Yours etc

D. WALKER

Hull, England

Kuwait corrections

SIR: First our compliments for an excellent edition on Middle East and Islamic Architecture (AR March 1998). The articles were superb.

However, the article 'Waterfront Development, Kuwait City, Kuwait', p42, submitted by HLW, falsely portrays the project. You are led to believe that the HLW design was built and KEO was its associate in implementing the scheme.

Taking the last point first. KEO was never an associate architect to HLW on this or any other project. KEO did not implement the HLW scheme. As an aside, KEO is not a 'local Kuwaiti design consultancy'. KEO (KEO International Consultants) is a broad-based multi-disciplinary firm with five offices in the region and one opening in New York in May '98. The other significant issue is that the article is written in the 'present' tense implying the HLW scheme lives and has been constructed. Nothing could be further from the truth.

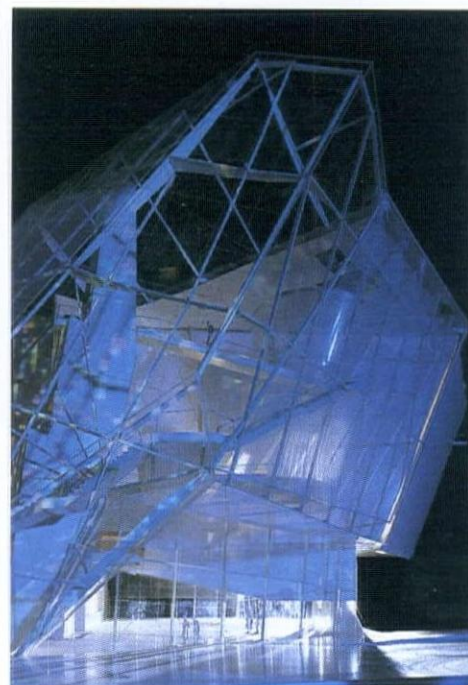
HLW was the lead consultant in a consortium that developed a successful entry in a design competition on behalf of National Real Estate Company (NREC). NREC chose not to continue with the services of HLW and hired KEO to be design consultant for the project. KEO's contract included a revision of the masterplan, concept designs through working drawings for the Asharq Waterfront Project as it is now called. KEO was also the Construction Manager for the \$100 million development.

The project is a landmark project so the record needs to be corrected and we request that an article appear that describes the project that was realized and built.

Yours etc

DONNA SULTAN

KEO International Consultants, Kuwait



Buildings for recreation form the theme of next month's issue, underpinned by extensive coverage of the Lisbon Expo site in Lisbon. An ambitious development programme on a site beside the River Tagus aims to propel Lisbon into the future, with a legacy of recreational and commercial facilities that will revitalize a neglected part of the urban conurbation. Among the projects to be considered are Skidmore Owings and Merrill's vast indoor sports arena, Alvaro Siza's Portuguese Pavilion, an oceanarium by Peter Chermayeff and a new station for the Expo site by Santiago Calatrava.

In Paris, we look at the new national stadium designed for the World Cup by Macary and Zublena, and on a much smaller scale examine a school sports hall in Germany by Peter Hübner that combines placemaking with an innovative approach to environmental control. Also included are a beautifully executed conversion of a monastery into a hotel in Braga, northern Portugal by Eduardo Souto de Moura, and a stunning new cinema in Dresden by Coop Himmelb(l)au. And in Scandinavia, where recreation and nature have traditionally enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, we look at a new Finnish Folk Art Centre by Kaira Lahdelma Mahlamäki and an exquisite little Norwegian summer house by Carl-Viggo Høimebakk. Buy this and 11 other equally enlivening issues by filling in the enclosed subscription form.

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AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE AT SPECTRUM

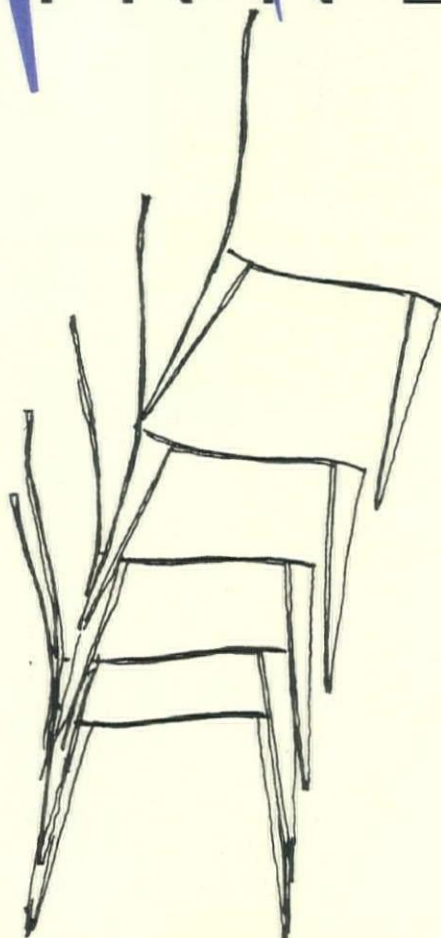
This is the second year of the AR's Award for Product Excellence at Spectrum, the annual furniture fair held at the Royal College of Art, London. To be eligible for an award products must be fresh to Spectrum. This year the jury members were Adrian Gale, Head of the Prince of Wales' School of Architecture, Anthony Hunt, structural engineer of Anthony Hunt & Partners, and Patty Hopkins of Michael Hopkins & Partners. Penny McGuire, AR assistant editor was chairman.

Awards went to an outright winner and three commended entries, and were presented by AR's editor, Peter Davey, who also quoted the jury's honourable mention of 'an old and enduring friend'.

Hans Lenselink and the winning chair



WINNER



501

The winner this year was Mart van Schijndel's prototype of a lightweight brightly coloured metal stacking chair, designed for the Dutch firm Lensvelt and called Fulfil. The chair is made out of a folded perforated sheet of an aluminium and carbon alloy and its structure is strengthened by welding. Available in any colour.

The judges found this a 'compelling design' with an essential spark of imagination and originality that engaged their curiosity. Its proportions remained satisfactory from every angle, while the profile possessed 'pleasing alertness'. They remarked on an admirable attempt to experiment with new material and use it in an interesting and innovative way.

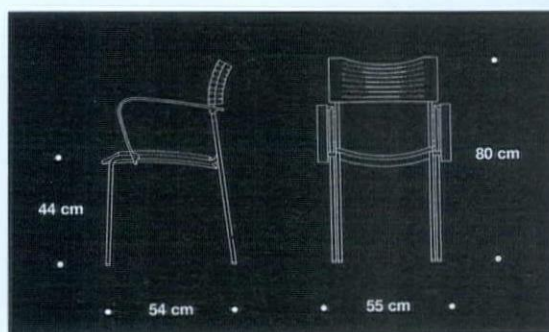
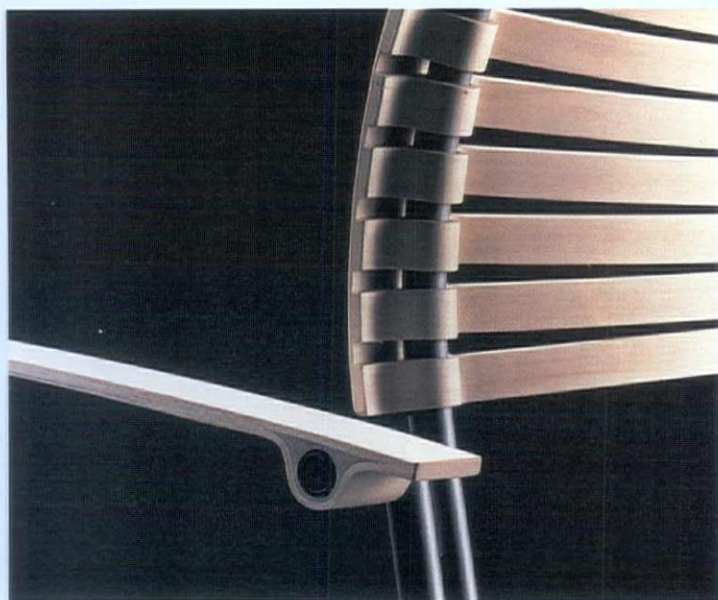


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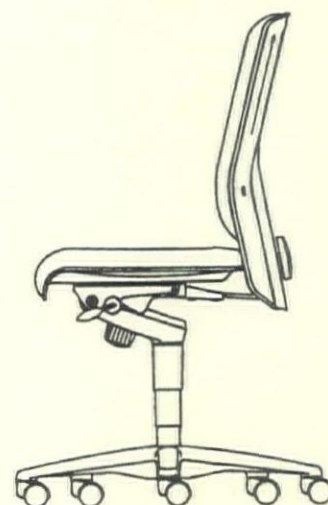
502

Runner: stacking linking chair designed by Kasper Salto for the Danish firm, Botium, and available from Howe. Made in wood and steel, the chair's design is deliberately anthropomorphic and skeletal. Seat and back are constructed to curve in two directions. The wooden pieces have a traditional outward bow but are slit horizontally so that when they are fitted onto and compressed by the fine steel frame both curves come into play. The result is a light elegant chair that firmly supports the body with slight springiness. Wood can be maple or beech and the chair is available with or without arms and an upholstered seat.

The judges liked the version in wood and steel, without upholstery, finding it a 'highly resolved' piece of design, with a clearly expressed structure crafted in the finest Danish tradition.



HIGHLY COMMENDED



503

Xerra office chair from Girsberger, designed by Dieter Stierli and the Girsberger design team. The 'dynamic-synchronic' mechanism makes the chair flex automatically with the occupant; height is adjustable, as is the backrest. Armrests are optional and there are five possible colours.

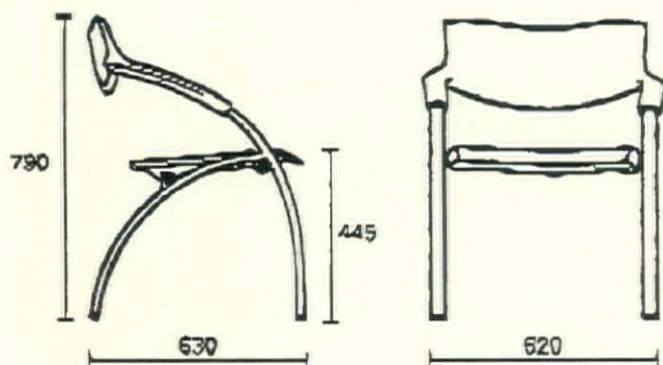
The judges commented that this was a good comfortable office chair, competitively priced. Its design was sophisticated without being pompous.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

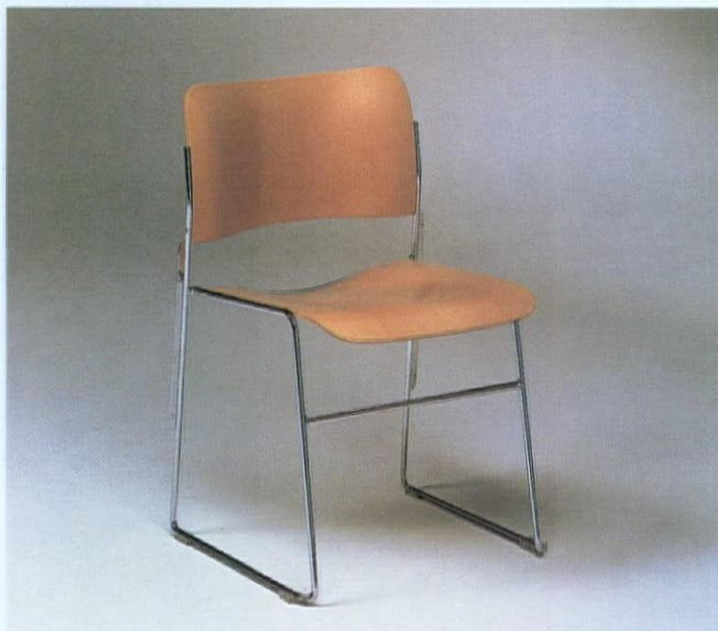
504

Drac cast aluminium and moulded polyurethane chair, designed by André Richard for the Spanish firm, Amat.

The judges (in one of whom this chair inspired profound passion) found it a sleek, stylish and comfortable design.



HONOURABLE MENTION the 'old friend'



505

40/4 stacking wood and steel chair by David Rowland, designed and made in the early '60s and available from Howe UK.

The jury could not let the occasion pass without mention of the 40/4 – 'an old friend'. This extraordinarily refined design has endured for over 30 years and the chair continues to fulfil excellently the purpose for which it was designed. It is comfortable and stacks beautifully. Rowland's chair is an archetype, providing a touchstone by which excellence can be measured'.



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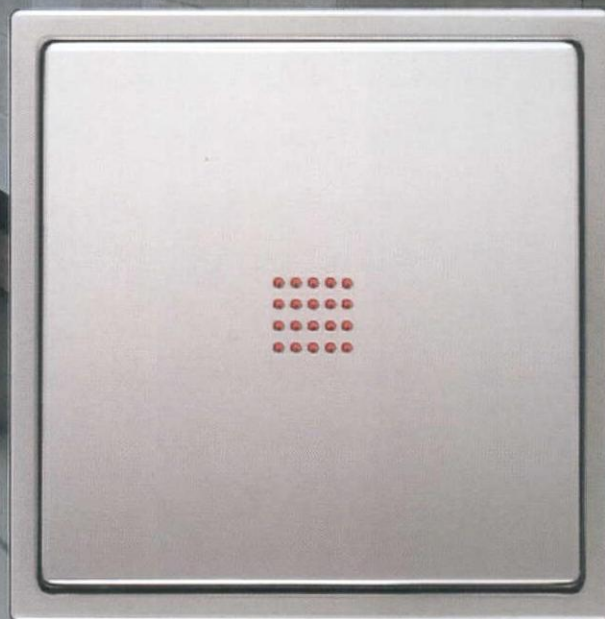
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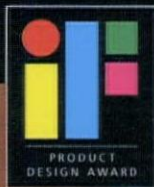
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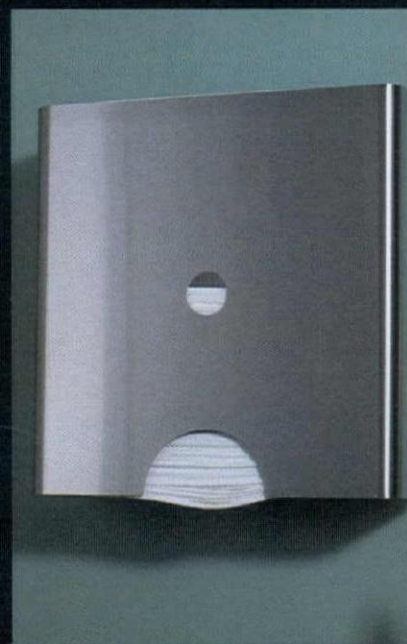
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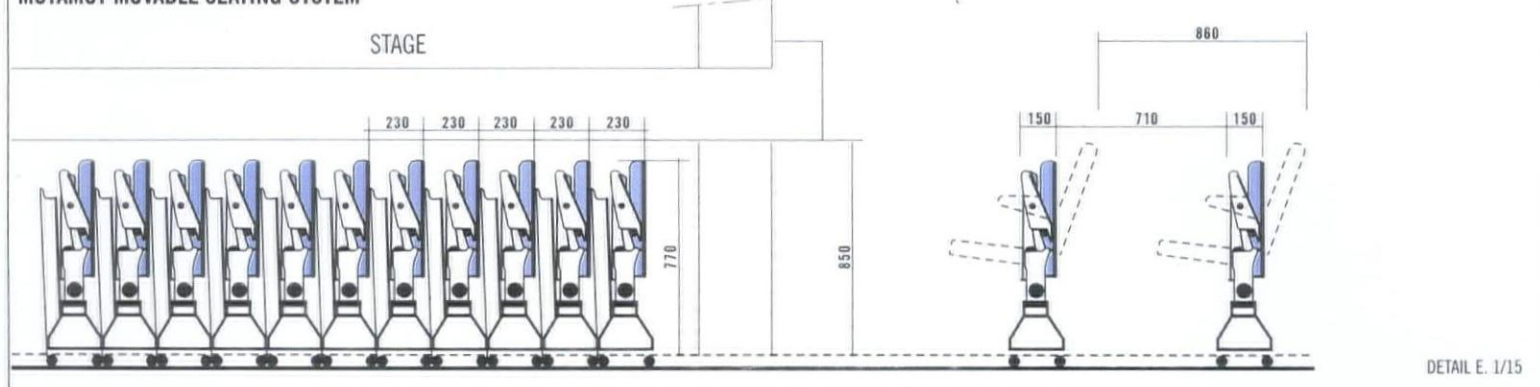
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outrage



The relentless trivializing of culture is aptly symbolized by the degradation of the once noble piano into a garish husk housing a cocktail cabinet or escritoire: fetishistic status symbols devoid of meaning.

Before the invention of the gramophone and its raucous progeny, musical entertainment in middle-class households was an altogether genteel affair, generally conducted around a piano in the corner of the living room. This necessitated some degree of skill and application on the part of family members, who had to take the trouble to actually learn to play an instrument. Now that instant aural gratification can be had at the flick of a switch and modern families no longer dine together (let alone enjoy jolly sheet-music bonding sessions), the piano *per se* has long become redundant; yet it still exerts a talismanic hold on our collective consciousness. The dilemma is as follows: how to retain the piano as a comforting status symbol, but without the pesky, time-consuming business of having to play the thing yourself.

Step forward Piano Decor, responsible for the curious creations shown above. As their florid literature puts it: 'Pianos have always

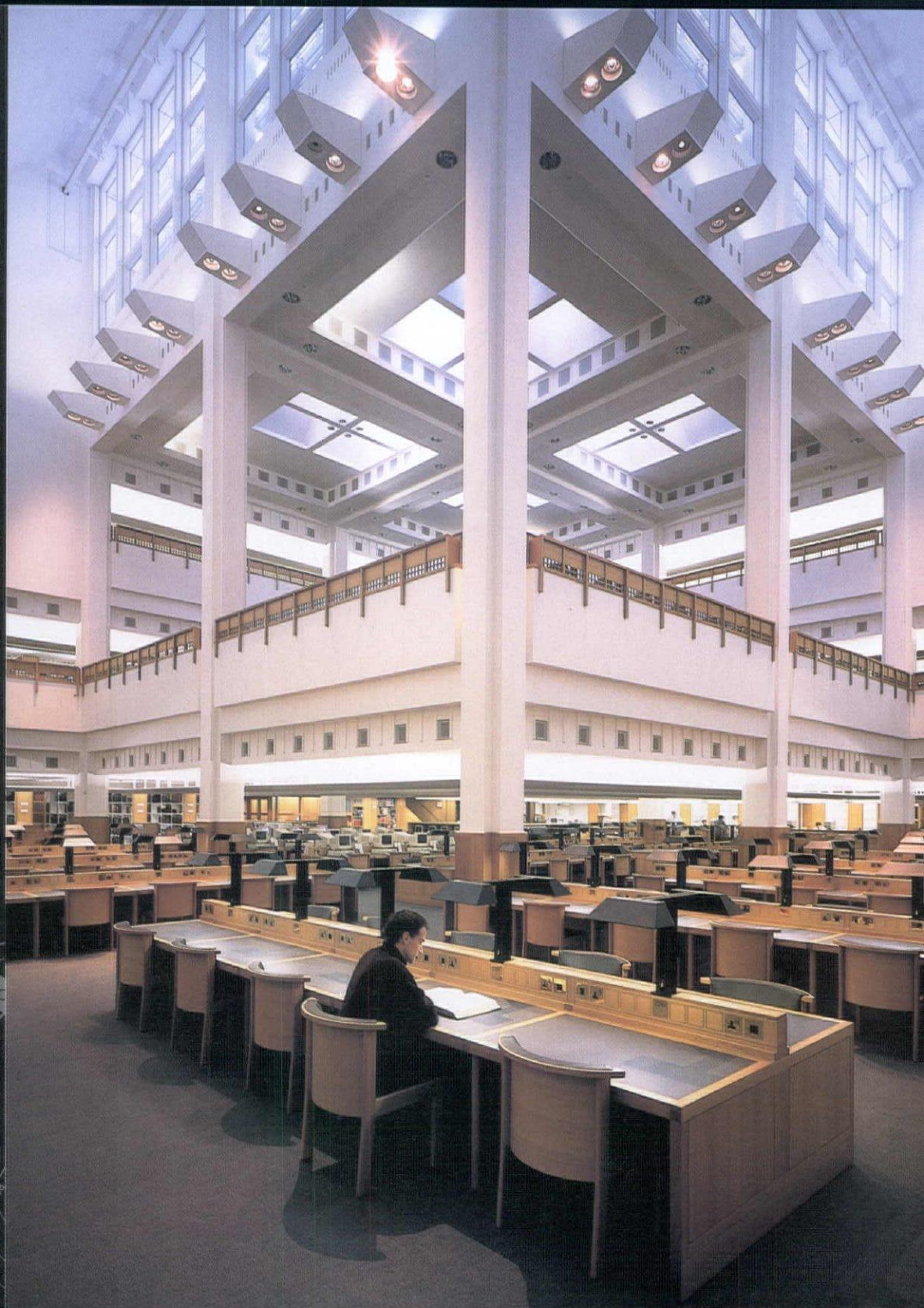
been seen as beautiful furniture. Now you can have vibrant colour, unmitigated style and not have to worry about anyone actually tickling the ivories'. So when is a piano not a piano? When it's a cocktail cabinet, writing desk, aquarium or music system, cunningly concealed inside a piano-shaped body and 'strikingly emblazoned' in leopard-skin print or fake marble 'to suit individual designs ... shock value or sleek sophistication, the choice is yours'. No doubt that these living-room talking points are ingenious (you marvel slightly at how an aquarium could be satisfactorily incorporated into a piano), but the entire enterprise is horribly flawed, with its relentless, jokey disregard for function and meaning, wearily symbolic of the incessant trivializing of culture. Pity the poor piano – once a complex, noble instrument now reduced to the status of fetish object in a tart's boudoir, a feeble suburban attempt to conjure up the stylistic excesses of Las Vegas and Liberace. But at least Liberace knew how to play.

C. S.



Morgan

*a passion for
chairs*



The British Library Project

Morgan won the tender for the reader's chairs and produced a total of 700 which were delivered on site following individual inspection and approval from the project architects.

The Design

The Reader's chairs have been designed exclusively for the British Library by Ron Carter, made in solid European Oak with a curved oak veneered back and green leather upholstery.

The Manufacturer

Morgan is continuously launching new individually designed products while at the same time continuing to work with architects and designers where specialised custom furniture is required. The company's Design Director, RCA graduate Katerina Zachariades, ensures that new or special products are developed with a goal for design excellence.

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TOOLS OF CIVILIZATION

Richard MacCormac's wonderfully intense Ruskin Library (here and p64) is a treasure-house. It is at one end of the spectrum of work shown in this issue, which ranges in scale and function from the library as civic centre, for instance Henning Larsen's pellucid reading room in Malmö (p52) and Will Bruder's rustic version in Jackson (p69), to libraries as great national scholarly repositories like Colin St John Wilson's long-awaited British Library (overleaf), Arat-Kaiser-Kaiser's German National Library in Frankfurt (p59) and Dominique Perrault's Très Grande Bibliothèque (p77).

Photograph Paul Barker



SPEAKING VOLUMES

After almost unimaginable vicissitudes, the British Library is at last open, and is revealed not only to be an awesome repository of knowledge, but a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and great public building in its own right.



It is a tough prospect for an architect to have to wait 23 years for the completion of a building, tougher still when this extended period is due not only to the unprecedented scale of the project but to politically conditioned stops and starts which greatly increase costs,¹ and when the whole process is in the public eye, inviting ill-informed remarks on design quality by princes and others.² For Sandy Wilson it has been something of a millstone, and he might have preferred to spend the effort on 10 lesser works, with more chance for development, experiment and exploration. But for the rest of us such an exchange would have been a loss, for someone has to undertake major public buildings of this kind, and it is hard to think of a more appropriate architect than this doughty debater of architectural issues and Professor Emeritus at Cambridge. It needed a thoughtful architect who could rise above the waves of fashion to produce something of long-term and fundamental quality.

Consider the chronological context: the design for the library dates from 1975 and was published in *AR* of December 1978.³ In 1980 James Stirling was RIBA gold medallist with the Wissenschaftszentrum in Berlin on his drawing board. His Stuttgart Staatsgalerie (*AR* December 1984) was yet to come: imagine it completed now and you see the problem. A major building of its time, it is stuck in the mid '80s, victim of its own success when its much-borrowed motifs became design clichés. The British Library, in contrast, was deprived of the power to influence. Completed in the early '80s, it would have played a major role in architectural debate, perhaps even as a foil to Stirling.

The basic project goes back even further. It is the main work carried on by Wilson from an earlier period in partnership with Leslie

¹ Wilson's library echoes George Gilbert Scott's St Pancras station in its materials, and perhaps more fundamentally, its method of composition. The huge formal gateway in the foreground ...

² ... leads to the formal entrance court: a tranquil enclave, protected from the traffic and mess of Euston Road.



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CRITICISM

PETER BLUNDELL JONES

PHOTOGRAPHS

MARTIN CHARLES



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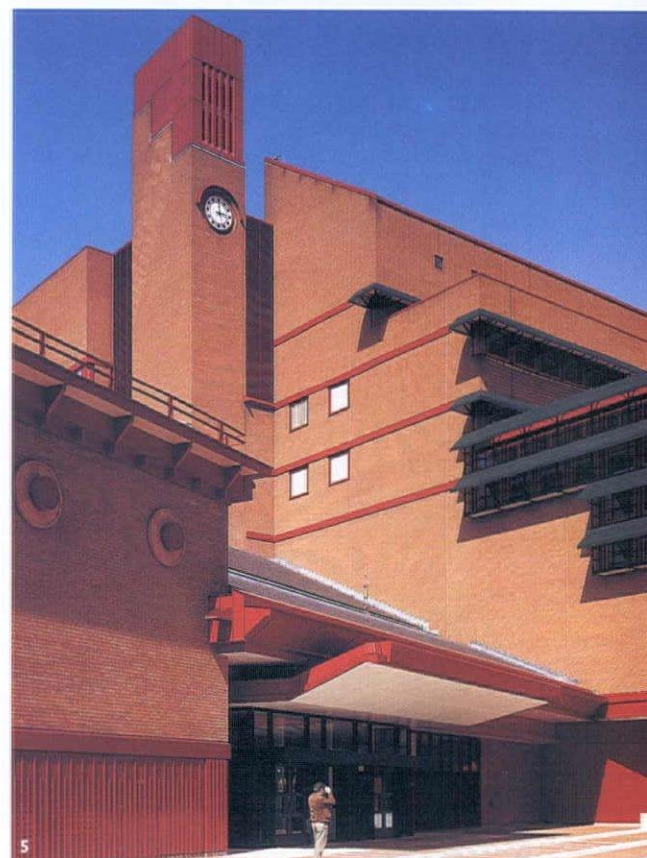
Martin. The need for an extension to the British Library had long been felt, for the reading room was crowded and the ever-expanding collection of books had to be housed in a variety of places in less than ideal conditions. Responding to the library's first brief in the brave new world of the '60s, Martin and Wilson planned a new building opposite the British Museum, part of a new square developed on its axis. It offered Smirke's building breathing space and would have produced a significant new public meeting place for London, but was abandoned with the rising tide of conservation, for it threatened a substantial piece of Georgian Bloomsbury. The 1970s rethink produced a switch to the St Pancras goods-yard site, the nearest available place large enough for the library and its projected extensions. It was a far-sighted move, for although the area has not been very salubrious, travel links are good and will improve when the Continental trains come through. Just by its presence, it will produce an upgrading of the area. The site was meant to accommodate a much larger library in fully expanded form, but with rising costs and a stranglehold on public spending, the extensions were abandoned and the last government even planned to sell the rest of the site. Let us hope that Blair & Co will take a longer view.

The library's main neighbour is George Gilbert Scott's St Pancras hotel, a Gothic Revival masterpiece recently subjected to an expensive external restoration, though still awaiting a convincing new use. In its daringly irregular asymmetrical plan and aggregative assembly of volumes it follows Gothic practice as advocated by Pugin and Ruskin, who found virtue in the 'savageness' and 'changefulness' of Gothic as opposed to the integrated totality and repose of a Classical scheme.⁴

An English building

Wilson has long been an advocate for the English Free Architecture that grew from the Gothic Revival, and of the Organic Architecture of Wright, Häring, Aalto and Scharoun that followed on from it in the twentieth century.⁵ He therefore felt that an irregular articulated building exploiting the givens of the site and displaying the disposition of the programme would sympathize with St Pancras. His red brick and slate roofs echo the station directly: even the red paint of the library metalwork has its counterpart across the road, but essential kinship with the older building is much deeper: a kinship of process and inner articulation.

Central to the library's programme were reading rooms required to be used in different ways. Humanities readers would require books from distant stacks to be ordered and delivered, with relatively few open shelves. Science readers, on the other hand, would depend much more on current periodicals, which can be kept on open stacks. This difference led to contrasting types of reading room: square ones with many reader places and linear ones which are half user-stack and half reader places. These two types are disposed in linear tracts on the two sides of the site, each following its respective boundary and each extendible to the rear. The diverging space between them became the foyer which reconciles the building's two orthogonal systems, expressing in its dynamic shape its transitional role. It brings readers in for checking and cloakrooms, then distributes them to either side. It also contains the public restaurant in a prominent position, evoking a sense of hospitality and letting everyone know where to go for refreshment.





3
The 1972 project: a different site but similar programme, the project would have destroyed a huge chunk of Georgian Bloomsbury.

4
Scott's fairy towers dream over twentieth-century pragmatism.

5
Main entrance in corner of court.

6
Entrance to conference centre on east side of court.

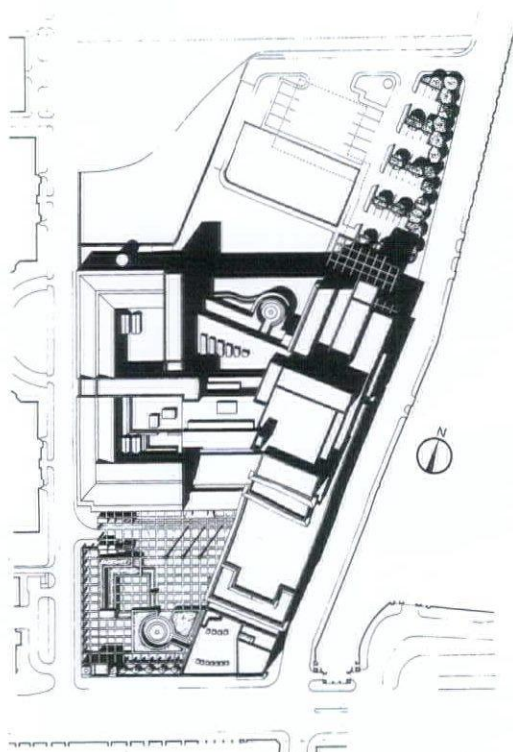
7,8
Midland Road side: where shops might have been appropriate, heavy-handed governments forbade mixed use.

9
North side overlooks area intended for extension and car park.

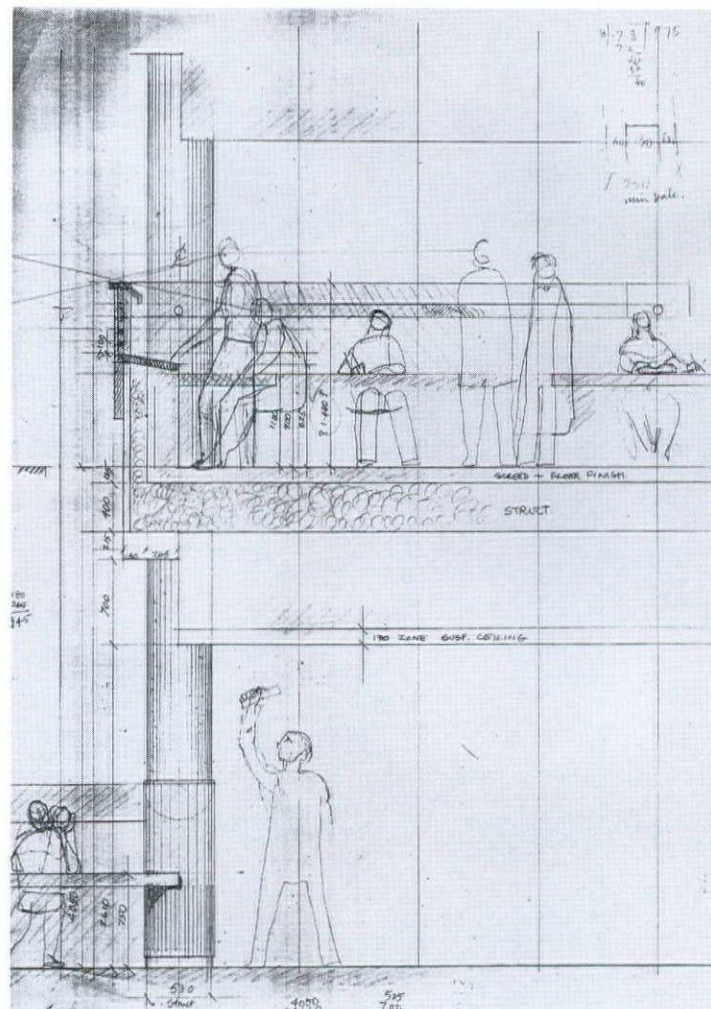
10
Terrace for readers and friends of library crowns north elevation.



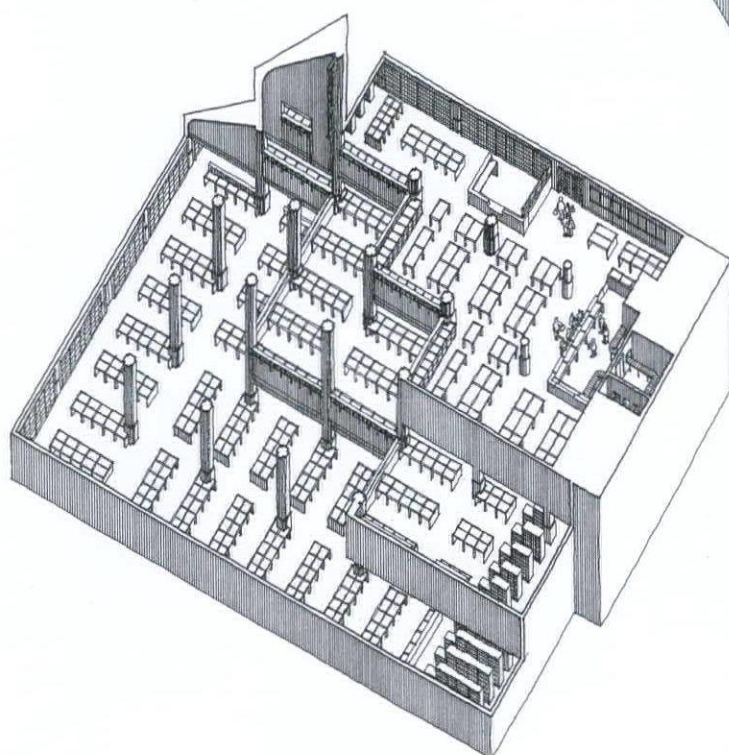
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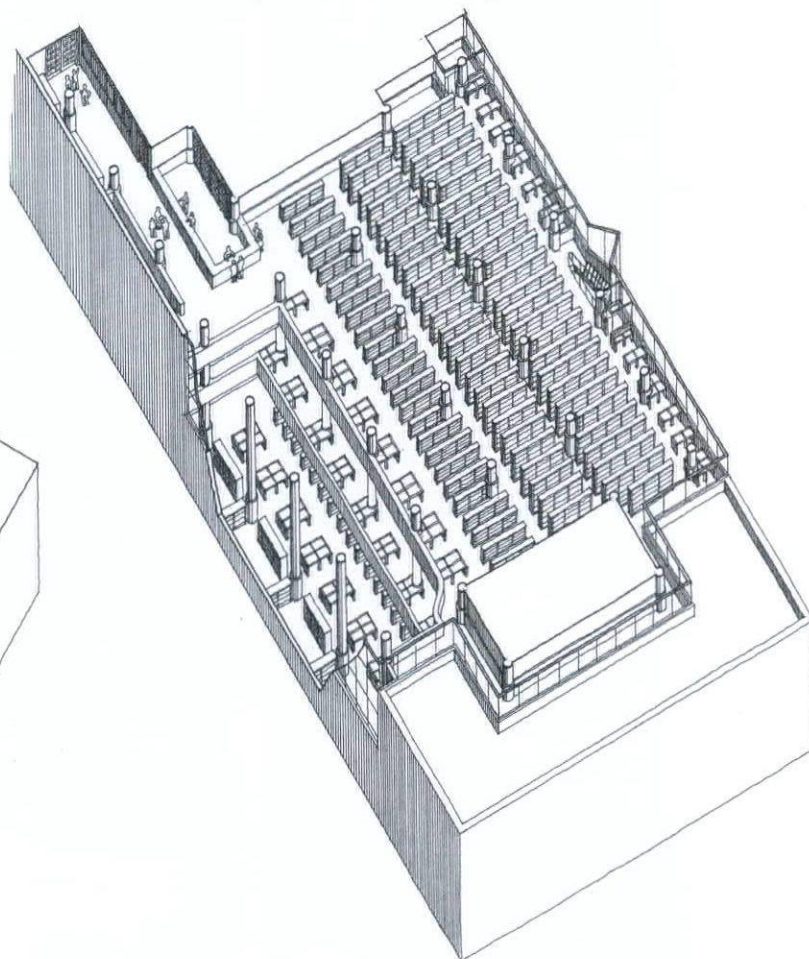
site plan



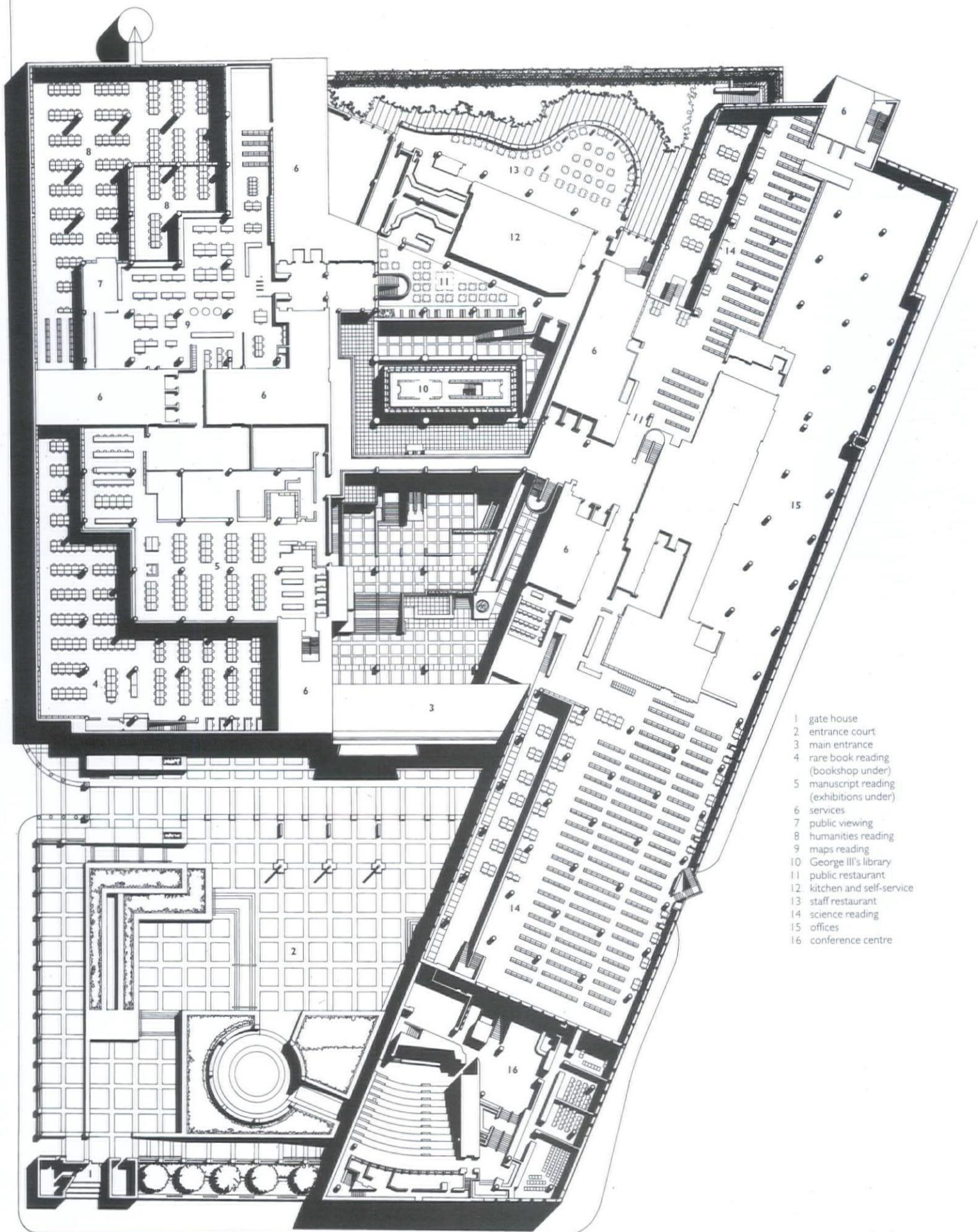
Wilson sketch of workplaces in humanities reading room



humanities reading room: workplaces in centre with reference books on perimeter



sciences reading room: open access stacks with readers on periphery



composite multi-level plan (scale approx 1:800)

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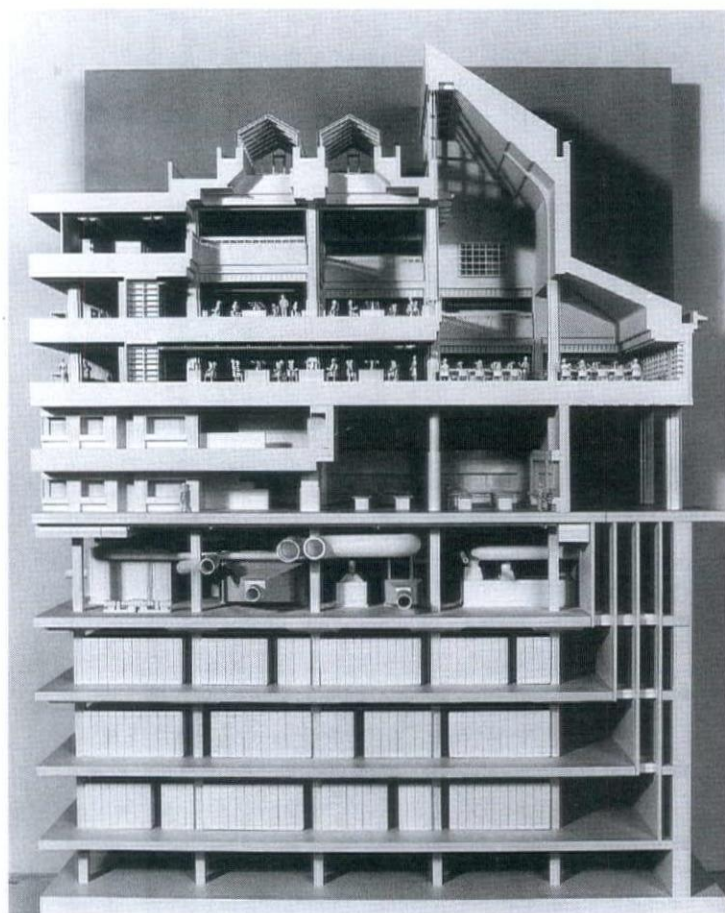
The Camden planners insisted on the court fronting Euston Road as the public space from which to enter the building, and necessitated the deep set-back of the entrance front. Though it seems natural for a major public building to open on a square where people can gather, it posed a tricky design problem. Euston Road is a noisy and polluting six-lane highway, and the four-lane Midland Road which divides the library from St Pancras is not much better. The square could scarcely be left open and unprotected, but Wilson had to argue hard to be allowed to project the south-east wing forward. He also found it necessary to erect a considerable – though partly transparent – wall against the traffic along Euston Road, and to build a separate gatehouse at the south-west corner. If this is a less than ideal relationship between building and public realm, it reflects the conflicts of our technical age. Inevitably the library seems fenced off from Euston Road, and with construction hoardings was even more standoffish, hence the bad press before the positive qualities of the court could be discovered.

Promenade architecturale

At the gatehouse, though, one happily leaves the traffic behind. Progress is diagonal toward the main entrance, down two shallow flights of steps, and across a slightly tilted plane. The route is not fully prescribed, leaving an element of choice, but an even rhythm develops in the layout of the paving. Paolozzi's impressively mechanistic Newton – at just the right scale – closes the first axis, so one sidesteps to the right, then sidesteps again. The court has a number of subsidiary parts with inviting seats along the way, used even on winter days, so it should become even more tempting as a meeting place in the summer. Over to the right near the east entrance from the stations is a more definite and static sitting place in the form of a rotunda: this will be animated by a series of heads by Anthony Gormley when funding is found. The court encourages varied use and its subsidiary areas are intimate without destroying the sense of the whole. The pace gathers towards the building, the paving tilted down slightly to a secret gutter before tilting up again in front of the multiple doors in the corner. There is no doubt where the entrance is, but also no rhetorical flight of steps to overwhelm the visitor.

The foyer is the *pièce de résistance* with inviting flights of steps flowing on and up to the reading rooms. Visible beyond are galleries on several levels linking the two reading room tracts like bridges. Light pours in from clerestories that are at first not visible, but emerge along with their sweepingly curved ceilings as one crosses the space. The plan geometry makes the whole arrangement necessarily asymmetrical, contrasting staggered stairs on the left with skewed ones to the right. It also allows the different facilities to be clearly presented in different ways. The shop and exhibition galleries open to the general public are to the left, readers' ticket office on the right. Ramp and stair descend easily to basement cloakrooms and lavatories where one might expect to find them. For readers there is a clear and natural progression up the stairs next to the great Kitaj tapestry, through the control stiles, and on to the entrances of the various reading rooms.

Behind the crossing galleries stands the giant glazed bookcase of the King's Library which is the holy of holies and heart of the building.



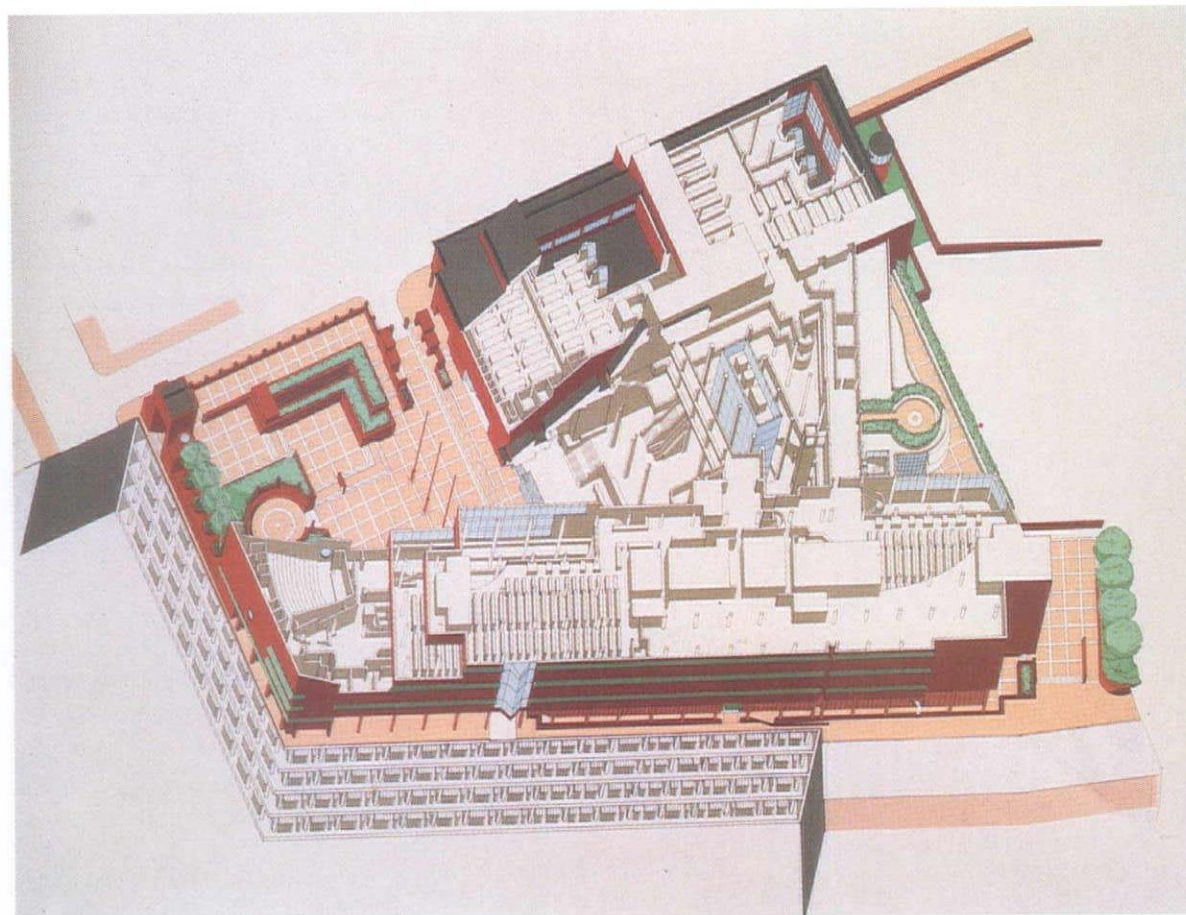
sectional model, not quite as built, but showing relationship of storage and public spaces



the (as yet unoccupied) Oriental and India Office reading room in east wing



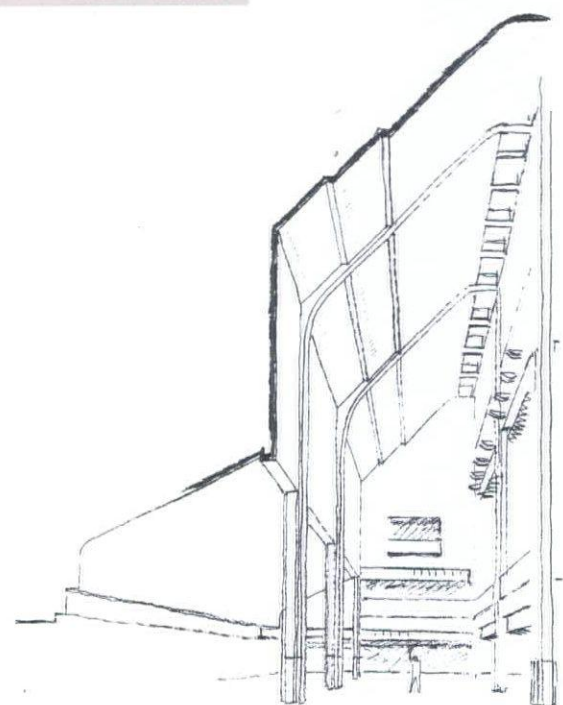
north-south section of central concourse with main entrance to right, and staff and public terraces to left



phase I, more or less as built – the plan was to have another phase to north (right)



south-north section through public concourse (entrance to left)



structural section through humanities reading room

11

Approach from the entrance hall. To the right you ascend to the reading rooms. The left-hand path is a public route to the exhibition galleries.

12

Main reception desk. Kitaj tapestry informs whole of space.

13

The great public concourse with public entrance to whole complex left.

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The richly leather-bound volumes collected by George III are placed on moveable shelves so that they can be withdrawn for reader consultation, but most of the time they just bear witness to the purpose and history of the library.⁶ The stack is set in a shiny marble floor, so seems to carry on down into the basement, alluding to the storehouse of knowledge below: the visible tip of the iceberg.

Behind the King's Library, the second large foyer space unfolds. Its tall void, again daylit from above, offers a restaurant open to general public and readers alike. Moving around, you discover the foyer as one continuous space, a complex and exciting internal landscape with rich multi-layered views in all directions, yet organized in a seemingly natural way and easy to navigate. There is no better space of this kind in London. Contrast with the labyrinth of the Barbican Arts Centre underlines the significance of the art of spatial manipulation, and the importance of escaping the neutralizing homotopia of a construction grid.

Though reading is a solitary task, visits to the national library mean partaking in a community of scholarship which ought to be acknowledged spatially. There are of course private study carrels, but a library consisting entirely of these would give no sense of arrival and participation. The ritual of visiting the capital to consult the most venerable authorities, and of sharing the experience with similar folk is surely what any national library is about. Presumably, too, it will continue in the electronic age, for the production of books shows no sign of decline and the transfer of all existing books to electronic media would be a gargantuan task. The role played by the library in the storage of electronic information will depend on the yet undecided definition of intellectual property rights.⁷

Reading together

In the design of reading rooms, some sense of togetherness and centrality is vital. Smirke's old round reading room, like many early libraries, could suggest a complete world of knowledge in its hemispherical form. This idea of global space worked from the Enlightenment schemes of Boullée until Asplund's Stockholm Library of 1928, but we have come to see our world as one among many, and the illusion of encyclopaedic control lost credibility with expanding specialities and multiple media. There is no longer the possibility of a total collection of books, or for that matter of a single world of knowledge. In his bold open-plan design for the Berlin State Library of 1964 (AR June 1979), Hans Scharoun retained the idea of a single great reading room for all, but made an asymmetrical terraced space with shifting angles defining shifting territories, indiscernible edges, and views to the world beyond. Immortalized in Wenders' film *Wings of Desire*, it is a single space with a recognizable centre but at the same time seemingly infinite. Amazingly, it lacks a decisive break between reading room and foyer.⁸

The British Library is more conservative, with several reading rooms, each totally enclosed with airlock entrances. Their differentiation defines specialized worlds of knowledge, basically science and humanities – C. P. Snow's two cultures, but also maps, manuscripts and the Oriental and India Office collections. The two humanities reading rooms are the most impressive, but also the purest and most enclosed. Essentially square in plan and partly terraced, they are dominated by deep L-shaped spaces rising to high clerestories against curved reflector walls. These spaces stress the





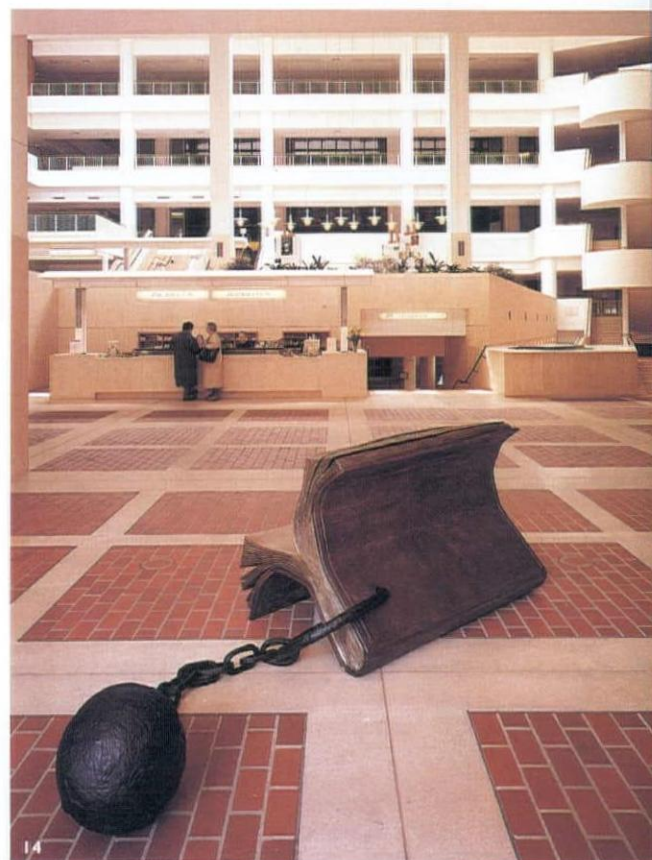
diagonal axis, defining an inner and outer corner. The inner corner belongs to the centre of the complex, marking entrance and delivery point for books. The outer with its falling ceiling marks the periphery, and in fact adjoins the outside world. The play of the diagonal in a square is found in the earlier library designs, and significantly also in Wilson's domestic masterpiece, the Cornford House in Cambridge. In the library it produces a markedly more disciplined, static and reposeful space than the foyer, without it becoming too much a world in itself. Another important design consideration was the creation of varying conditions for readers, some more open, others more intimate. Each generous leather-topped desk has task-lighting and power-points for laptops, but at the larger scale one looks across the room observing other people and the effect of changing daylight on the upper walls.

For the scientists, a more pedestrian kind of reading room was initially implied by the design brief, for there was uncertainty about the relative proportion of reader places, open stacks and associated librarians' offices. This resulted in the east wing being planned on a flexible modular system with variable partitioning. It could have ended up simply as a series of regular and mainly artificially lit floors. Concerned both to make the spaces legible and to echo the grandeur of the humanities side, Wilson pointed out the possibility of a three-storey void along the west side, allowing clerestory light to flood in, with visible stairs to upper terraces. Happily this was accepted despite the reduction in floor area, and it has become one of the major spaces, indeed the building is unthinkable without it.

Beyond the science reading rooms in the south-east corner is the conference centre, usable as a separate complex with its own entrance. The contrast in shaping of space seen in the main building between the irregular foyer and more disciplined reading rooms is played out again between the fan-shaped lecture hall and the terraced foyer. Informal groups of seats incorporated in the levels accommodate casual chat and coffee between sessions. The lecture theatre is among the most inviting I have seen, with excellent sight-lines and generous leg-room. The large porthole nicely placed between lecturer and audience opens it to the outside world.

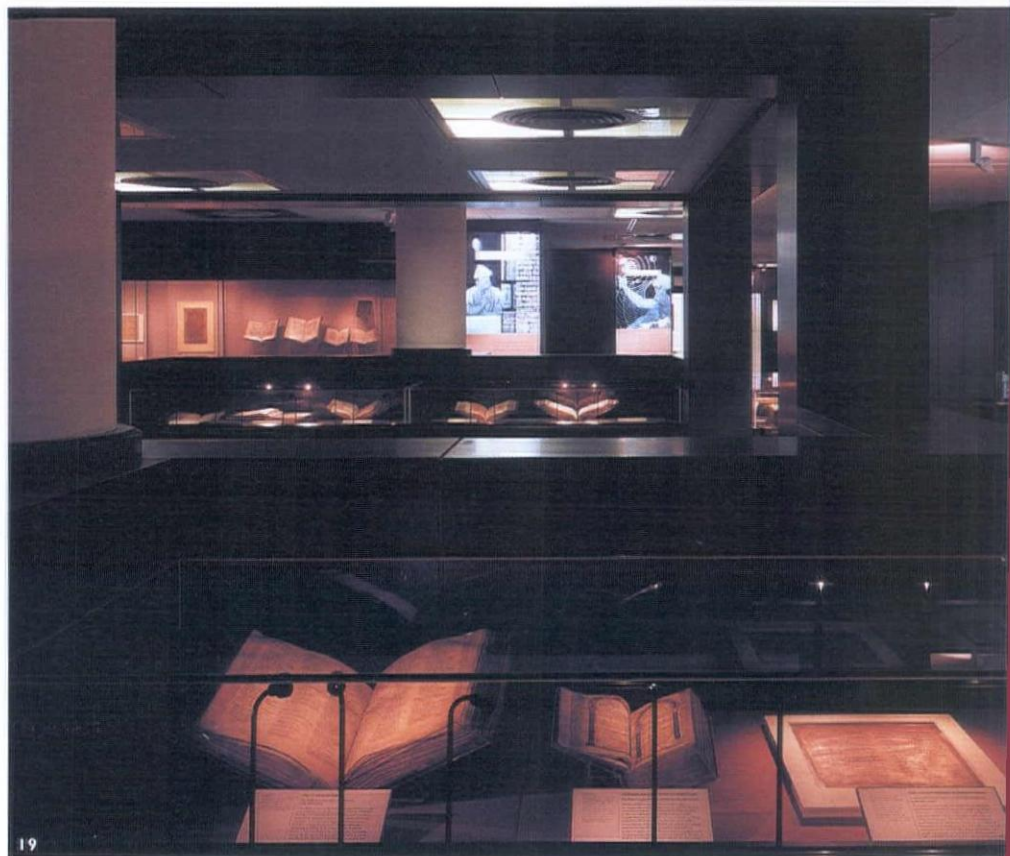
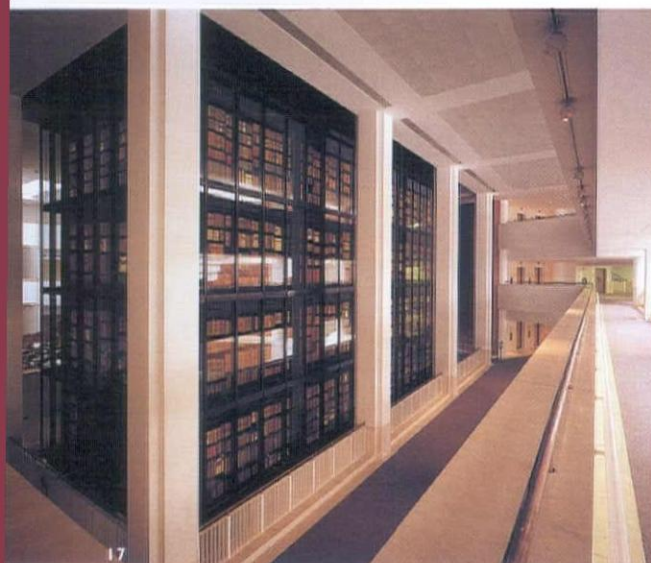
A national institution

An advantage of a long-running project is attention to detail, and a national institution intended for centuries of use must be built of durable materials.⁹ From the carved travertine seats and leather-covered bronze handrails in the foyer to the oak and leather desks and specially designed reader chairs, everything touched is of lavish quality – for once the abused word 'crafted' is really applicable. Things only seen are also carefully designed and beautifully made: flawless plasterwork, oak panelling and doors, polished stone floors, elegant light-fittings. If occasional details seem overwrought – some column-claddings, for example – the thoughtfulness of the design will at least prevent them dating fast. These tangible and visible things indicate direct return for the taxpayer's money, but of course the biggest and in some ways most expensive parts of the building are necessarily invisible, most of all the 340km of basement book shelving. Not only are the books now better organized and accessed: they are kept for the first time under accurately controlled atmospheric conditions. This involves extensive plant for the



14
'Sitting on History' in the main public
concourse. This seat sculpture by Bill
Woodrow was donated to the Library.
15
Water sculpture by architect at head of
ramp down to cloakrooms from public
concourse.
16
Restaurant (right) overlooks the King's
Library in its magnificent glass and bronze
casket.

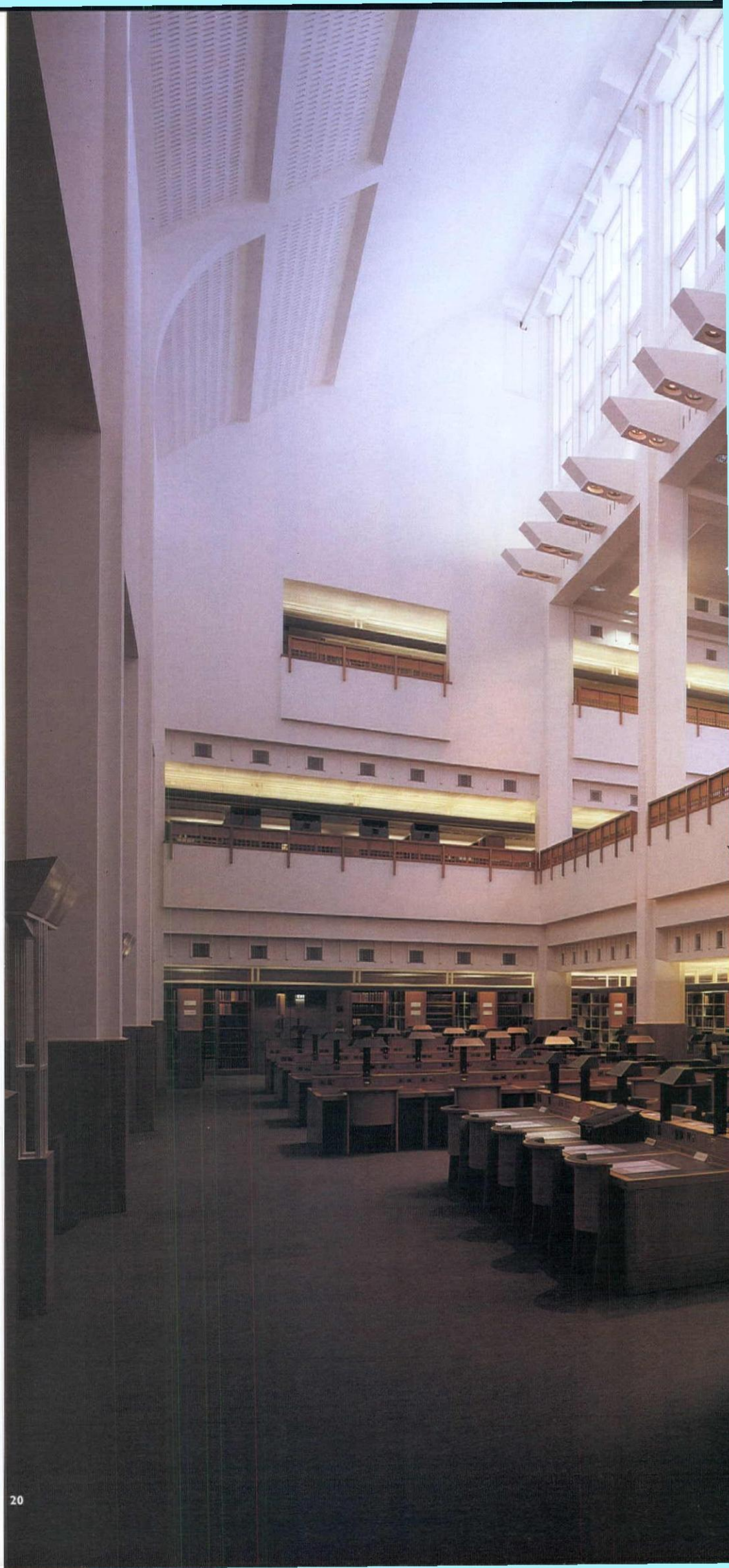
17
The King's Library: George III's own
collection housed so that the gorgeous
leather bindings can be seen through the
dark glass.
18
Entrance to lower gallery which contains a
pop children's display.
19
Upper gallery which displays a few of the
library's wonderful treasures with lighting
and display cases by architect.



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20

The huge space of the humanities reading room is lit in complex ways, both by the sky and artificial sources, which in combination with orderly plan and dramatic section ensures a wide variety of individual reading places.

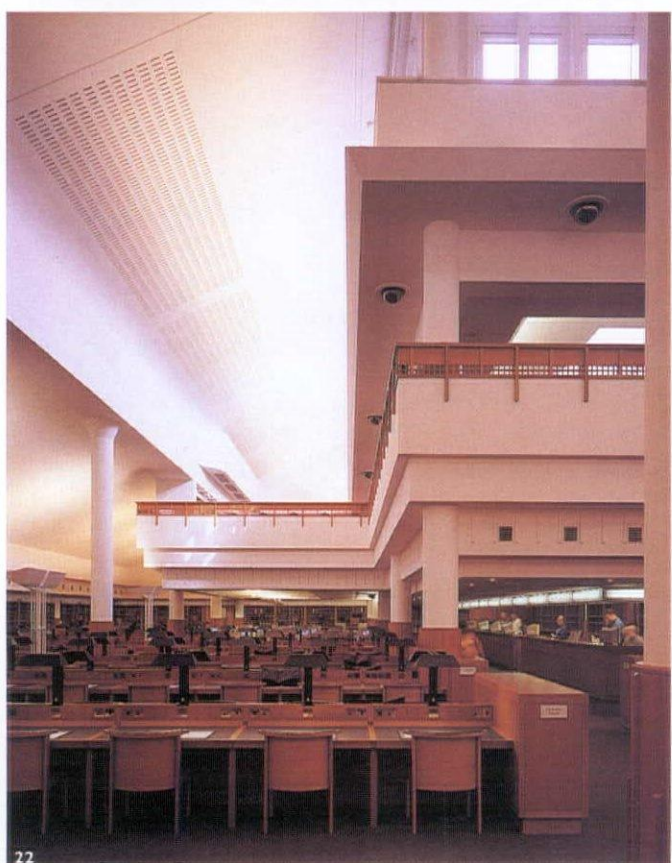




All the furniture and light fittings in the humanities reading rooms was designed by the architects whose aim was to create the solid, unobtrusive, durable comfort and utility that the English understood so well in the nineteenth century.



21



22

basement, and the building above ground is also discreetly air-conditioned. Equally essential is the arterial system of book conveyors taking material from the closed stacks to every reader outlet. They have produced a real revolution in delivery times: with the old building it took days, but is now down to half an hour. Under its skin the library is a great machine, and a High-Tech architect could have had a field day with its mechanisms, but Wilson rightly chose not to play up this aspect. He articulated social organization rather than mechanical, and concentrated on making visitors welcome rather than impressing them with gadgetry.

Since it opened to the public, the new British Library building has seen a turn in its reputation. On the whole people have been greatly impressed, and long-term readers who had dreaded the move have been congratulatory. The North Reading Room of the old building, kept open for the transition, was closed early when readers voted with their feet. Security attendants in the new foyer speak of the overwhelmingly positive response, and on my visit with Wilson an anonymous reader, overhearing that he was the architect, came and insisted on shaking him warmly by the hand. It works: it is a huge building, yet you find your way around with ease, you can get your books, have a coffee, find a well-appointed loo, visit the exhibition. The spaces are well-differentiated and inspiring, beautifully lit, not too noisy. Since it opened, readership attendance has risen by 50 per cent and reader applications have soared.

Outsides and insides

The outside has always been more controversial, but as the building grew it was judged without knowledge of the interior or its mode of operation. With this kind of architecture it is essential that inside and outside be understood together. The internal organization displays itself: the parts are readable. The shift in plan angle is a real shift between territories. The sloping roofs are seen inside the reading room. The porthole of the lecture hall locates it from the court. This articulation has a respectable history in the Gothic Revival and the Organic Tradition, and it has always produced criticism from those who prefer a well-ordered Classical object. But to impose a classical *parti* with such an irregular site and complex programme could only produce an irrelevant autonomy and painful tension between form and content, as indeed happened with much Post-Modern Classicism.¹⁰ And even then the expression of the building would be of a general or universal kind, rather than specific to the case. A rigid Classical plan would not have fitted the site and would never have been flexible enough to absorb the design changes between the ambitious multi-stage first version and the curtailed one finally built.¹¹

Accepting the building on its own terms, some of the persisting difficulties of the exterior can be related directly to content (or lack of it). The facades to Midland Road and Ossulton Street are bleak less in terms of design than through lack of human presence, for the building correctly addresses itself almost entirely to its front court. The seemingly obvious solution of letting the ground floor out as shops was presumably unthinkable in the days before privatization. The abruptness of the angle change between the wings and the acute corner of the entrance also seems to me to reflect a territorial difficulty. The foyer should be an independent realm between the two sets of reading rooms, and therefore angled halfway between them



rather than following the geometry of the humanities to break against the sciences. Exactly along the fault-line is a curious brick tower with a clock on it that fails to appear inside the building, and is in fact a ventilation shaft. In my view this also strikes a false note, for it marks no vertical circulation axis like a Gothic (or Modernist) tower, and the servicing aspect is something that the architect chose for good reasons not to articulate.

But these are minor quibbles. The successes of the building and the power of its underlying philosophy are what matter. After years of Post-Modernism which often meant applying fake facades to the dulllest and meanest of Modernist plans, Wilson has shown us the value of letting the building articulate its own content, of making its parts recognizable and its spaces navigable. He has reminded us of the need for great rooms in great public institutions, for legible sequences and inspiring progressions of space, memorable staircases. At a time when it is too often forgotten, he has demonstrated the importance of admitting daylight to all major spaces, even if for practical purposes you have to rely on artificial light. And he has reminded us of the importance of noble and natural materials which age gracefully. If the oak and leather recall a Pall Mall club or the interior of a Rolls-Royce, this is surely no accident. Some might have preferred it more modern, more glassy, more abstract, but it is a very British institution.

References

- 1 Inflation rages, of course, and it is more expensive to build in stages, impossible to keep to keen tenders. Worst of all is the need to build temporary partitions, entrances and so on which later have to be destroyed. The £511 million total cost includes such things as the maintenance costs of stages already completed, legal charges, furniture and VAT. The imposition of the tax as a 17.5 per cent cut after design – a £32 million reduction – caused many difficulties. Final cost per square metre including furniture is £3416.
- 2 In his notorious television film *A Vision of Britain*, Prince Charles, judging merely from the half-built exterior and presumably the drawings, likened the library to an academy for secret police.
- 3 Projects completed around that time were Lasdun's National Theatre (AR January 1977); the first Tate extension – the Llewelyn-Davies boxes, not the Clore – (AR August '79); RMJM's Hillingdon town hall (AR February '79); Neave Brown's Alexandra Road housing (AR August '79) and the Portsmouth Poly Library by ABK (AR April '79). Moving on a couple of years, you find the Barbican Arts Centre (AR October 1981), Lasdun's London University buildings (AR March 1980) and Luxembourg European Investment Bank (AR November 1981), and Robinson College Cambridge by Gillespie Kidd & Coia (AR August 1981).
- 4 These are two of the terms used by Ruskin in his famous chapter 'The Nature of Gothic' in *The Stones of Venice*. An encouragement to irregularity is a constant refrain in the book, as in the following: 'Observe if it be irregular, its different parts fitting themselves to different purposes, no one caring what becomes of them, so that they do their work. If one part always answers accurately to another part, it is sure to be a bad building; and the greater or more conspicuous the irregularities, the greater the chances are that it is a good one.' *The Works of John Ruskin on CD-Rom*, Cambridge University Press: Cook & Wedderburn, Vol X, p268.
- 5 See Wilson, Colin St John *The Other Tradition*, London: Academy Editions, 1995.
- 6 The King's Library contains about 60 000 volumes. It was given to the nation by George IV.
- 7 This was discussed by Dr John Ashworth, Chairman of the British Library, in his lecture of 16/1/97, published in *The Friends of the British Library Newsletter* no 23, Winter 1997.
- 8 It offers one continuous space between the main entrance and the reading desks. Both the fire danger and the acoustic performance were solved.
- 9 Life expectancy was defined as 200/250 years: see Wilson *The Design and Construction of the British Library*, published by the library 1988.
- 10 The argument here can also be led back to the Gothic Revival. Ruskin claimed that the great virtue of Gothic was its flexibility: 'Undefined in its slope of roof, height of shaft, breadth of arch, or disposition of ground plan, it can shrink into a turret, expand into a hall, coil into a staircase or spring into a spire, with undegraded grace and unexhausted energy; and whenever it finds occasion for change in its form or purpose, it submits to it without the slightest sense of loss either to its unity or majesty.' 'The Nature of Gothic', see note 4.
- 11 The King's Library, for example, was a late addition, occupying the site of a former catalogue hall made obsolete by electronics.



Architect

Colin St John Wilson & Partners

Project team

Colin St John Wilson, M. J. Long, John Collier, John Honer, Douglas Lanham, Peter Carolin, John Barrow, Alison Bell, Peter Brough, Peter Denney, Dennis Dornan, Brian Frost, Clive Hogben, Rolfe Kentish, Linda Suggate, Fritz Stoll, David Wares, John Bushell, Hilsie Cleford, Mark Davies, Camillo Gonzalez-Ordonaz, Helen Grassly, Simon Horner, Krzysztof Jaraczewski, Dennis Jordaan, Tony Pryor, Phil Russen, Catherine Stewart, Peter Wong

Structural engineer

Ove Arup & Partners

Mechanical engineer

Steensen Varming & Mulcahy

Quantity surveyor

Davis Langdon Everest

Tapestries

R. B. Kitaj and The Edinburgh Tapestry Company

Portico gate

David Kindersley, Lida Cardozo

Readers chair and boardroom furniture

Ron Carter

Piazza sculpture

Eduardo Paolozzi and Morris Singer Foundry

Signage

Pentagram Design, Richard Conn, Elizabeth Burney-Jones, Bruce Nivison, Rivermeade Signs

Exhibition display

Ivor Heal Design, Ronayne Design

Suppliers and subcontractors

Ironmongery Allgood Hardware; Readers chairs Morgan Contract Furniture; Steel windows Crittall; Roof slates Penrhyn Welsh Slate

24
Staff restaurant opens on to terrace on north side of building.
25
The as yet unoccupied science library on the east side of the complex: here readers are given free access to stacks.
26
Stair in science wing (can be seen as oriel in 8).

27
Conference suite, carefully organized to allow for informal contacts and casual chat between sessions in meeting rooms and ...
28
...lecture theatre. Circular window focuses on Paolozzi's Newton in the entrance court.



25



27



26



28

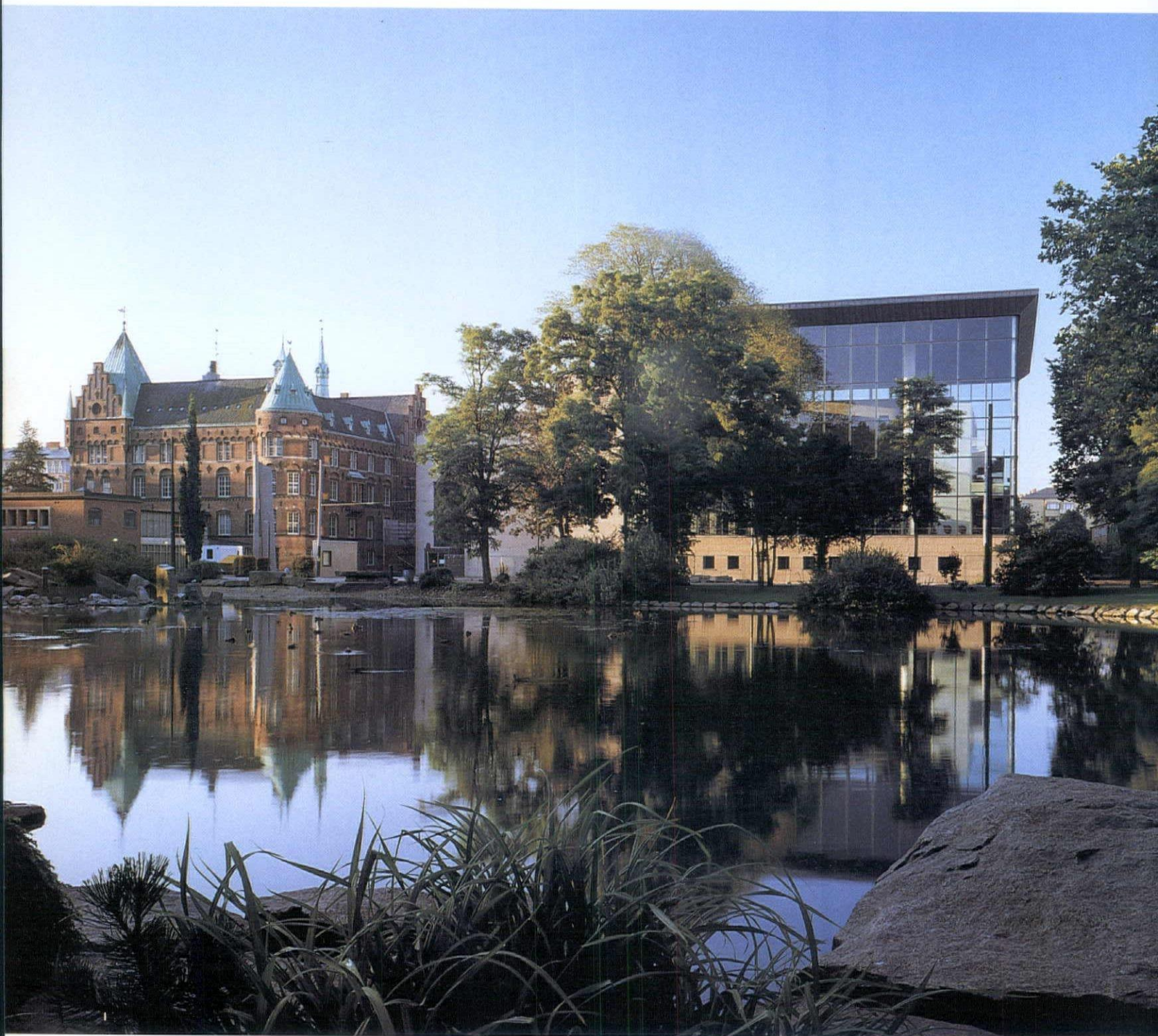
PUBLIC LIBRARY, MALMÖ, SWEDEN

ARCHITECT

HENNING LARSEN

MALMÖ MASTERPIECE

The extension to Malmö city library more than doubles its size and makes it an elegant and appropriate civic building for the post-modern age.





Henning Larsen's extension to the Malmö city library is an exemplary achievement: a major public building, simple and noble simultaneously, created by an architect at the height of his powers. Larsen, a Dane who works just across the Sound in Copenhagen, won the project in a 1992 invited competition with a design that recalls Asplund in its simplicity and generous humanity.

The brief called for an extension of the old library (built as the city's museum in copper-roofed red brick neo-Hansa style by J. Smedberg in 1899). The new pieces are an entrance and foyer area in a drum, and a new block of overlapping squares in plan: a low glass tower wrapped to east and south by an L of what Larsen calls the 'heavy' part – four stories of stacks, study areas and offices clad in stone. The drum is balanced between the old building and the stone and glass cubes to the west and is connected to them by glazed links. A U-shaped entrance court is contained between the two main masses; it opens northwards across a quiet road, Kung Oskars Väg, to the beautiful lake and trees of Kungsparken (the King's Park). Because the scale of the west pavilion is skilfully manipulated by juggling the squares of its plan, a balance is set up between Smedberg's cheery red and green museum and its cream and crystal descendant with the stone-clad drum acting as fulcrum.

As you approach, analogies with Asplund are clear, and are patently intended. The

drum is not so big as that of Stockholm public library, nor of course is it contained within a quadratic base; the square windows high up on the Stockholm plinth are transferred to the drum in Malmö, as is the great tall rectangular glazed entrance. And the latter is shorn of its wonderful tapering frame, an echo in the 1920s of Bindsøll's dignified and majestic way of making openings in the blank classical walls of the Thorvaldsens museum in Copenhagen in the mid nineteenth century. Larsen's quotations are not as direct as Asplund's were before he evolved his marvellous fusion of Classical and Modern in the '30s, and the Dane's are informed by a sensibility that is post-modern (in the best sense).

The entrance in Malmö is offset from the diametric axis of the drum, and is designed to make you aware of the organization of the whole place, with old and new wings to left and right, a secondary entrance towards the city in front, and the reception and returns desk informing the space. Nothing could be more different from the powerful entrance sequence in Stockholm, with its tight dark vestibule leading to the majestic stair that draws you almost willy-nilly to the light and knowledge of the lending room in the drum. In contrast to this magical, almost shamanistic progression, at Malmö all is open, clear and generous. Instead of knowledge being approached as a distant treasure, attainable by only one arduous route, you are made aware that it has many



1 Library complex seen over park lake to north: Smedberg's century-old building (originally the town museum) to left.

2 Northern entrance court with drum of entrance to left and mighty orthogonal library hall, in which a light building grows out of a heavy one, right.

3 Glass library hall grows from a masonry plinth containing offices, auditorium and periodicals department.

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ARCHITECT

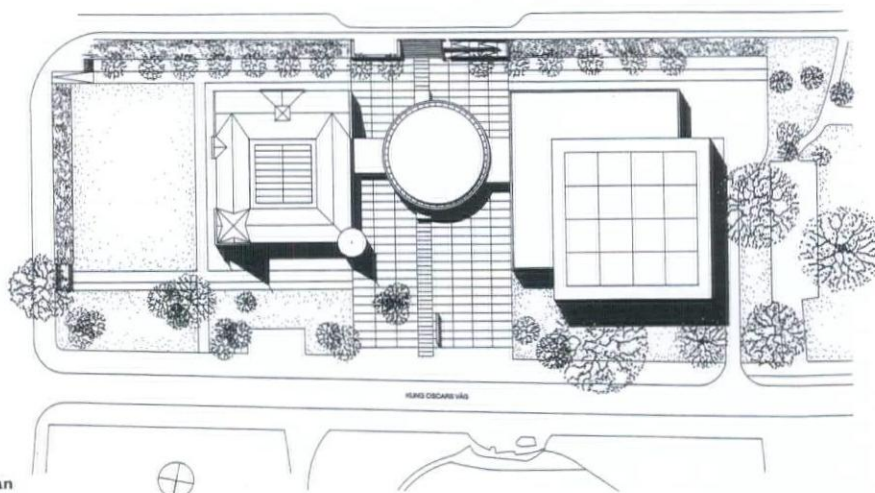
HENNING LARSEN



4
South side, openings are much smaller to limit insolation, though blinds have to be lowered on sunny days.

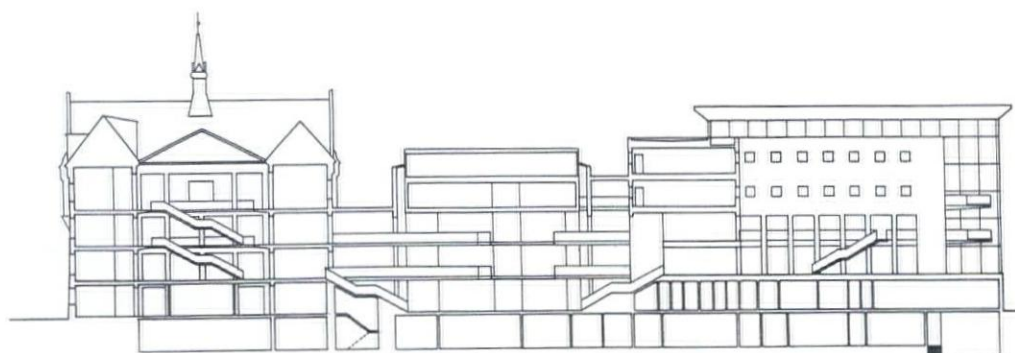
5
South elevation was supposed to have stone cladding (like north side), but to save money, it was rendered – with restraint and fine craftsmanship.

6
Intimate relationship between readers and nature in new library hall.





south elevation



east-west section showing old building (left) with proposed new central lantern

facets, and that there are many approaches to it, as is made clear by glimpses of the different levels of the new wing to the right, and the open galleries that connect it to the old building which will be reached by a generous free-standing stair, similar to the one which links entrance level to the new first floor reading room.

If external resemblances between the two libraries are obvious, there are strong internal similarities between the Malmö entrance hall and that of Asplund's '30s masterpiece, the Gothenburg Law Courts. There, galleries surround a basically toplit light-filled space and look down on the public parade and the fine gentle single flight of stairs to the first floor. At Malmö, the stair has a landing (presumably required by contemporary regulations) and the galleries cut across the space rather than surrounding it; comparisons are clear, but the volume has an element of mystery which the Law Courts rightly lack. A continuous skylight circles the whole space, so that the volume continuously changes with the time of day, weather and the seasons. The monumental effect of light spilling from on high over the very slightly irregular plaster walls, delicately pierced with little squares of holes in front of acoustic absorbent is heightened (in some circumstances) by shafts of light from the small windows high up in the drum. Larsen's motto in the competition – Scandinavian competitions continue the (sometimes) delightful tradition of identifying entries by motto – was *Ljusets Kalender*, light's calendar, and the giant sundial-like device of the entrance drum is our first intimation of its realization.

The second is the great library hall which you begin to appreciate as you near the top of the stair from the entrance. The four-storey high volume gradually reveals itself as you go through the comparatively compressed heavy part and come into the huge luminous space. In an otherwise rather sour article, the critic Björn Linn has said that 'it is hard to think of anything as splendid in recent decades of Swedish architecture',¹

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ARCHITECT

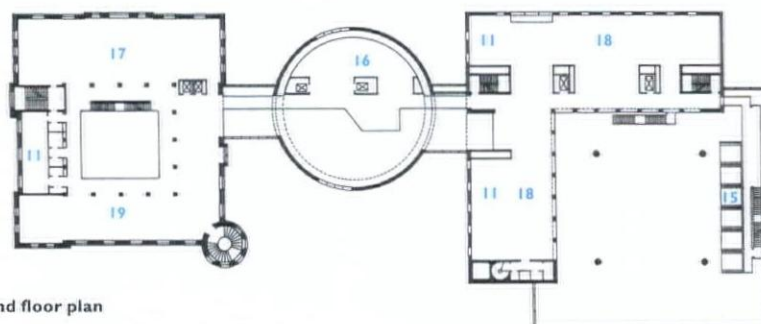
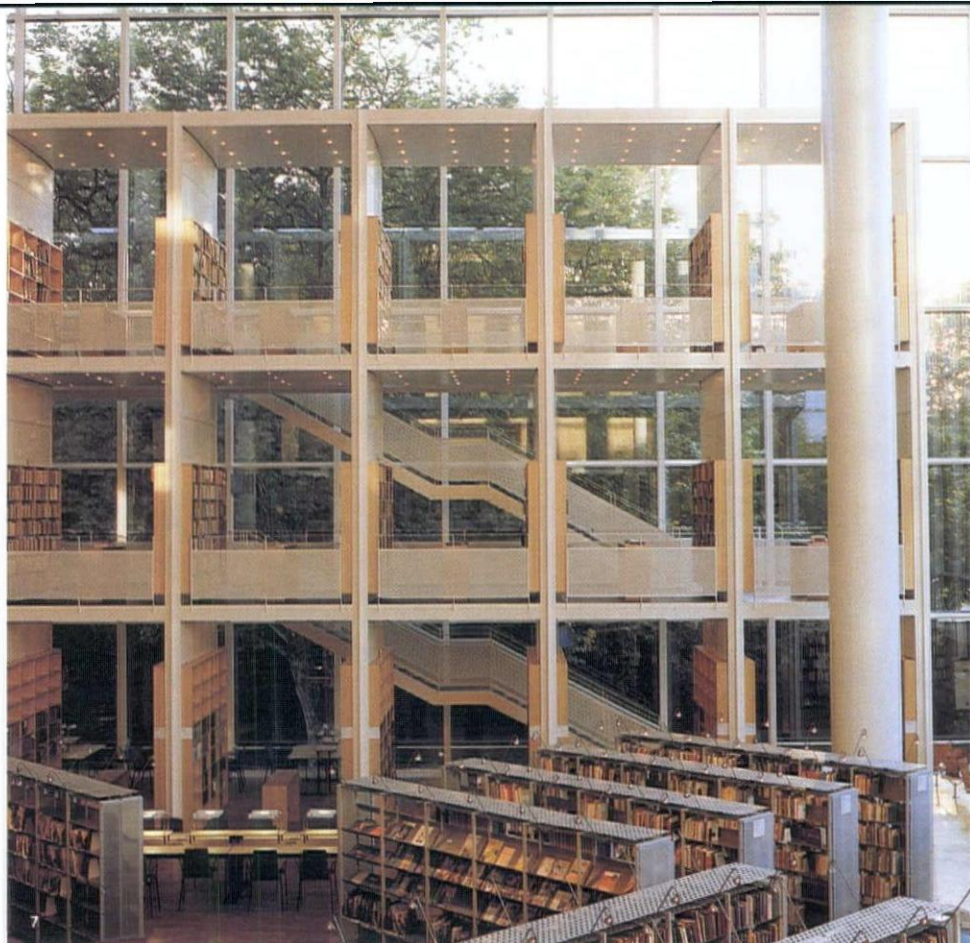
HENNING LARSEN

and he is surely right. A grey roof plane, supported on nothing more than four round white columns, floats over full-height glass walls to the park and the garden to the west. Clerestories over the heavy L bring in east and south light, so the whole space is filled with luminosity that changes with time – and with the seasons as the surrounding trees put on their pale green leaves in spring and shed them brown in the autumn. The space is as noble and dignified as Asplund's in Stockholm, but completely opposite in feeling. Asplund's, based on Sydney Smirke's Reading Room for the British Museum,² is completely introverted, a crucible for distilling knowledge. Larsen's is a pavilion in the park, in which you are engaged with the wider world and endlessly changing nature.

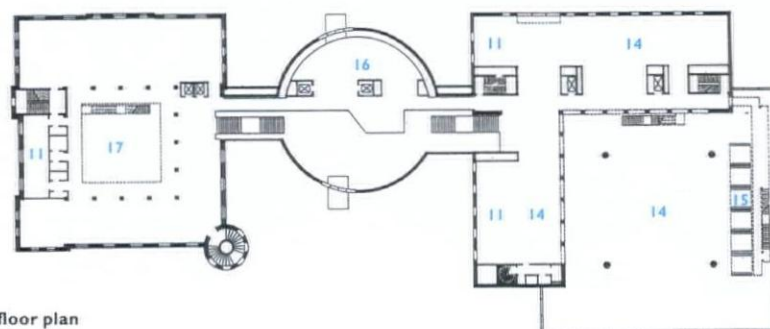
Along the west side of the space is a free-standing, three-storey high stack of open boxes reached by stairs from the floor of the hall or by flying galleries from the floors of the heavy L to the south. The boxes contain the reference collection and form little carrels in which individuals can study or look over the great space or the garden. The slender white steel-framed structure acts to some extent as screen from the winter sun.

Inside the L, study areas, stacks and offices are intermingled as part of an ambitious integrated programme. In his generally adverse survey, Linn criticizes this intermingling, because it does not allow any really calm study areas anywhere, and he suggests that the spaces are in any case deficient because the cills of the openings to the great space are so high that you can see no more of it than its ceiling when you are sitting down.³ A more generous interpretation might be that the architects were trying to provide just those conditions of contemplative privacy which Linn wants; there are after all plenty of other places in which you can have different kinds of fine views when sitting down – the reference carrels for instance, and the floor of the great hall itself.

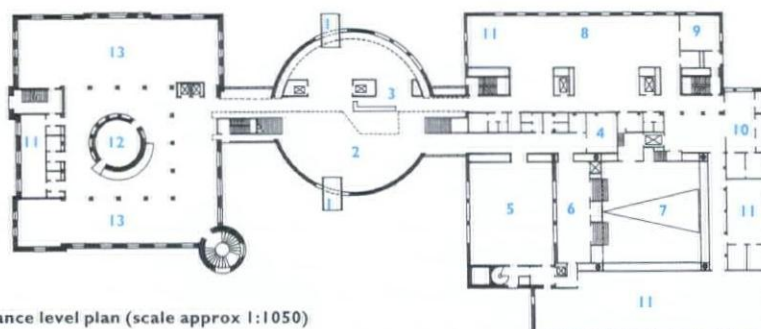
There have been considerable difficulties in the completion of the building. Larsen points out that his office has not had responsibility for fitting out the interior, nor for some of the interior details. The city's estates department (the client) decided to control the fit out⁴ and there have been disagreements. Happily, key details are clearly at least strongly influenced by Larsen: for instance, the balustrades with their



second floor plan

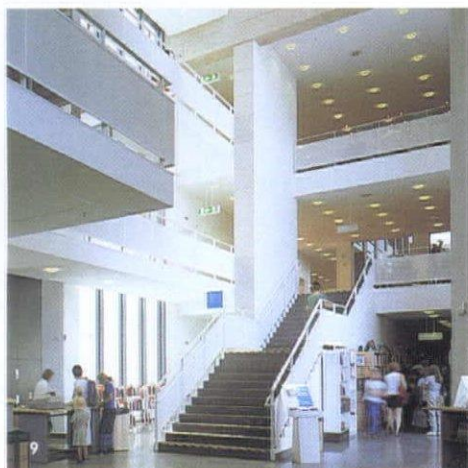


first floor plan



entrance level plan (scale approx 1:1050)

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 lobby | 6 crush | 11 *office | 15 reference |
| 2 foyer/exhibition | 7 auditorium (150 seats) | 12 story room | 16 balcony |
| 3 information | 8 transport | 13 children's library | 17 literature |
| 4 cloaks | 9 security | 14 society and humanities | 18 nature and technology |
| 5 periodicals | 10 delivery | | 19 talking books |

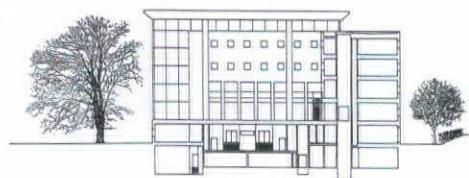


- 7
The free-standing bank of reference carrels in the great volume of the library hall both relates users to nature and provides a form of climate modifier.
- 8
The hall, in which the light (glass) building grows out of the L-shaped heavy one (right).
- 9
Entrance hall, looking to stairs to library hall.
- 10
Looking up at sundial-like arrangements in entrance hall, where a continuous annular skylight throws light over intentionally slightly rough walls.

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ARCHITECT

HENNING LARSEN



north-south cross section of library hall



diaphanously pierced metal sheets, reminiscent of the cladding Larsen used on the Berlingske Tidene newspaper offices (AR June 1995); here again metal is given semi-transparency, allowing veiled communication between spaces and levels.

Veiling is clearly a problem as well. Linn comments that the big openings in the south elevation have to be shaded with drab grey blinds on sunny days. And only time will tell exactly how the great glass room will perform throughout the year.

Modifications may have to be made. But the fundamental arrangement of fine spaces will remain, and will be capable of alteration in detail without loss of dignity to give greater or lesser degrees of privacy as the management changes its priorities. Notwithstanding all the difficulties, the Larsen office is working on the remodelling of the Smedberg building, where it plans to glaze over the courtyard so that the interior can be filled with daylight. So while one wing of the building is filled with daylight from outside, the other will, as it were, be a negative of it, with light suffusing the spaces from within. Larsen has for long been a

master of light,⁵ and the Malmö library adds to our understanding of how it can be used to celebrate and ennoble the everyday lives of the citizens of a civilized democracy. P.D.

1 Linn, Björn, 'En vision kommer ut i dagsljuset', *Arkitektur* 8-1977, p15.

2 Asplund incidentally had exactly the same trouble as the younger Smirke did in inserting a round peg in the square hole of his brother's courtyard, and was left with rather nasty lightwells in the corners of the square. Norman Foster's scheme for glazing the wells and joining them will resolve the problem in London.

3 Linn, *ibid.*

4 Larsen, Henning, 'Malmö Stadsbibliotek', *Arkitektur* 8-1977, p5.

5 See for instance his Saudi Arabian Foreign Ministry, Riyadh (AR July 1985), the school at Høje Taastrup, the Gentofte library (AR November 1989), and, above all in the context of the Smedberg building, his handling of the courtyard in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (AR December 1996).

Architect

Henning Larsen Tegnestue, Copenhagen: Henning Larsen, Niels Fuglsang, Louise Becker, Peer Teglgård Jeppesen, Michael Christensen, Dorte Mandrup-Poulsen, Katrine Lotz, Hanne Halvorsen, Annika Carlson, Hans Amos Christensen, Ingela Larsson, Jens Larsen, Mette Kynne Frandsen, Mette Carstad, Niels F. Turpie, Anette Jensen

Landscape architect

Henning Larsen Tegnestue and Stig L. Andersson Aps
Landskabsarkitekter

Photographs

Jens Lindhe



12



13

11 Not all furnishing was to Larsen's details.

12 The great room changes continuously as the sun moves round (compare to 8).

13 Nature and knowledge in harmony in the carrels.

CULTURE PAVILION

As a representative national institution, this new building for the Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt represents a modest, functional, democratic ideal.

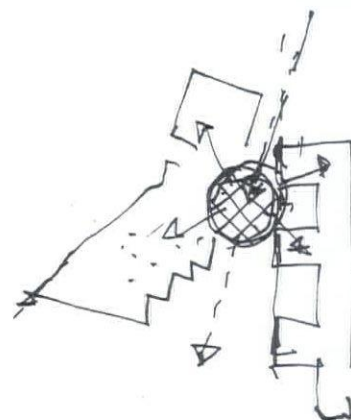
GERMAN NATIONAL LIBRARY, FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY

ARCHITECT

ARAT-KAISER-KAISER



2



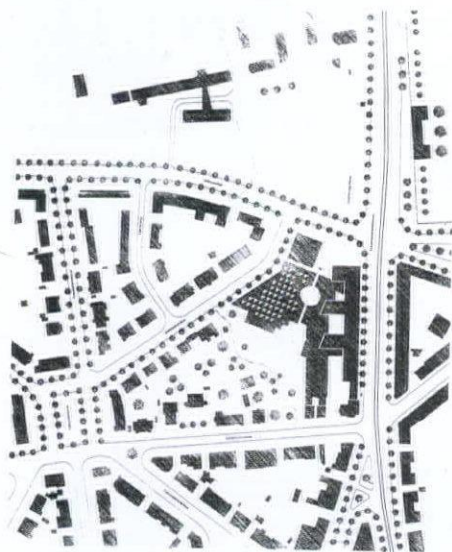
Preserving culture is costly, time and space consuming. The concerns of culture are universal but artefacts remain classified along nationalistic lines and how a nation houses its culture is as revealing as a study of its stored treasures. The Deutsche Bibliothek, as an institution, is as split as German history. It is spread over three cities: the Musik Archiv in Berlin and libraries in Leipzig and Frankfurt am Main. Between 1945 and 1989 Leipzig and Frankfurt, apart from collecting every publication in their own sectors, also collected those of the enemy. In Frankfurt a two stage architectural competition, held between 1981 and 1984, and eventually won by Mete Arat, Hans-Dieter and Gisela Kaiser in opposition to an initially preferred design by Günter Behnisch, was already in detailed planning when Germany's unification treaty was signed. Both Frankfurt and Leipzig have publishing traditions and both still hold annual international book fairs. Perhaps the idea that the east should not be totally

ransacked led to the decision to maintain two depositories with identical contents. Every book and magazine published in the German language, including those from Switzerland and Austria, can be found in Frankfurt, along with a special collection of German writings in exile. The Frankfurt library is designed to hold up to 18 million publications, and meet needs up to 2040.

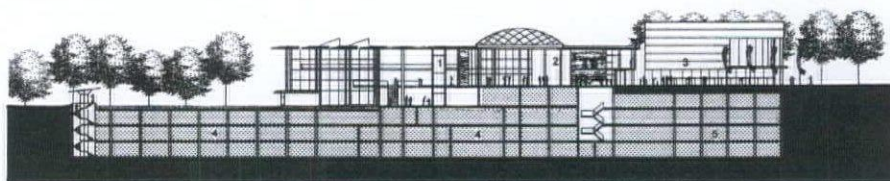
Situated on the corner of a busy crossroad on the Eckenheimer Landstrasse, the library entrance of glass doors is approached across a black basalt flagged court. The shallow glass-domed double-storey foyer – one of the few architectural references to a Classically designed public building – is the centre point from which the two wings of the library stretch along the public perimeters of the site. Between these splayed wings a landscaped garden can be seen but not entered. The two parallel blocks which form the east wing contain 5000 square metres of up to five floors of offices bordering the

1
A landscaped garden lies between the library's two main wings.

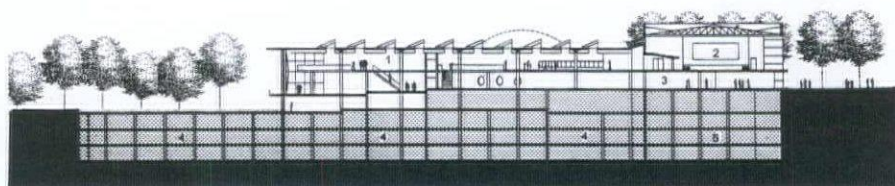
2
The urban Frankfurt context, with the gleaming towers of the business district in the distance.



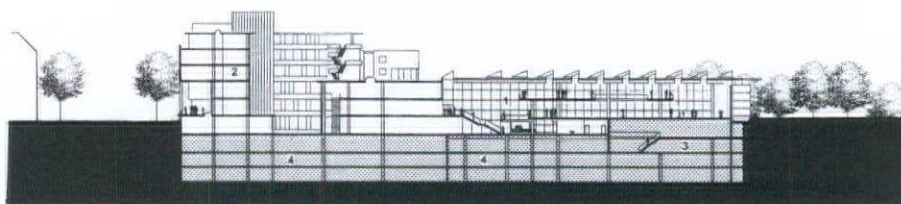
site plan



cross section through entrance rotunda



longitudinal section through reading rooms and lecture theatre



cross section through offices and reading rooms

**GERMAN NATIONAL LIBRARY,
FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY**
ARCHITECT
ARAT-KAISER-KAISER



3



4

street over workshops for printing and binding. Hidden from public view between the two blocks there is a delivery yard and access to the public underground car park. New publications arrive daily by post. Vast quantities of cardboard packaging are compressed in special rubbish collection rooms for pick up and recycling. The east wing could be classified as behind the scenes. In these offices most of the 394 employees work; in the EDV suite with its data strong room, transferring the written word from paper to electronic media, cataloguing and administrating. With the idea of counteracting the health problems of sedentary work, a small keep-fit room has also been tucked in-between the offices. At the end of this wing two caretakers' flats in a Modernist white concrete pavilion enjoy optimum privacy with use of the lawns.

In contrast the west wing is the public face of the library containing 3200 square metres of double-height reading room with 292 seats on the main floor and along galleries, overlooking the internal garden. A separately articulated restaurant with 160 place settings

facing the street and entrance is directly accessible from the domed foyer, as is also a double-height exhibition hall, connected at gallery level with a 300 seat auditorium, equipped with simultaneous translation cabins and projection facilities. This constellation of function rooms gives maximum flexibility for events combining lectures, presentations and catering from the public restaurant.

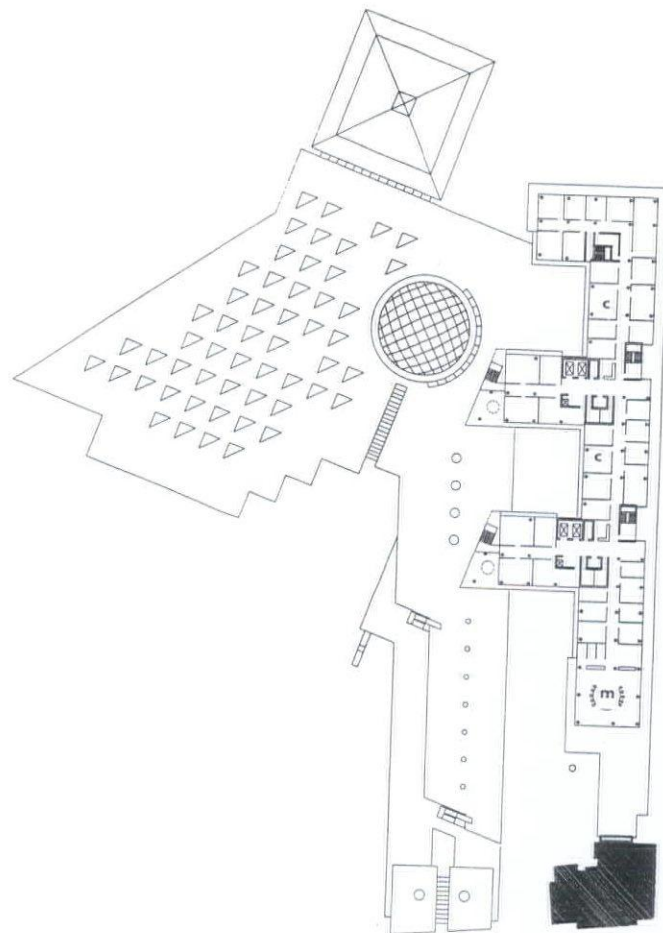
Buried beneath virtually the whole of the 19 000 square metre site are three storage levels, parking for 271 cars and a nuclear fall-out shelter for employees. After studying various book storage and transport systems, the underground climate was fixed at 18 degrees Celsius with 50 per cent humidity for both paper and personnel comfort. Electric rechargeable battery cars driven by staff run between the stacks, picking up and returning publications requested over computer codes from the library staff above. A paternoster style vertical and horizontal conveyor belt system transports the publications from arrival in the post room, to the stores and all floors above. Storage areas

3
Tall glazed reading rooms overlook the garden.

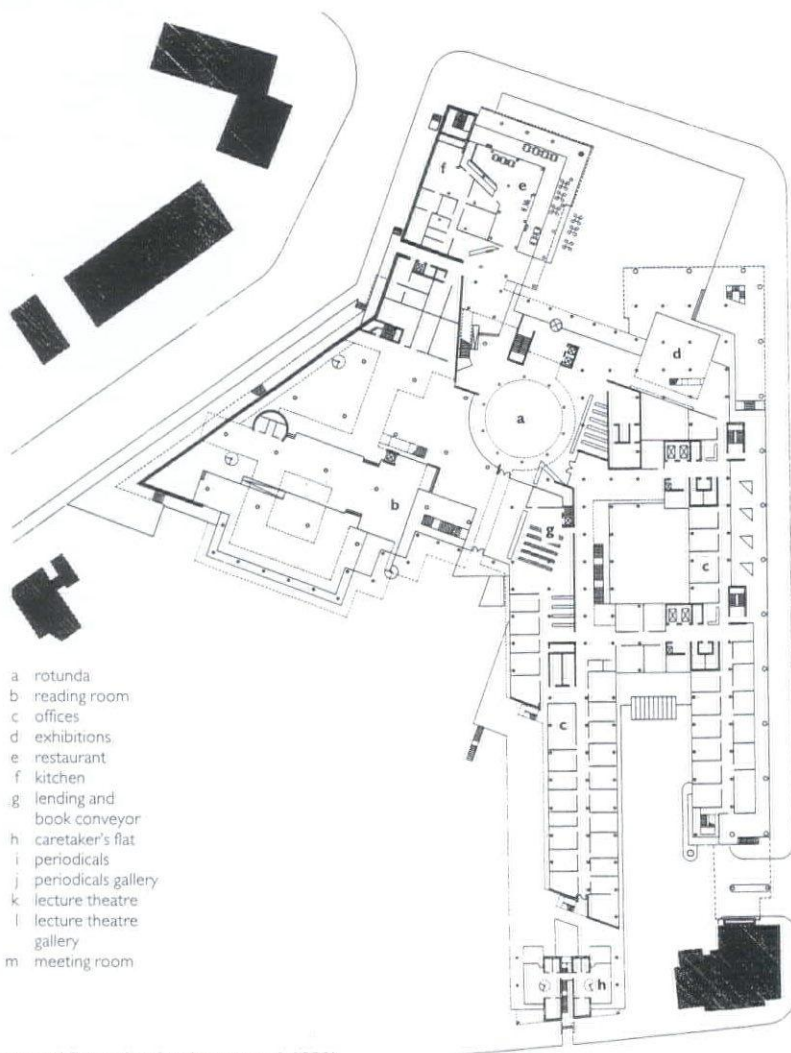
4
Monolithic street elevation.



first floor plan

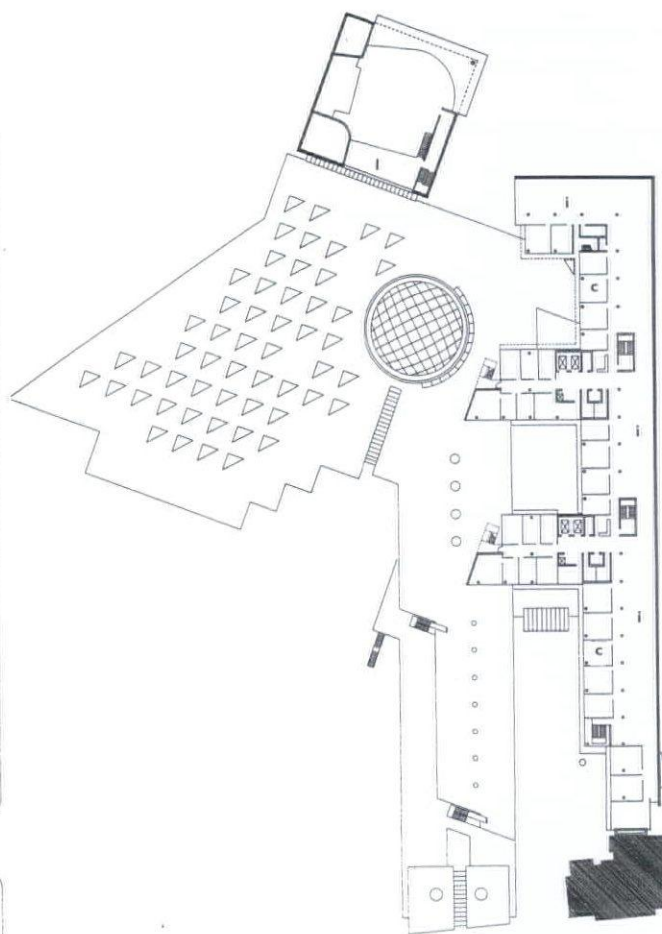


third floor plan



- a rotunda
- b reading room
- c offices
- d exhibitions
- e restaurant
- f kitchen
- g lending and book conveyor
- h caretaker's flat
- i periodicals
- j periodicals gallery
- k lecture theatre
- l lecture theatre gallery
- m meeting room

ground floor plan (scale approx 1:1250)



second floor plan



5

**GERMAN NATIONAL LIBRARY,
FRANKFURT AM MAIN, GERMANY**

ARCHITECT

ARAT-KAISER-KAISER

Architect

Arat-Kaiser-Kaiser, Stuttgart

Project team

Mete Arat, Hans-Dieter Kaiser, Gisela Kaiser,
Peter Kaltschmidt, Gerhard Wolf, Joachim Tochtermann

Structural engineers

Ingenieurgesellschaft Tragwerkplanung BGS
– Boll Ingenieursozialität BGS, Boll und Partner

Mechanical engineer

Brendel Ingenieure

Electrical engineer

Matysik & Partner

Landscape architect

Sommerlad & Partner

Photographs

Manfred Storck and Madjid Asghari

are compartmentalized to hinder fire spread, and covered by a dry sprinkler system which only fills with water when activated by smoke detectors, to try and avoid water damage caused by broken pipes. All three underground floors lie below ground water level. To provide enough ballast in the foundations so that the building did not float out of the earth, the base concrete slab was constructed as a sandwich with iron pellets infill. As a second line of defence against ground water infiltration, the ventilation ducts are full-height corridors around the perimeter of the cellar, forming a safety buffer zone and making inspection and any necessary repair easier.

Above ground the structure is fair-faced concrete columns and walls with 300mm thick slabs for acoustical separation and loads of 1000kg/cubic metre. The economy of materials – pigment washed concrete walls, basalt internal and external paving, a Swiss green granite external cladding, steel, glass, aluminium, dark aubergine coconut fibre floor covering, maple wood furniture,

stair treads and wall panels – reinforce the clarity of the design.

As a representative national building the Deutsche Bibliothek is no grand gesture, in the French style, rather a modest and functional national ideal. Like all other national libraries it has taken the opportunity to decorate itself with art. Frankfurt is also a city of numerous public art museums. A competition, for invited artists, judged by a jury of art museum directors produced six projects, from a Georg Baselitz figure under the foyer glass dome to Jochen Gerz's over dimensioned fallen glass bookshelf on the roof terrace of the director's meeting room. Whether the red brick barrier, by Per Kirkeby, between street and entrance plaza is compatible with either the building's aesthetics or the concept of openness to the public has been heavily debated. Wall paintings by Ilya Kabakov are hidden away in the light well entrance to the underground car park, but perhaps that is in keeping with the spirit of a culture pavilion stripped of pretentiousness.

LAYLA DAWSON

5

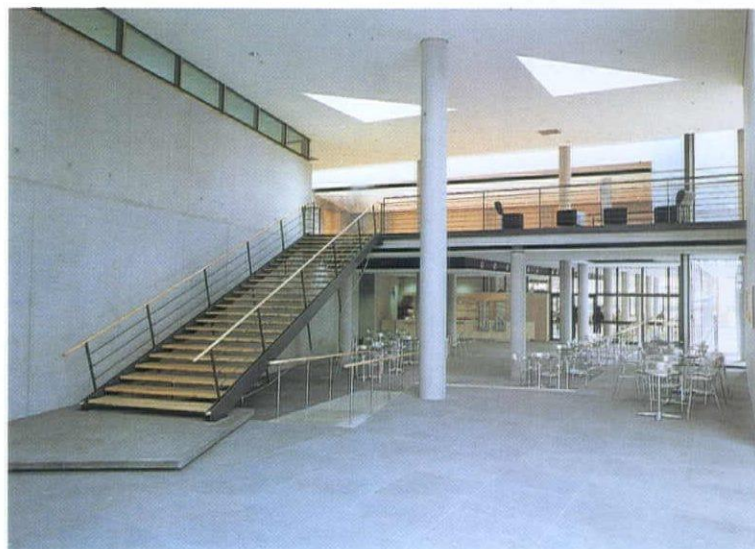
The entrance rotunda gently alludes to the notion of a Classical public building, with a sculpture by Georg Baselitz.



6



7



9

- 6
Part of the luminous double-height reading rooms.
- 7
Intricate interpenetration of space in the reading rooms.
- 8
Furniture and fittings are crisply detailed.
- 9
The library café.

Lancaster University was built in the '60s boom, the last time that the Duke's remark that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton was taken seriously: all new universities were built out of town, so students would have ready access to games pitches. As a result, the architects had to try desperately to generate some sort of urbanity and sense of community amid the fields. The Shepherd & Epstein plan (AR April 1970) still works well today, but its courts are largely closed to the outside world by inexpressive walls of brick and concrete.

Now, the place has acquired a landmark and a sign. As you approach up the winding drive from the main road, the smoothly curved walls of the Ruskin Library stand out like a little keep. It is also somehow to do with the sea, 'striped and almost slippery like a fish, and pointed, cresting the escarpment like a skiff, while signalling it like a lighthouse. Behind is the neutral backdrop of the new extension to the original university library.

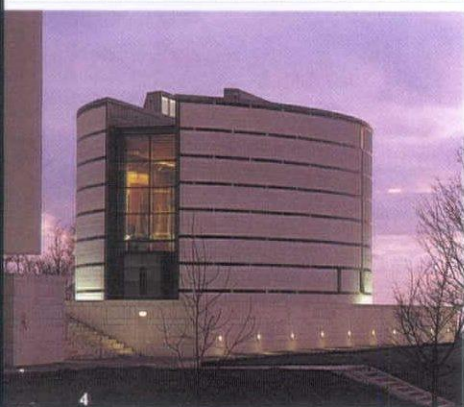
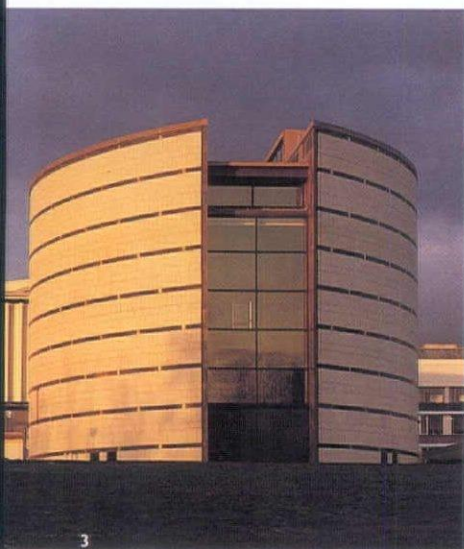
Both extension and keep are by MacCormac Jamieson Prichard, and the contrast between the two is a proper reflection of their roles. The extension reinforces the library's role as the university's main academic plant and accepts the predominantly neutral expression of the rest of the campus. The Ruskin Library is clearly very special. It contains the largest collection of material about or owned by the great Victorian savant. Books, papers and pictures were originally put together by the Liberal MP and educationalist



**RUSKIN LIBRARY, LANCASTER
UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND**
ARCHITECT
**MACCORMAC JAMIESON
PRICHARD**

THE EIGHTH LAMP

The most important collection of John Ruskin's papers, books and pictures has been brought together in a treasure house which celebrates the profound ideas and passionate feelings of the greatest critic of the nineteenth century.



1
The main entrance is over a bridge-like causeway across what will be a lagoon-like lawn of waving grass.
Beleschenko's abstraction of a Ruskin daguerrotype of St Mark's dominates the entrance space at night.

2
The Ruskin daguerrotype, lit from within the archive box.

3
Neutral extension of main university library with giant louvres over long glass strip (behind) sets off the intensity of the house of the Ruskin collection.

4
The keep-lighthouse on its ceremonial platform, which is retained by a wall faced in same sparkly white concrete blocks as curved carapace.

5
Oak-bound Venetian-red treasure chest (the archive) greets visitors at the entrance. It emerges mysteriously through the glass and slate floor (a metaphor of the sea) and a top-lit path runs up towards reading room along each side of it, enclosed by dark and battered wall.

Howard Whitehouse (1873-1955), and kept at his Bembridge school in the Isle of Wight. The need to keep the material in better conditions, the possibility of relating it to collections at nearby Brantwood (Ruskin's home on Lake Coniston), and the opportunity offered by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund all focused and facilitated the project of building at Lancaster University, already known for its Ruskin studies.

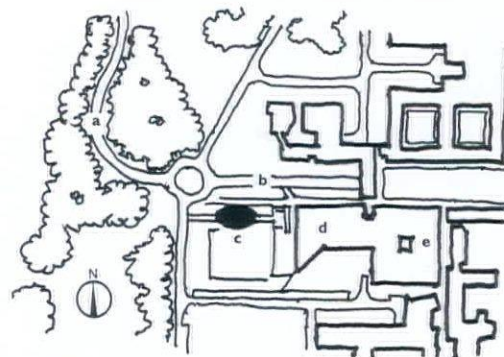
The site is the old university bowling green (those '60s bureaucrats were mad about every sort of sport), on a podium defined by a long retaining wall, so the lighthouse-keep stands on a ceremonial platform. Sparkling marble aggregate enlivens the slightly rough surface of its concrete block walls, which are given scale by thin horizontal bands of polished dark green precast concrete.

The curved walls form a protective, almost imperforate carapace. At each end, you can get glimpses of the warm insides of the organism through glass panels. You enter from the east through a bronze-clad porch which opens into a double-height entrance hall. Immediately, the fundamental organisation of the place becomes clear. A huge Venetian-red free-standing box dominates the space. On each side of it, light shoots down from lanterns onto dark, virtually black battered walls, which are given a curious, almost slimy texture (reminiscent of sea walls) by being sealed with linseed oil. Between them and the box, gently ramped paths rise towards the reading room, another double-height space at

the west end of the building.

Both *parti* and the sacral atmosphere irresistibly recall MacCormac's Fitzwilliam College chapel in Cambridge (AR April 1992), where a rectangular form is contained within curved walls with light pouring down between them. In Cambridge, the inner structure is a sort of *baldacchino*, enclosing altar and congregation. At Lancaster, the box is plainly a treasure chest, its waxed and polished plaster walls strapped with oak frames, the joints of which are emphasized by cruciform insets of polished bronze. It floats up mysteriously into the entrance space through a floor of glass and slate, a metaphor of the sea, like the lagoon-lawn of long waving blue-green grass which will be planted all round the building. The glass floor is already somewhat scratched, and is intended gradually to become largely translucent, like the turbid waters of Venice: no bad thing perhaps, because the basement store (like the bottom of the lagoon) is untidy.

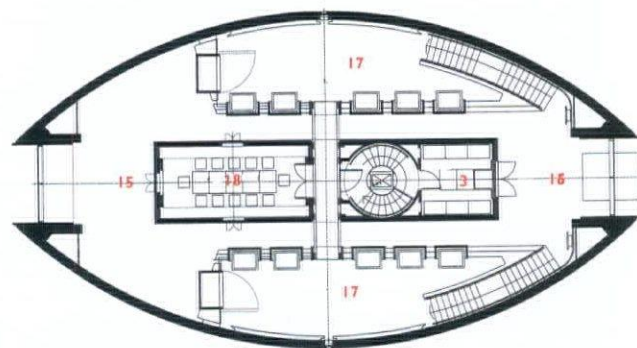
You are drawn up the ramps to the reading room, a very calm place, quite small in plan, but with a vertical glazed panel similar to the one at the entrance. This offers amazing views of sunset, sky and countryside, stretching away to the shallow waters of Morecambe Bay, the part of England topographically most like the Venetian lagoon. The space is given its air of distinction not just by height but by the special solid, well-made furniture: tall chairs of English oak upholstered in leather, and tables with oak frames inset with dark fine-grained walnut.



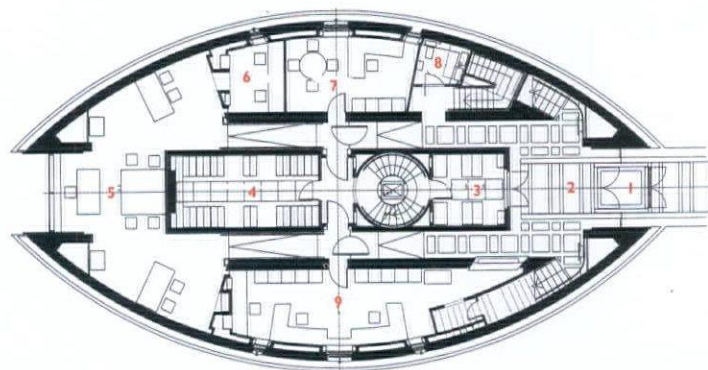
site plan

- a approach drive to university
- b vehicular university entrance (ends underground)
- c Ruskin Library
- d university library extension
- e original university library

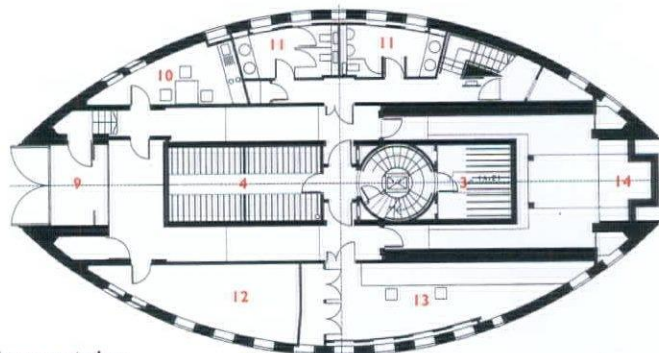
- 1 porch
- 2 entrance
- 3 archive spaces (east stack)
- 4 archive spaces (west stack)
- 5 reading
- 6 catalogues
- 7 curator
- 8 disabled lavatories
- 9 loading bay
- 10 staff
- 11 lavatories
- 12 plant
- 13 workshop
- 14 used for storage
- 15 void over reading
- 16 void over entrance
- 17 gallery
- 18 meeting



first floor plan

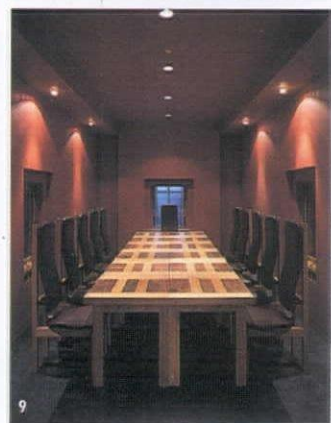
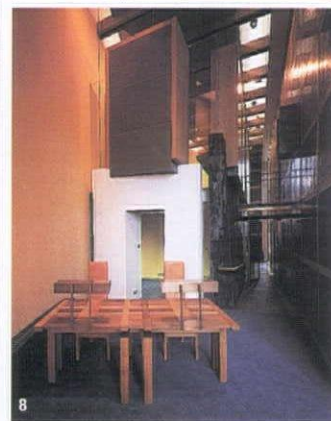
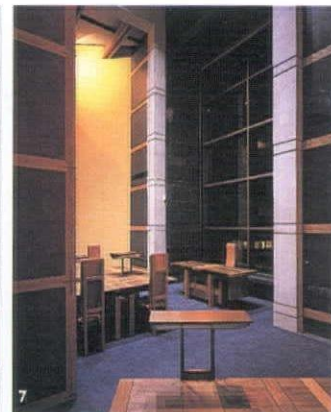
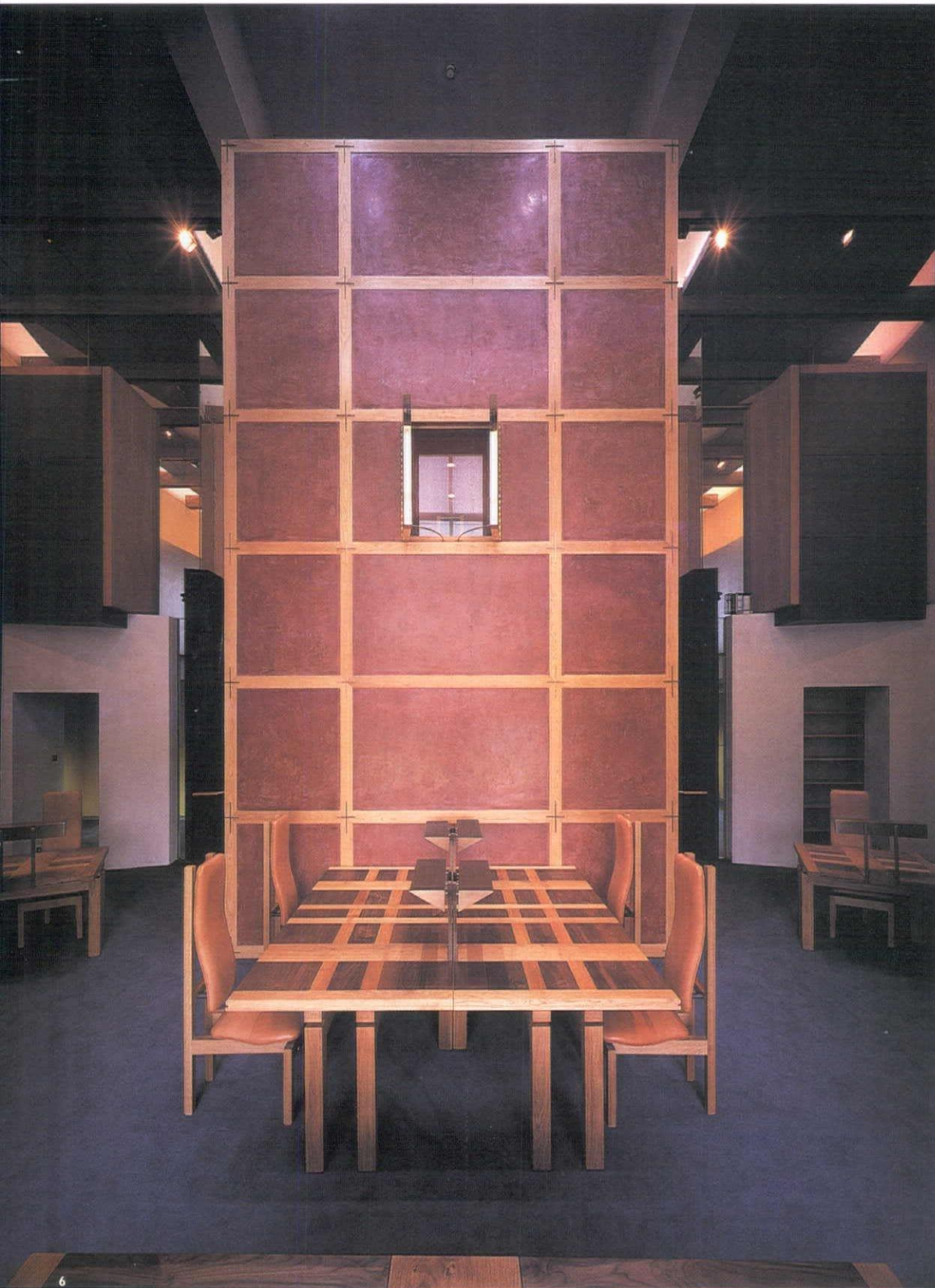


entrance floor plan (scale approx 1:350)

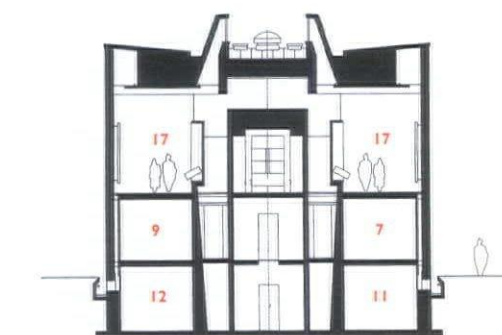


basement plan

RUSKIN LIBRARY, LANCASTER UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND
ARCHITECT
MACCORMAC JAMIESON PRICHARD



- 6 Reading room is climax of entrance floor, a dignified intense place, with ...
 7 ... a huge window that looks out to sea, a view marred only a little by inapt building in foreground (p33).
 8 Reading room, looking back to entrance, and overlooked by gallery. Note how dark battered wall just stops when no longer needed. Ruskin would approve of such changefulness.
 9 Meeting room in first floor of box, with (like reading room) special oak and walnut furniture by the architects. The window at the end is in the middle of 6.



cross section



long section

Computers have introduced a jarring and utilitarian note: perhaps their design will improve during the expected long life-time of the building.

The reading room is partly overlooked by two galleries reached by stairs which rise from the entrance hall following the curves of the outer walls. In the galleries, cabinets on top of the battered black walls display some of the treasures of the collection. Glass bridges connect the galleries via the treasure chest, the top western part of which is a tranquil meeting place that overlooks reading room and view through a shuttered opening. Like all other details, the shutters (which are supposed to be closed at night) have been very carefully thought about, and open out on curved bronze stays.

The rest of the box is occupied in workmanlike fashion by archive spaces, but there is one further touch of mystery. A tall shuttered window overlooks the entrance hall from the archives at the east end of the box. On its glass, Alexander Beleschenko has imposed a partly translucent abstraction of a Ruskin daguerrotype of the north-west portal of St Mark's,² and one of my abiding memories of the place will be the image of the curator quietly reading in the box, dimly seen through the screen, almost as if under water on which the Serenissima was reflected.

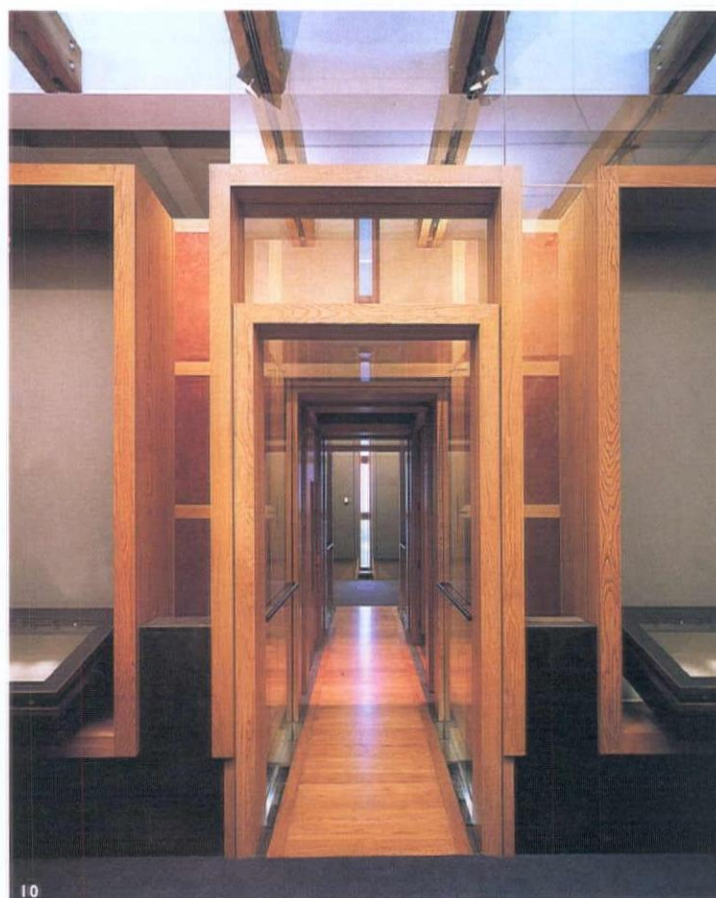
Richard MacCormac is a cheerful, charming, ruddy-faced fellow. But there is a rather frightening side to him: he can tap deep and complex feelings which few architects of our time are even able to comprehend. At its best, his architecture is Soanian in intensity, but the

multiple allusions are different: here, to Venice itself, to sea, waves, wharves, treasury, sky, church and lagoon.

Would Ruskin have liked it? I don't think that he would have been a fan of the outside, for he did not usually welcome overall symmetry, believing that buildings should express their inner workings on their exteriors. But he would surely have approved of the clarity of the structure, in which two huge expressed reinforced-concrete portal frames running from east to west are stabilized by the curved walls, and the roof is supported on exposed paired timber joists. He would have liked the changefulness³ of the interior – for instance the way in which those battered black walls just start, and stop when they are no longer needed. As one of the first people to be an environmentalist in the modern sense, he would have welcomed the way in which the internal climate is balanced by drawing in cool air at night from the little moat which follows the curve of the walls, so largely obviating the need for air conditioning.⁴ He would have enjoyed the nobility and appropriateness of the materials, the contrast between them, rough and smooth, and the craftsmanship, which in some places is appropriately savage, showing the hand of the workman.⁵ Of course, he would have welcomed the allusions.

Surely, difficult though he was, he could scarcely fail to be touched. As his star rises again, and his thoughts are profoundly relevant once more, their little storehouse, the eighth lamp,⁶ is one of the most moving buildings of the second half of the century.

PETER DAVEY



10



11

10 Looking through the box from one gallery to the other. Glass bridges connect them to the box where meeting room is to right, entrance to archive left. Long axial window in opposite gallery can be closed with internal shutters.

11 South gallery, which like north one, has lectern-like showcases in bronze and oak.

RUSKIN LIBRARY, LANCASTER UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND

ARCHITECT

MACCORMAC JAMIESON PRICHARD

Architect

MacCormac Jamieson Prichard: Richard MacCormac, Peter Jamieson, Oliver Smith, Toby Johnson, David Bonta, Glaspole Graham, Rainer Hofmann, Jessie Marshall, Pal Sandhu

Quantity surveyor

Gleeds

Structural engineer

Harris & Sutherland

Services engineer

Michael Popper Associates

Photographs

All photographs by Peter Durant apart from 2, 3 and 4 which are by Paul Barker

1 All the sea stories are homage to Ruskin's wonderful three-volume book, *The Stones of Venice*, perhaps the greatest work of cultural criticism ever written.

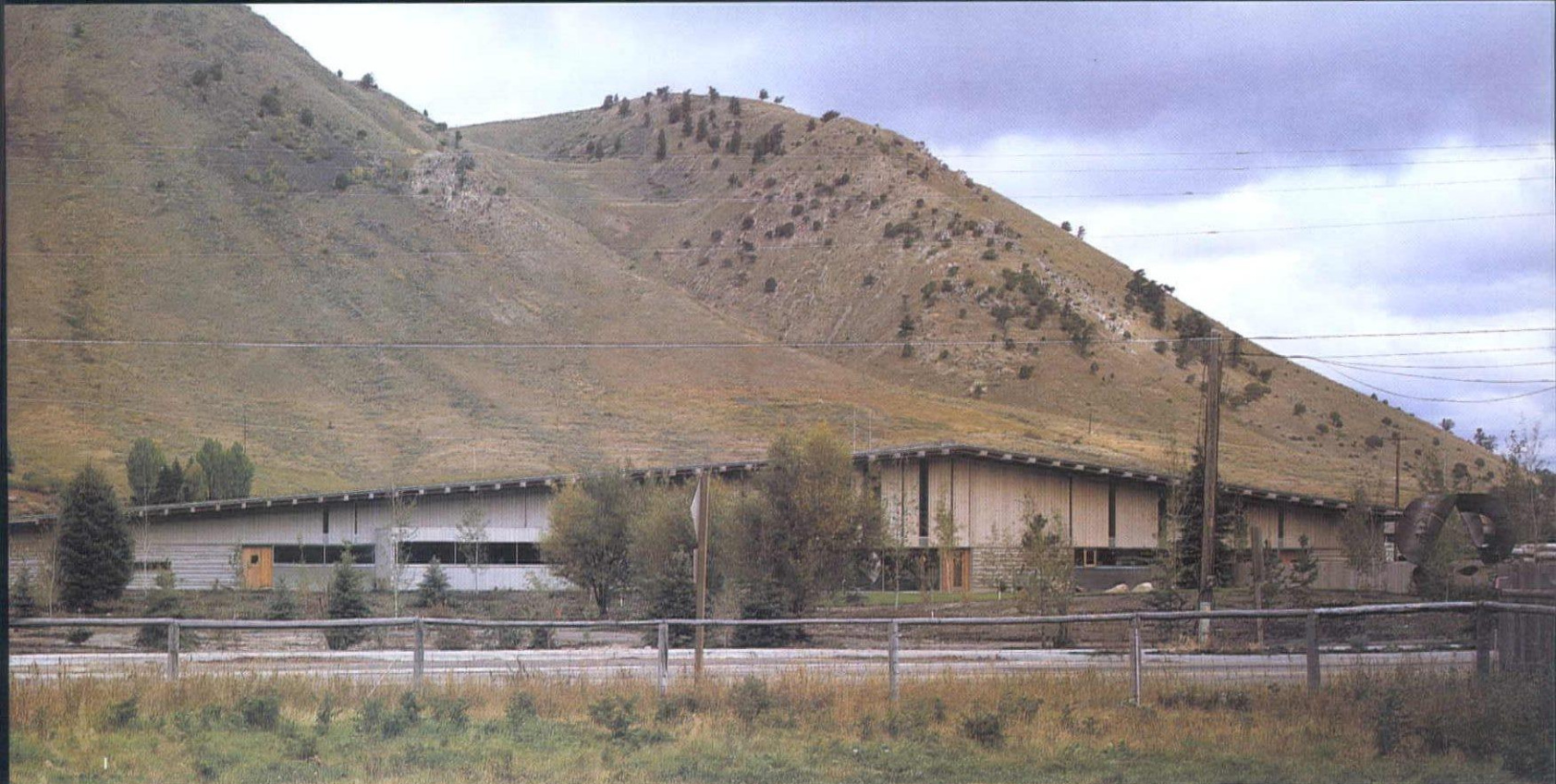
2 MacCormac says that though the image exists in the collection, this version was taken from a book, then reproduced on glass; during each process something was lost, so it is a memory of a memory of a memory.

3 See for instance note 4 on p50.

4 The building is the first passively conditioned major archive in Britain; the masonry walls and large air volumes act as heat sink.

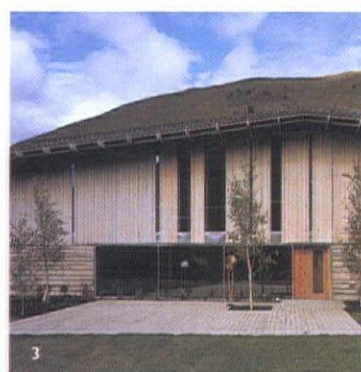
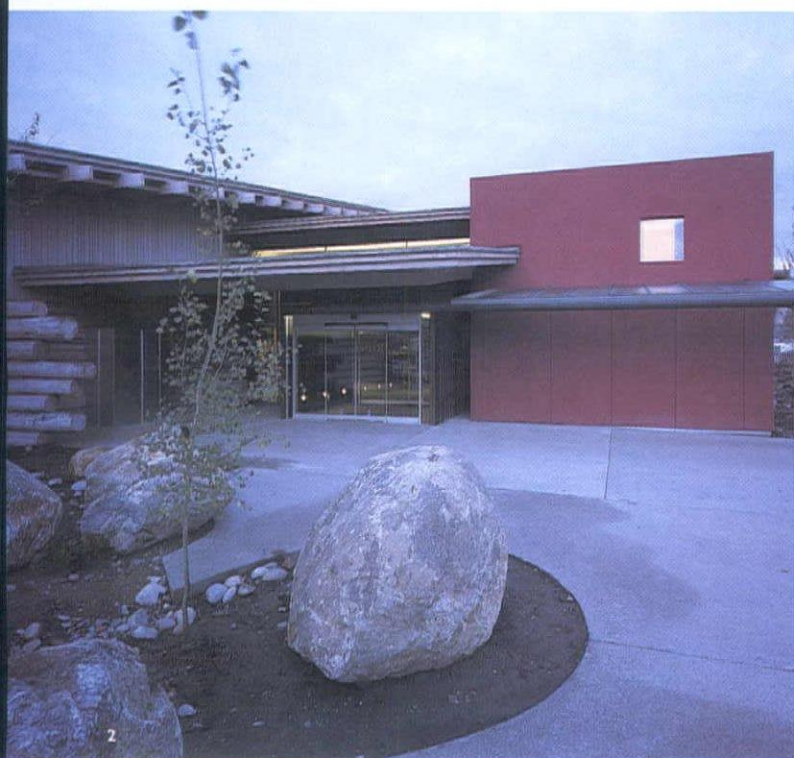
5 Ruskin believed that 'You must make a tool of the [workman] or a man of him' (*The Works of John Ruskin* on CD-Rom, Cambridge University Press: Cook & Wedderburn, vol X, p192), the latter being achieved by allowing him freedom in execution of the work, even to the extent of allowing mistakes: 'savageness'. It seems to me that the treatment of the plaster of both the casket and the battered walls shows savageness in Ruskin's sense (though they are without obvious mistakes).

6 Ruskin's first book on our art was *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. I am indebted to Paul Finch for the observation that the building is clearly the eighth.



RUSTIC REGIONALISM

A new county library in Wyoming draws on the rustic, vernacular style of the regional architecture.



LIBRARY, JACKSON, WYOMING, USA
ARCHITECT
WILLIAM BRUDER

- 1 The cabin-like form of the new county library recalls Wyoming's rugged vernacular architecture.
- 2 Entrance courtyard, landscaped with boulders and saplings.
- 3 Timber decks on the south elevation encourage contact with the outside.
- 4 Materials and form have a rustic simplicity, appropriate to the rural context.

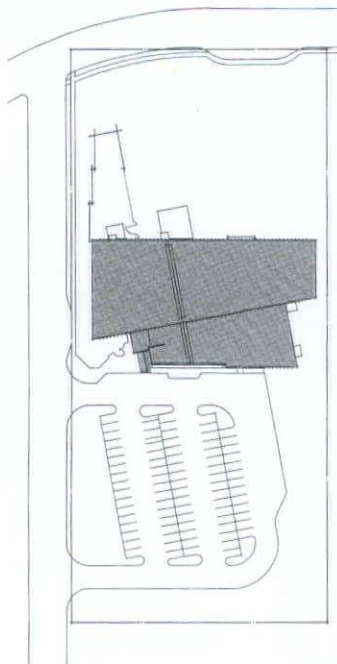
Designed by William Bruder, the new Teton County Library is a modern reinterpretation of Wyoming's vernacular ranch buildings and the log structures that still populate the region. Bruder's most significant project to date was the central library in Phoenix (AR March 1996), an imposing copper-clad monolith inspired by the mighty forms of the south-west American desert landscape. Here, the programme is necessarily more modest, yet Bruder endows an essentially simple building with humane inventiveness and a lively material presence.

The new library eases gently into a Wild West landscape of rolling forested hills and snow-capped mountains. Lying on the edge of the small town of Jackson, the site is flanked to the north by a busy road. The plan is based on two wedge-shaped volumes pushed together and enveloped by a great oversailing pitched roof, like a big log cabin or ranch house gable. Clad in rough-sawn planking, the larger wedge contains the main public volume of the library, which is

LIBRARY, JACKSON, WYOMING, USA

ARCHITECT

WILLIAM BRUDER



site plan

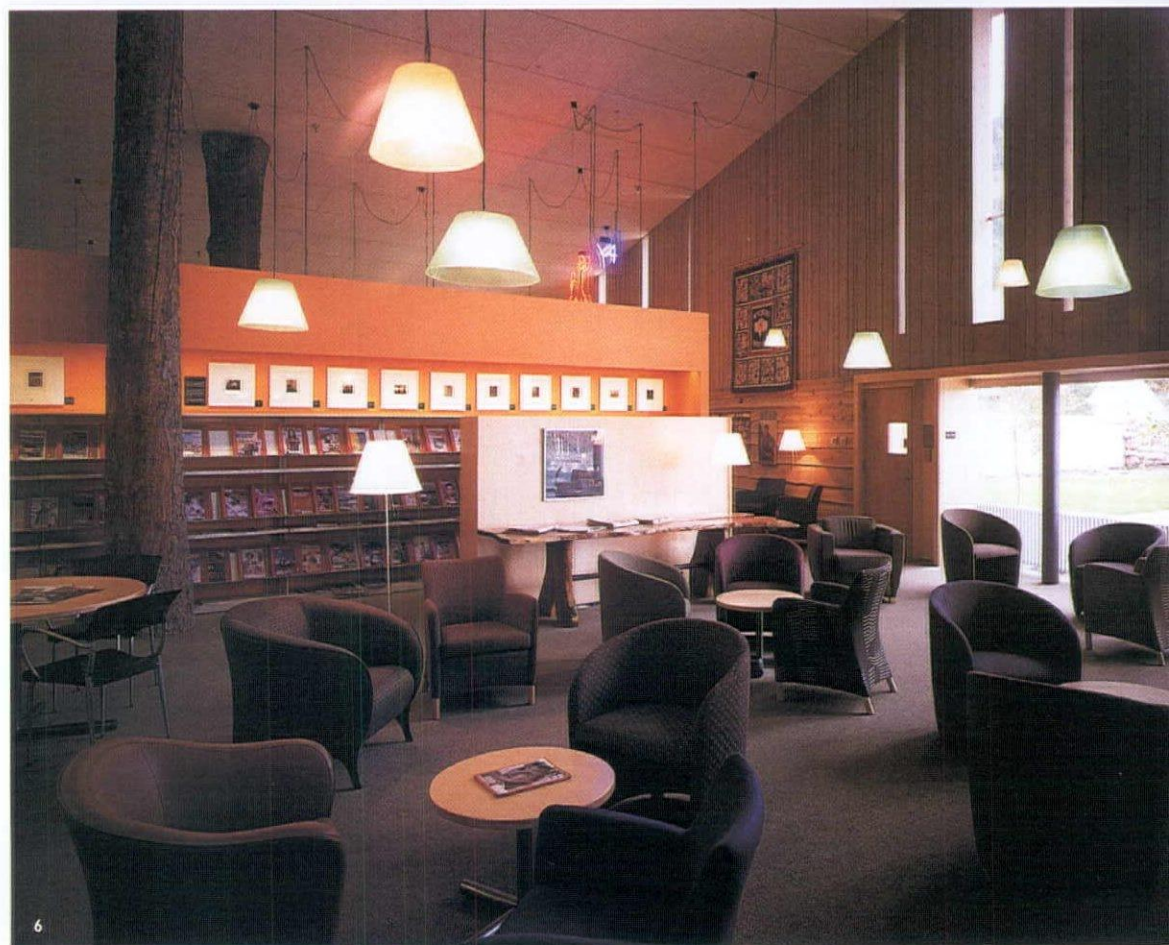
5 The great library room, loosely subdivided by stacks, tables and seating to create many different kinds of reading and study spaces.

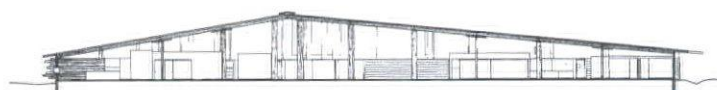
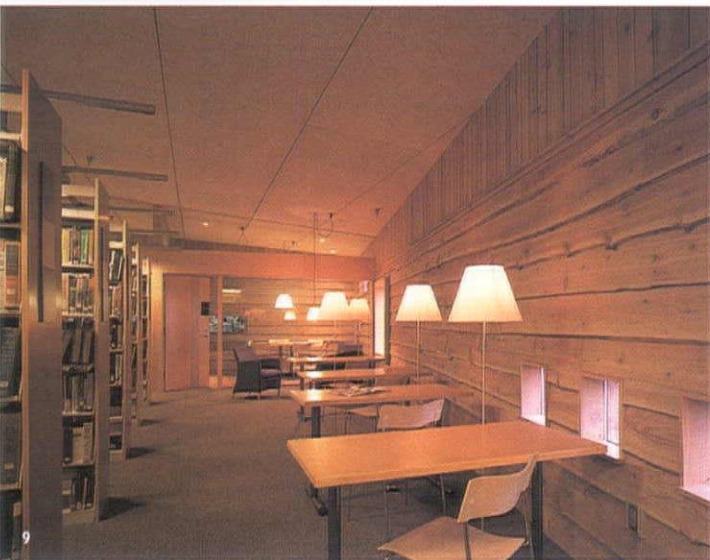
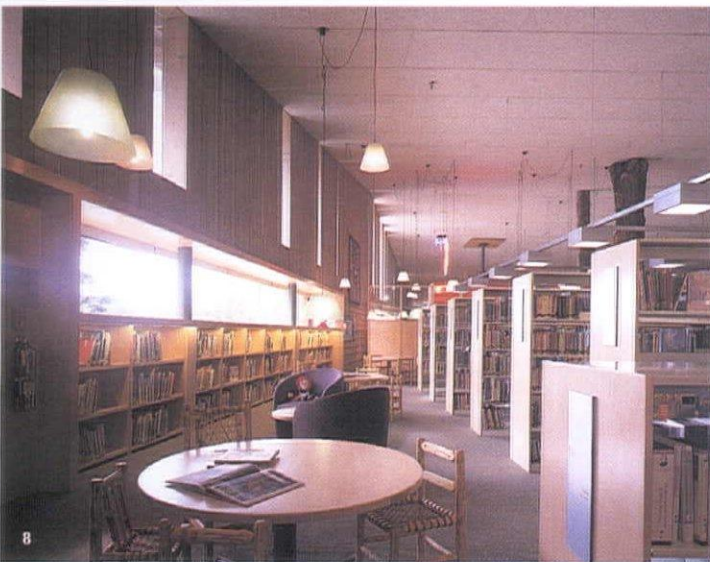
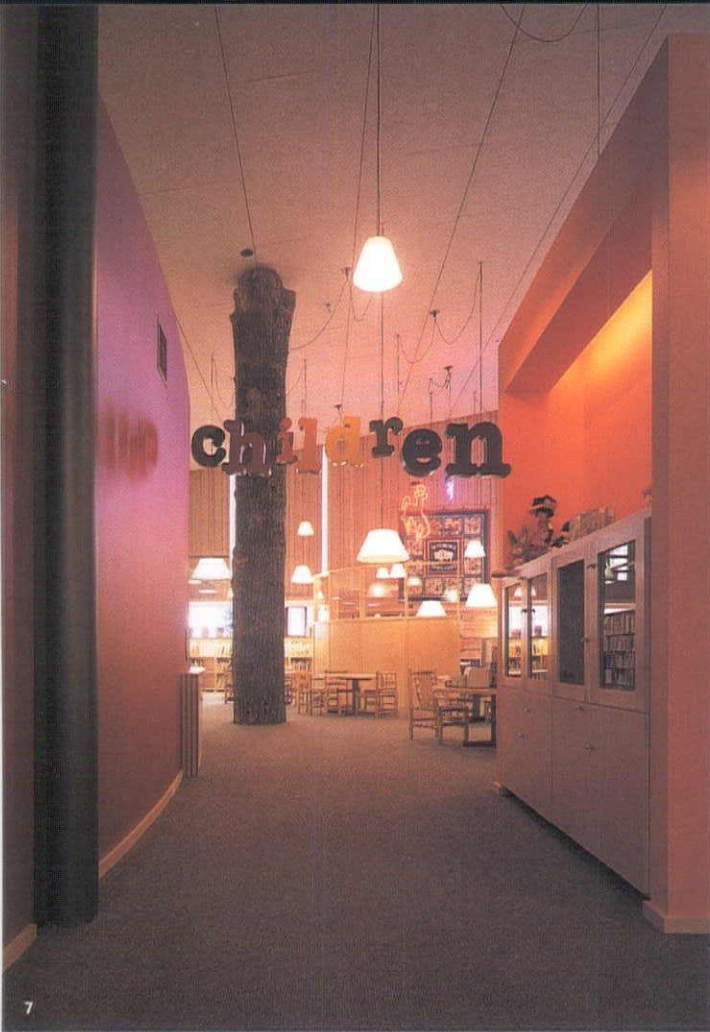
6 Informal reading area, with the external deck beyond.

7 Children's library, with bold, colourful signage and child-sized furniture.

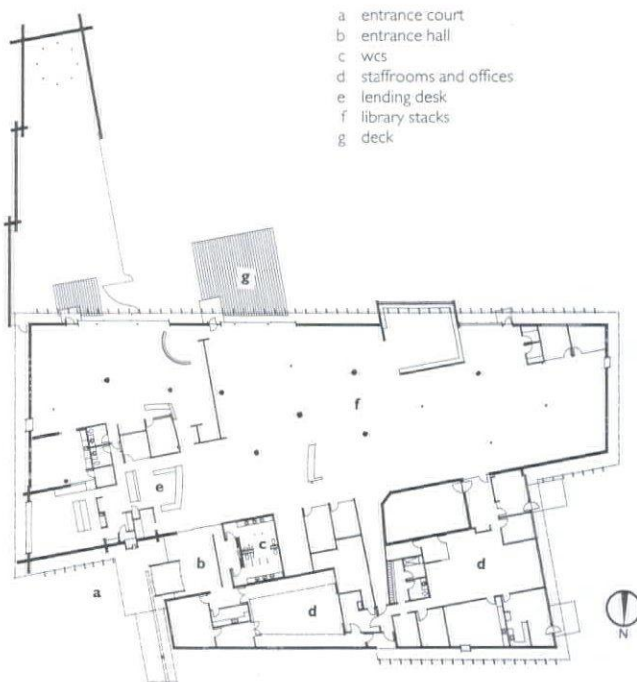
8 Narrow strips of clerestory glazing illuminate the reading areas.

9 Desks for individual study.





longitudinal section



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:1000)

conceived as a great luminous room facing south over reading decks, lawns and a courtyard for children's story-telling. The smaller wedge, its walls rendered a deep, oxblood red, houses the library's backstage facilities, such as librarians' offices and staffrooms.

Set between the intersection of the two wedges at the short east end is an entrance portico, overlooking a small courtyard landscaped with saplings and boulders. The gallery-like foyer serves as an antechamber to the main public spaces arranged in the large wedge. Making one sculptural space for the various library functions – general collection, children's collection, Western Americana, periodicals, reference and computer centre – generates both functional flexibility and an agreeable sense of informality. The changing height of the big sloping roof helps to create different kinds of spaces, from double-height reading areas illuminated by strips of clerestory glazing, to more intimate study tables

placed around the edges of the library room. Rugged 'tree-trunk' columns and rough sawn internal planking combine with furnishings of cherry, oak and leather to exude rustic homeliness and warmth.

This is clearly a building well suited to its rural community, but it is also a new civic landmark that distils bold, tectonic poetry out of a utilitarian brief. Bruder's notion of American regionalism is underscored by a romantic pragmatism that responds energetically to both users and context. EFFIE C. MACDONALD

Architect

William P. Bruder, New River, Arizona

Project team

William P. Bruder, Wendell Burnette, Tim Christ, Jack DeBartolo III, Ben Nesbeitt, Brett Oaks

Structural engineer

Brickey, Rudow & Berry

Mechanical engineer

Clark Engineering

Electrical engineer

C. A. Energy Designs

Landscape architect

Floor and Ten Eyck

Photographs

Bill Timmerman

Libraries in history

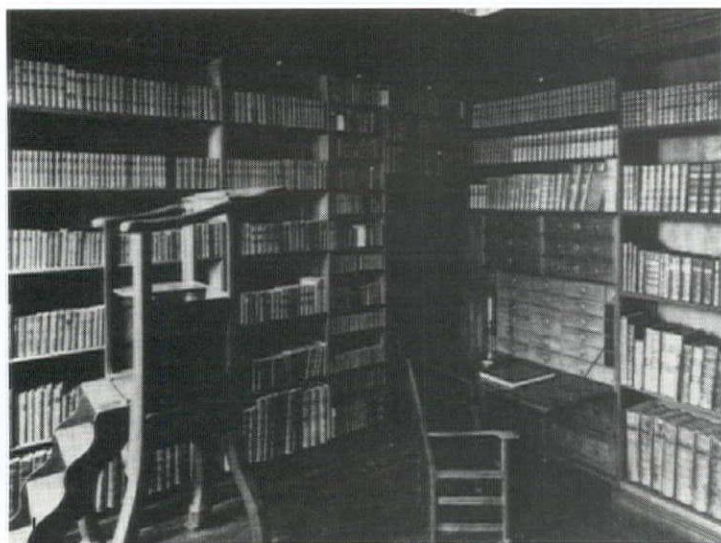
The modern library has evolved as a building type over half a millennium and is, as usual, facing rapid and irrevocable change. Yet some elements have persisted since the origins of the separate book storage space.

Any purpose-built library serves a symbolic as well as a practical purpose: by dedicating a special space to books and reading we signal the value we place on learning and culture, whatever use we subsequently make of it. Individuals as well as institutions can, of course, build libraries for themselves, and the idea of a separate library room was actually unusually well established in the English house between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (see Girouard, Thornton). Over this period it underwent considerable changes in planning and use: early examples were relatively small fitted book-closets or studies, used largely as private masculine retreats, while by the nineteenth century they had become larger, more comfortably furnished family rooms, still perhaps seen primarily as 'a sort of Morning-room for gentlemen',¹ but now also accessible to the ladies of the household. But while some private collections were housed in conditions of considerable splendour, it is the history of institutional examples which really concerns us here. It was from their struggle to reconcile the needs of growing numbers of books, staff and a separate category of readers that the library, as a distinct building type, emerged most fully.

The origins of the modern institutional library can be traced back to the late Middle Ages. Specialized and indeed elaborate

purpose-built libraries had existed in ancient Greece and Rome, attached to palaces, temples and municipal buildings. Some had contained tens or even hundreds of thousands of volumes, but these collections were all dispersed and destroyed during the fall of the Roman empire in the third and fourth centuries AD. While monasteries acted as centres of learning during the early Middle Ages, producing as well as preserving books, their collections of books were numbered in hundreds, rather than thousands. These could be kept in cupboards, or perhaps a small vaulted room, usually next to the cloisters, and dispensed to members of the community as required. Carrels or alcoves for reading and writing might be situated nearby.

The fully equipped library room only appeared in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in response to the widening of the religious orders' teaching duties, and in particular to the foundation of universities. Now greatly enlarged numbers of readers, not all of them necessarily trustworthy, required ready access to growing numbers of reference books. The answer was to provide a long, narrow room, preferably set at first-floor level to increase security and reduce the risk of damp, and lit by rows of windows. Between these were set long lecterns to which the books were kept



chained. The detached building provided at the Sorbonne (founded 1254) by the end of the thirteenth century was an influential early example of such a library. The model proved a durable one; when numbers of books began to expand, especially after the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, it was relatively simple to provide extra storage space on shelves above or below the lecterns. By the late sixteenth century at Oxford and Cambridge, lecterns had become stalls, equipped with seats. This arrangement, reminiscent of the earlier carrel, had the advantage of giving readers some privacy and protection from draughts.

The wall-system

The next stage was the wall-system, apparently pioneered by Juan de Herrera at the Escorial in about 1567. As the name suggests, this involved moving the bookcases against the walls; by using ladders or (more safely) galleries it now became possible to utilize the whole height of a room. The wall-system provided useful extra shelf-space for growing numbers of books, but it was also valued because it gave scope for greater architectural grandeur. With the advent of the Renaissance, building a library had become a way for the princely collector, as well as the university or college, to demonstrate commitment to humanistic values and the spread of learning. Though not public in the modern sense, such libraries were usually open to the serious scholar at least; more elaborately decorated than earlier examples, they often also served as galleries for the display of works of art and curiosities. The earliest use of wall-cases in an English library was at the Bodleian in 1610-13, when a new Arts End was added to Duke Humfrey's library. Security was maintained by keeping books on the lowest shelves chained, and those above behind a grille, while the galleries were only accessible to staff. A further extension, the Selden End, was added in 1634-36. However, the most monumental of seventeenth-century English libraries was undoubtedly that built by Wren for Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1676-81. Here, wall-shelving was ingeniously combined with projecting presses to provide a grander version of the older stall-system, still valued by academics for the privacy it provided.

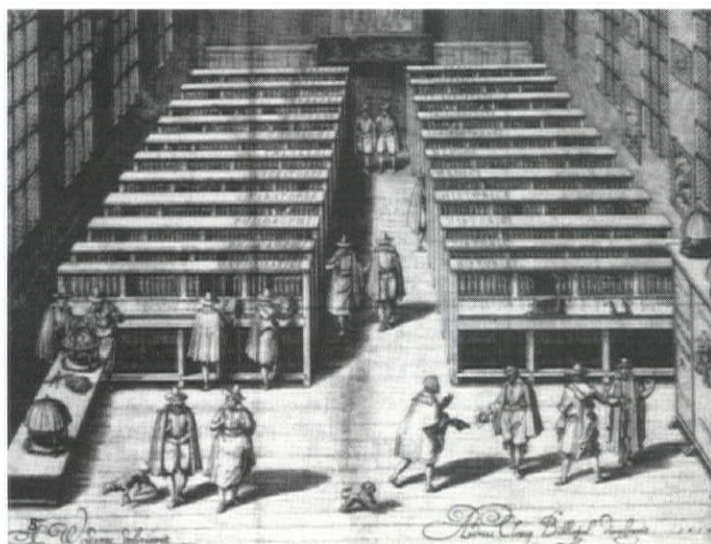
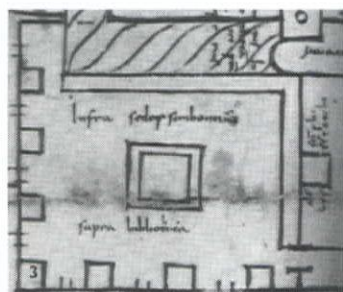
Despite this new monumentality, the medieval tradition of treating the library as a long, rectangular space had been preserved; it was only at the end of the seventeenth century that the alternative of the centrally-planned library emerged. The most usual plan on the Continent was an oval, often used in combina-

tion with the rectangle as at Herman Korb's influential building at Wolfenbüttel (1706-10). The idea of a circular plan was pioneered by Wren, in an alternative proposal for Trinity (see McKitterick). This domed building with its squared shell was to be located in the centre of the open court. Within it, the tables and seats formed an inner ring, with the bookshelves beyond, served by an outer corridor. It was this unbuilt proposal which inspired Hawksmoor to suggest a circular plan for the Radcliffe Camera in Oxford, a suggestion adopted and executed after his death by James Gibbs in 1737-49. Another circular library in England was the one built by William Chambers at Buckingham House in 1766-68.

Whether long and narrow or centrically planned, until the late eighteenth century the library was essentially a large single space, with little or no extra storage or office accommodation: books, readers and staff were expected to co-exist. Thus its bookcases, and any supporting scheme of iconography, could be arranged in such a way that the building itself became the principal catalogue of its contents, guiding the browsing scholar through different categories of collections. The idea of using space to order knowledge was as old as the idea of the purpose-built library itself. When lecterns were introduced, books on the same subject were logically kept together; the Bodleian's first printed catalogue (1605) was actually an expanded version of the subject-headings and shelf-lists placed on the end of each library stall.

Centric planning

With the development of the centrically-planned library, the idea that the building itself should demonstrate the universality and perfectibility of knowledge was taken a step further. Eighteenth-century plans of Wolfenbüttel, for instance, show that the books were originally arranged by subject, with theology and jurisprudence – divine order and human justice – in the position of greatest dignity, round the ambulatory of the ground floor. Such plans appear to have been influenced by the sixteenth-century concept of the theatre of memory, an imaginary semi-circular amphitheatre designed to let its creator file, preserve and retrieve every aspect of human knowledge to best advantage (see Markus). There were, however, two significant drawbacks to designs of this kind: capacity for future expansion or re-organization was inevitably limited, while a book could only be shelved in one place at a time, discouraging cross-referencing and lateral thinking.



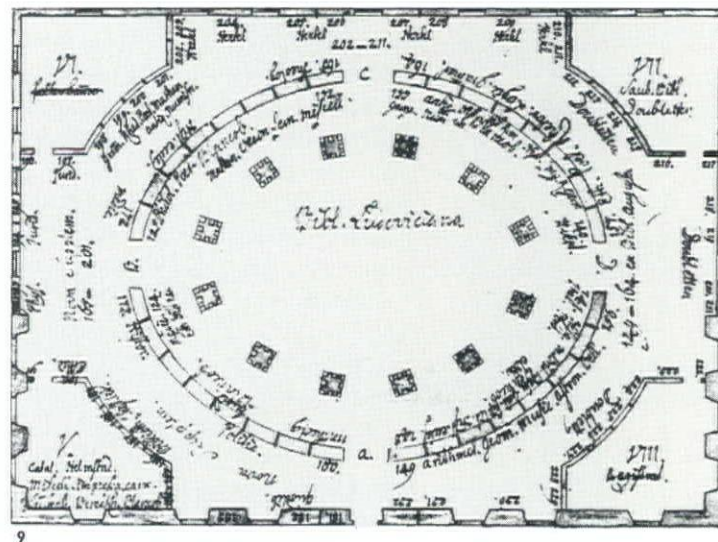
- 1 The gentleman's cabinet, the library as private retreat: Ham House Surrey, with fittings of about 1675.
- 2 Turn of the eighteenth century: accessible to ladies. James Wyatt's redecoration of the Cassiobury Park library, Hertfordshire, ca 1800, drawn by A.C.Pugin.
- 3 Origins of the library as separate space: part of the famous ideal plan of the abbey of St Gall, ca 800.
- 4 The wall system at Juan de Herrera's Escorial library ca 1567.
- 5 Library of Leyden University in 1610. Print by Cornelius Woudanus: long lecterns with book storage above and below.

As numbers of books – and readers – continued to grow inexorably, it became obvious that the future lay rather with the paper catalogue, which could offer permutations of arrangement infinitely more numerous and flexible than the physical grouping of books on a set of shelves. This recognition permitted dramatic changes in planning to be made in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Leopoldo della Santa's *Della costruzione e del regolamento di una pubblica universale biblioteca* (1816), in particular, marked a turning point in a growing trend to separate out readers, books and staff, and keep them apart wherever possible. In a period of rapid social and economic change, parallels to these developments are to be found in many other specialized building types; besides dealing with a surge in demand, they attempted to promote and refine new concepts of public order. So far as libraries were concerned, the changes involved banishing the majority of books to storage stacks, while restricting visitors to a reading room. Here, they could order up the works they required from the catalogue; members of staff not actually engaged in supervising their behaviour now acquired separate and private spaces for their cataloguing activities.

This period was also marked by the creation of the great national libraries, which often incorporated older religious or royal collections. By the mid-nineteenth century, library building had become the contemporary equivalent of the mid-twentieth century space race: resources were poured into new projects designed to demonstrate national commitment to scientific progress.

Influence of the British Museum

Up until this point the library at the British Museum had, for instance, developed in a somewhat ad hoc manner, being largely an accumulation of various private and some of the royal collections, housed in converted accommodation at Montagu House. The collections had already grown considerably: from about 50 000 printed books in 1759 to 65 000 in 1800 and 125 000 in 1823. A first purpose-built library, with two adjacent reading rooms, opened in 1829, following the acquisition of George III's library. A programme of more deliberate expansion began with the appointment of the ambitious and dynamic Anthony Panizzi (1797-1879; Keeper of Printed Books from 1837, and Principal Librarian from 1856). His aim was to make the library the finest in the world, and more particularly to overtake the larger collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. He successfully lobbied for increased purchase grants and better enforcement of the copyright laws; by 1848 the British Museum was acquiring 30 000



volumes a year to the Bibliothèque Nationale's 12 000, and by 1889 it was issuing five times as many books to three times as many readers each year. The idea of placing a circular reading room within the little-used central quadrangle of the museum was his, though the design was worked up by Sydney Smirke. Staff sat in the enclosed space at its centre, surrounded by concentric rings of the catalogue; beyond this radiated the readers' desks, while the books lining the outer perimeter represented a mere fraction of the collections, largely housed in iron stacks beyond its walls. As contemporaries proudly noted, at 140 feet the diameter of its glass and iron dome was greater than that of St Paul's (112ft) or St Peter's (139ft), though slightly smaller than that of the Pantheon (143ft). Its circular plan was to influence library planning across the world and into the next century: for instance at the Library of Congress (completed 1897), the Prussian State Library (1914) and the Stockholm City Library (1928). Even the reconstruction of the Bibliothèque Nationale (1865-68, Henri Labrousse), with iron book stacks and an apsed reading room, suggested the influence of the rival institution.

The circular space of the British Museum's Reading Room, like its centrally-planned forbears, potently suggested the ordering of knowledge. But nevertheless it indicated the extent to which libraries now functioned as accumulations of parts, rather than single monumental spaces. Professional librarians now demanded

6 Selden End, Bodleian Library, Oxford (1634-1636). Early use of wall cases.

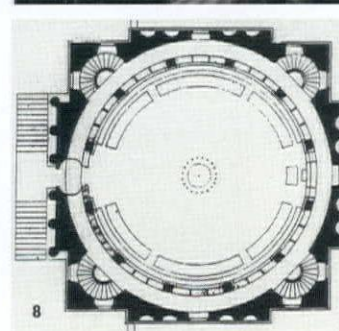
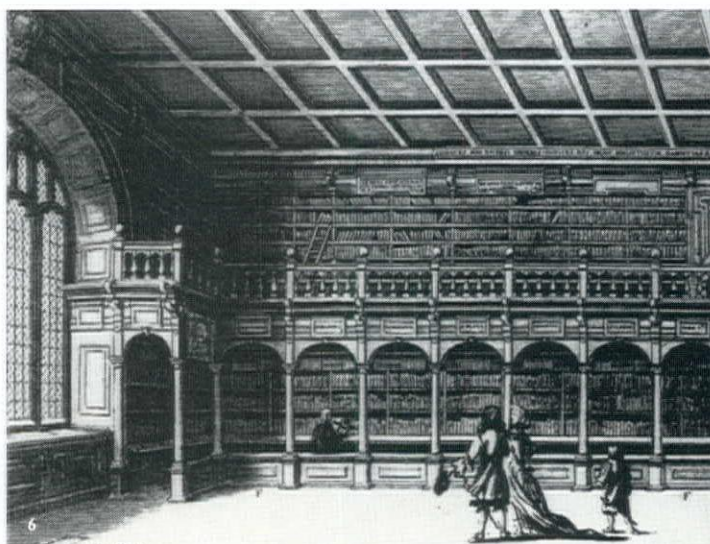
7 Wren's Trinity College Cambridge library 1676-1681. Wall shelving combined with projecting presses to provide grand version of old stall system, still valued for privacy.

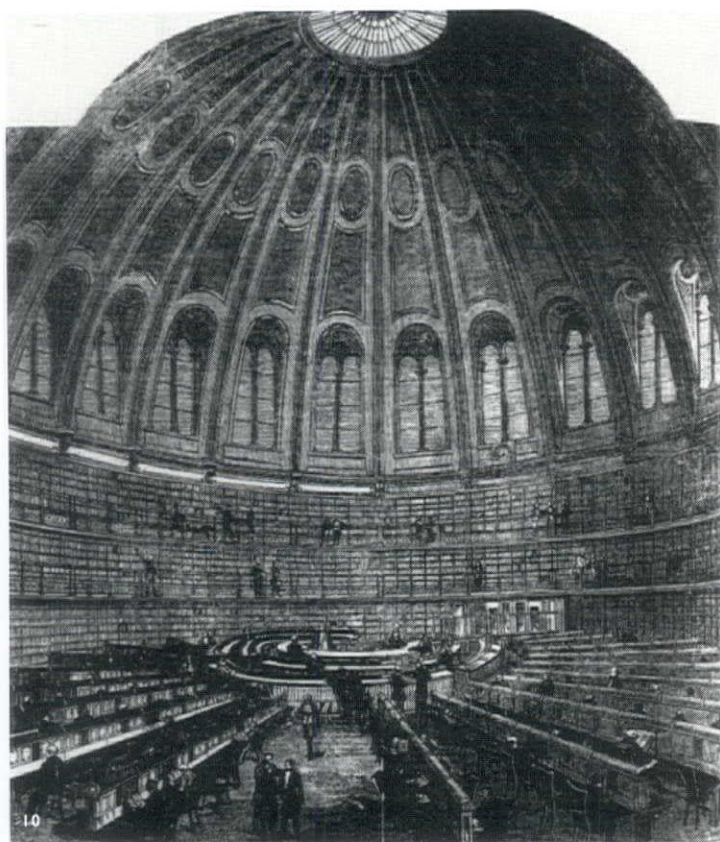
8 Wren's proposed plan for Trinity College library, Cambridge, ca 1675. Early (unbuilt) example of concentric library.

9 Wolfenbüttel library, Lower Saxony 1706-1710 by Hermann Korb. Early built example of centred plan.

10 British Museum Library Reading Room (1852-1857) by Sydney Smirke: central monumental space celebrating the triumph of scholarship was ...

11 ... very influential, even on Labrousse's Reading Room in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (1865-1868).





flexible buildings, with the potential for expansion, and during the second half of the nineteenth century this encouraged a diversification of style. Classical libraries, hitherto almost invariably deemed the most appropriate to the encouragement of learning, were joined by buildings in a gallimaufry of styles more obviously adapted to looser planning: Gothic, Renaissance, Romanesque, Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau. The sheer numbers of new libraries provided in the wake of the public library movement of the 1850s meant that the last 50 years of the nineteenth century and the first 20 years of this one became known as the golden age of library building. For the first time, books were made freely available to the general public at the expense of local government. English public library buildings were usually relatively modest, since both ratepayers and the charitable foundations who sometimes provided capital funding (most notably the Carnegie Trust, responsible for 660 new British libraries between 1885 and about 1920) kept a careful eye on expenditure. Again, they were initially organized on a catalogue system. Only at the end of the nineteenth century did it become possible to browse in the way familiar today: this involved reducing shelves in height and moving them apart, and creating a single bottleneck exit for issuing books.

Since the 1930s, despite a continuing lack of stylistic consensus, the general trend has been towards plainer, lighter and ever more flexible buildings. The rapid expansion of written information has rendered the space problem still more acute, and different kinds of libraries have attempted to tackle it in different ways. For national institutions such as the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale, faced with the need to maintain authoritatively complete collections on every subject, there has ultimately been no alternative but to rebuild. Expansion within universities has also been particularly marked, notably through the proliferation of separate subject-oriented libraries: during the 1970s and 1980s, some 16 new university libraries were being built each year in the

USA. But at the local level the model has more often been that of the 'self-renewing library', where new accessions have to be matched by the withdrawal of old stock.² Ultimately, of course, new technology has the capacity to solve the space problem by rendering the book physically obsolete, or at least pushing it into second place as a source of reference. Already computer terminals have largely replaced paper catalogues, and increasingly texts themselves are available on screen.

Though the impact of these developments has been most apparent in the design of larger libraries, it is likely to have more serious effects at local level. Public libraries, in particular, need to diversify into other media. Their book borrowing rates have fallen by nearly 20 per cent over the last 10 years, despite attempts to offer CDs and videos, they have generally been slow to invest in new information technology. They currently 'run the risk of becoming increasingly inefficient, ineffective and irrelevant to the needs of those they serve'.³

CLARE GRAHAM

1 Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 1864; quoted by Thornton, p220.

2 Turner, p321.

3 Due for Renewal, Audit Commission, 1997; see *The Guardian*, 24 Sept 1997, p12.

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BULO



Cloister-like walkway around the forest and entrance to research reading rooms.

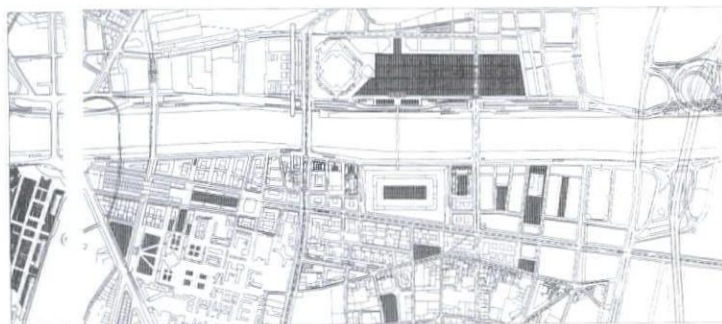
NATIONAL LIBRARY, PARIS, FRANCE

ARCHITECT

DOMINIQUE PERRAULT ARCHITECTE

Tours de force

The four glass towers of the French national library stand sentinel on the Parisian skyline. The forbidding exterior shields an abstract representation of a secluded cloister, an oasis for quiet study.

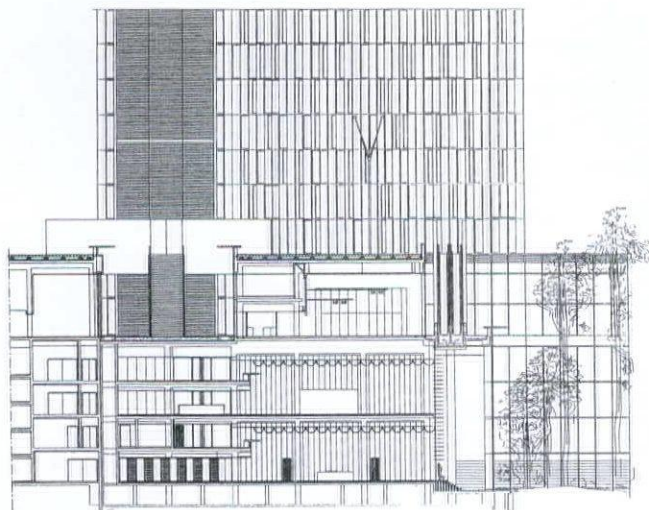


site plan of BNP, 13th arrondissement, south-east of Paris. Parc Bercy is to north

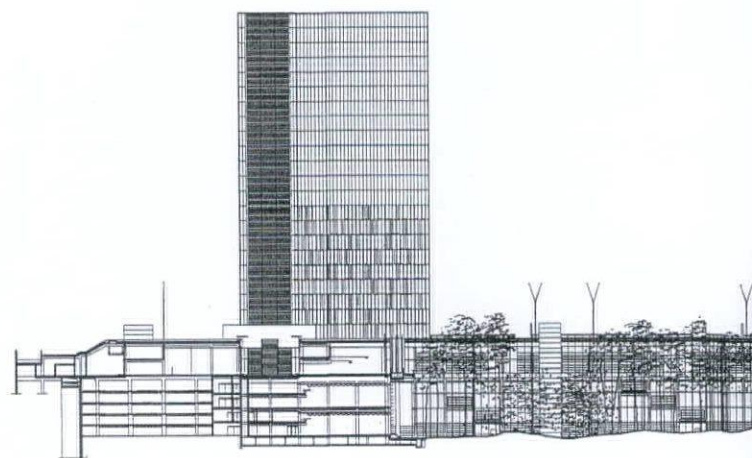
Cast as the protagonists in a new version of the hare and tortoise fable, the national libraries of France and Britain are nearing completion at roughly the same time. The British Library, beset by political and economic vicissitudes, has taken 36 years to build, while the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (BNP) propelled into life by the force of President Mitterrand's ambition, took less than 10 (AR July 1995).¹ The tortoise, the British Library, is now largely open (p34) except for the Science and Asian reading rooms; in Paris, the BNP's

general reading rooms and public spaces are open, but the important reference libraries for researchers and scholars will not open until late this year.

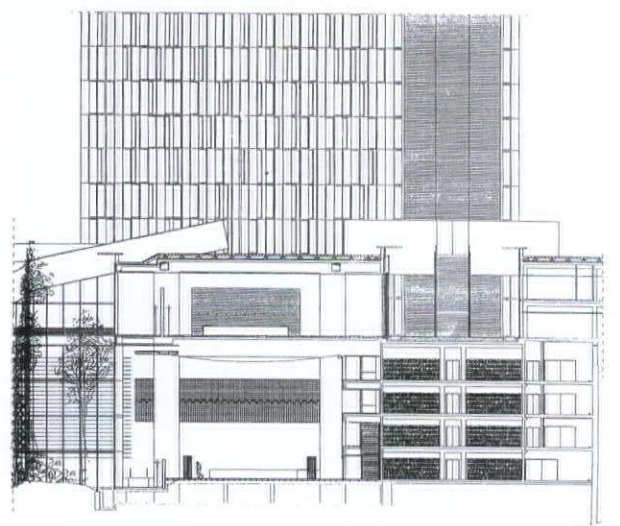
The near coincidence invites comparisons. In terms of size, and sophistication, the French library claims to be comparable to the British. But except for sharing the mythic status of great libraries, and similarly housing the technologies necessary for modern storage and cataloguing, the character of the two new institutions could not be more different.



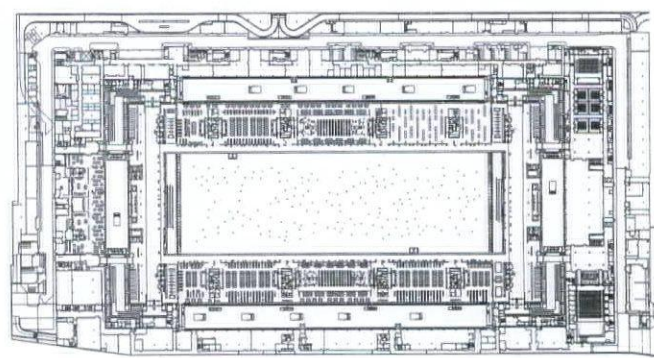
cross section of sound and image reading room



long section



cross section of rare books reading room



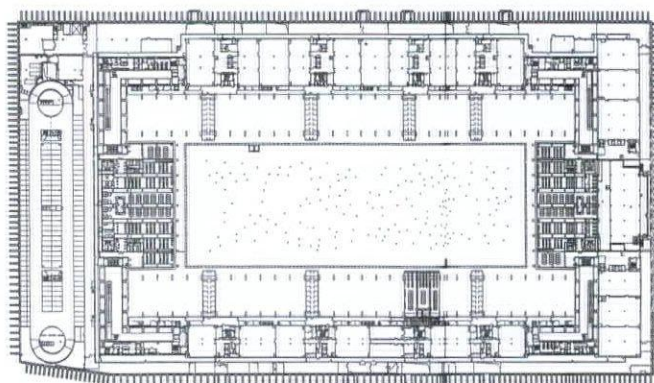
plan of entrance level, public reading rooms and lecture halls

At the root of the differences are the approaches of the two architects. Colin St John Wilson, who is a subtle and complex architect, has designed his building from the inside out (externally the British Library suggests a large building trying to look smaller); Dominique Perrault has done precisely the opposite. His building with its massive stripped down forms – the four glass towers, the immense bare podium built around a rectangular hole six storeys deep and containing a fully grown Normandy forest – expresses grandeur, monumentality, and presidential ambition. In this scheme, as Perrault has explained, form does not follow function, it contains it. So there are some ill-fitting bits that seem capricious. It is not sensible, for instance, to store books in glass towers. whatever is said about the

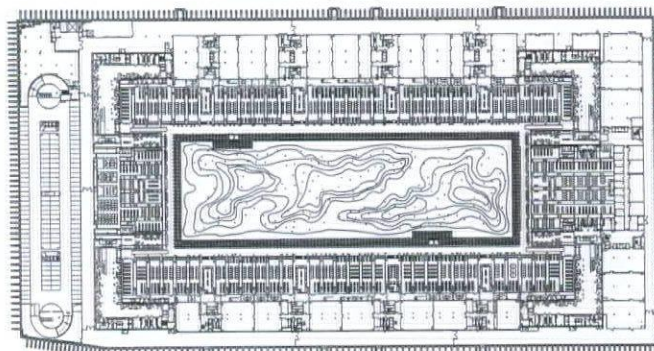
constraints of the Seine-side site, wooden shutters and solar glass. Nor is it considerate to make regular readers troop up the steps to the podium from the street and then make them descend into its bowels. This is a common complaint. The great wooden clad esplanade can be windswept and in wet weather extremely slippery.

But even before stepping onto the escalator that carries you down to the entrance you have been seduced by the emotional charge emitted by the building. Its external form, both forbidding and exhilarating in its enormous scale and Cartesian austerity, shields a rich and surprising interior.

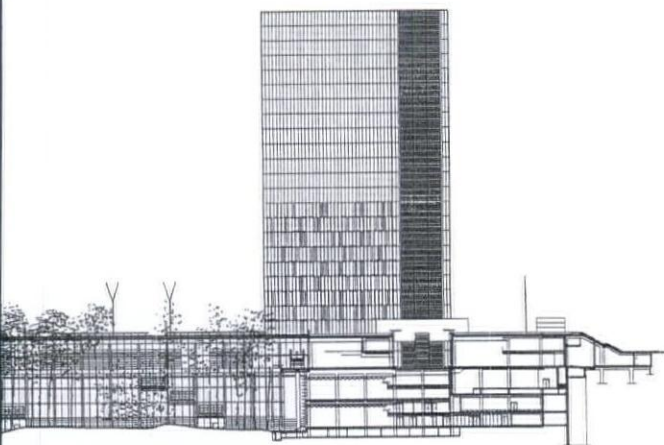
The logic of concentrating library facilities and of removing auxiliary accommodation like offices to the peripheral towers is clear. Reading rooms – those for the general public in the



mezzanine plan of reading rooms for scholars



plan of ground level and research reading rooms (scale approx 1:3800)



2



3

NATIONAL LIBRARY, PARIS, FRANCE

ARCHITECT

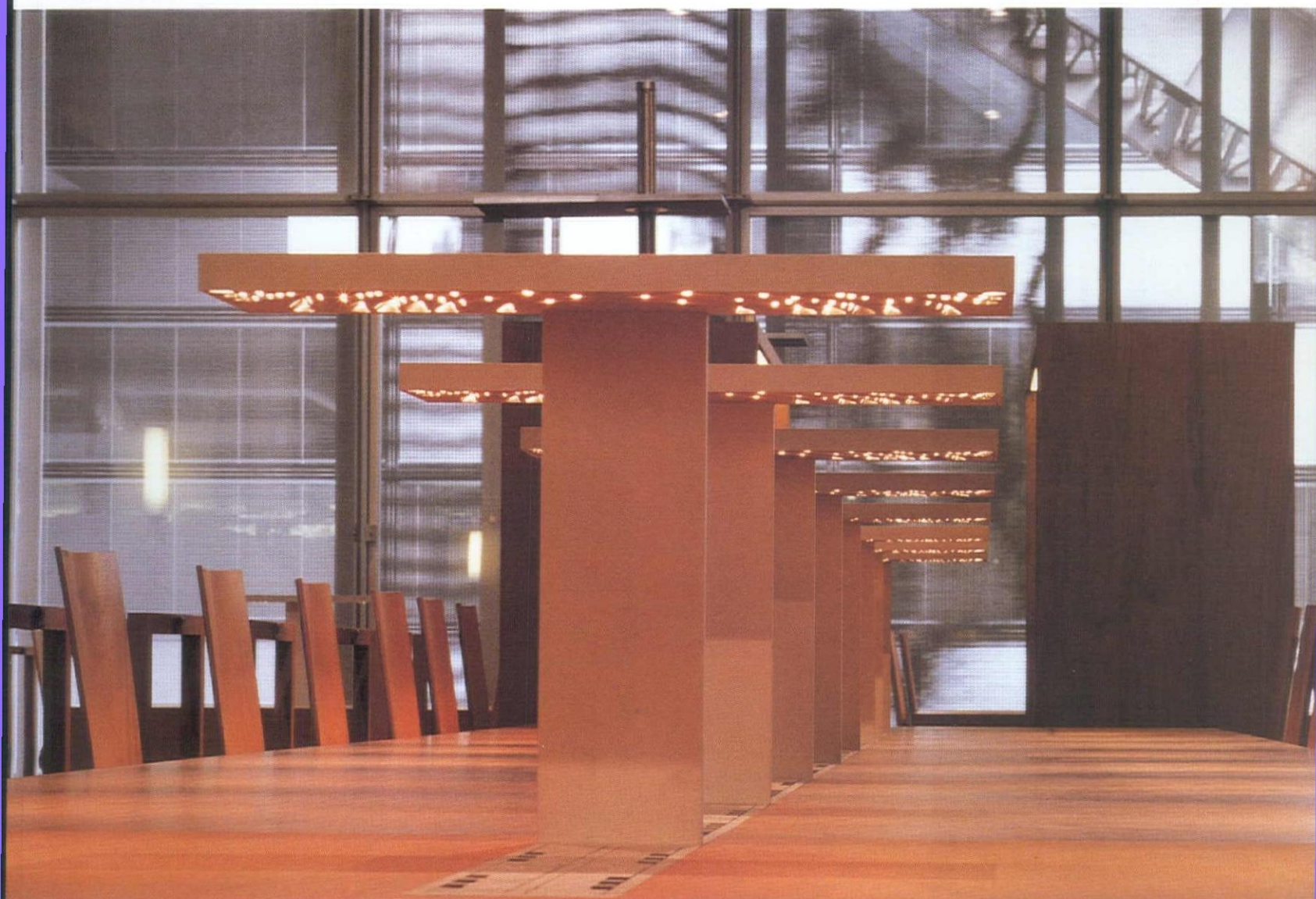
DOMINIQUE PERRAULT ARCHITECTE

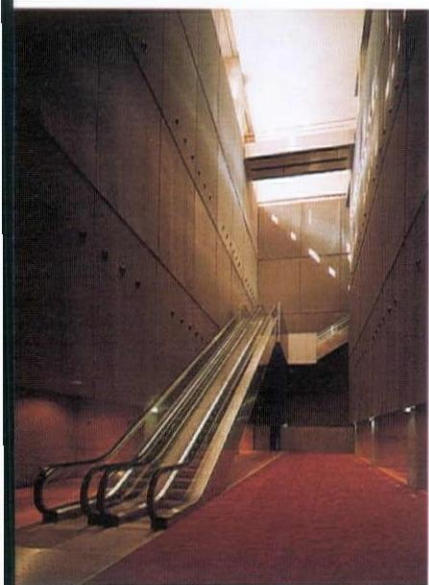
2 Glass towers symbolizing open books on south-eastern skyline of Paris, and forest core.

3 Walkway around tree tops at entrance level.

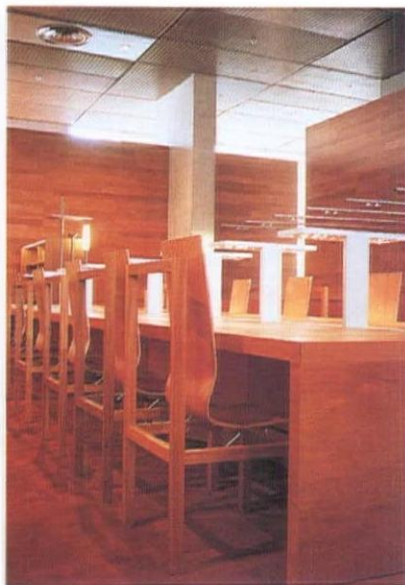
4 Chairs and tables in reading rooms, places illuminated by fibre-optic lamps.

4





5



6



7

NATIONAL LIBRARY, PARIS, FRANCE

ARCHITECT

DOMINIQUE PERRAULT

ARCHITECTE

5

Escalator lobby hung with GKD's architectural mesh.

6

Reading room and metallic mesh ceiling concealing services.

7

Lecture hall, wooden panelled and floored, metallic ceiling.

8

Public reading room, raw concrete walls counterpoising richness of wood and metal.

9

Open access wooden book stacks plainly designed and handsomely constructed.

10

Rare books reading room and protected stacks.

11

Reading room and looping lengths of architectural mesh.



8

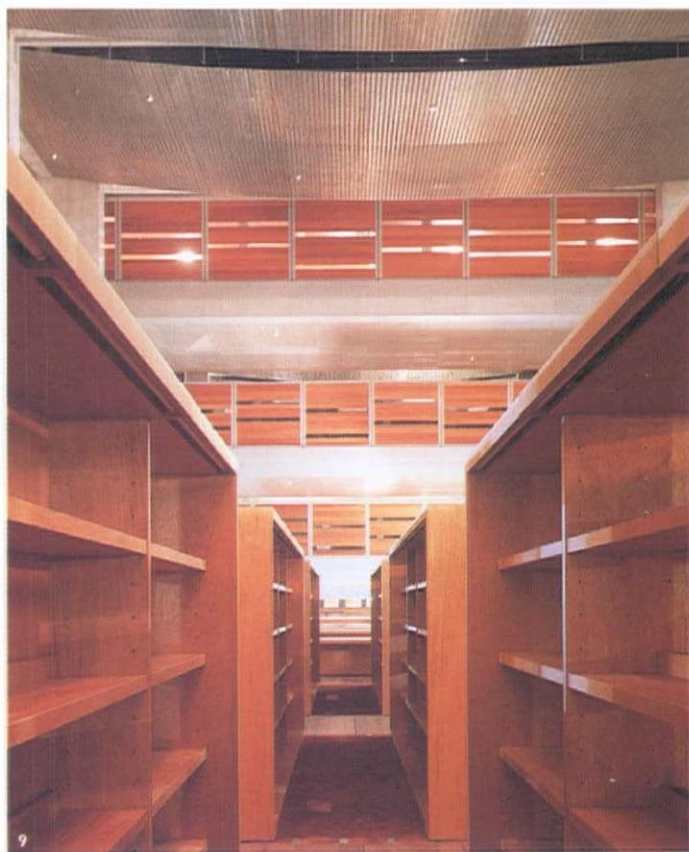
upper levels, those for research below – and other constituents of the main library are arranged around the forest and in moving around the building you are nearly always aware of this astonishing green oasis. You enter the library at treetop level, passing through a set of modest sliding doors into a vast double-height entrance hall running 115 metres along the width of the building. Behind it are the conference rooms and at either end is access through and up and down to the reading rooms.

Equally logically, Perrault has imposed on each floor a consistent plan made up of concentric zones – like a rectangular onion. An outer technical belt providing the various services – the enormous book conveyors, lighting, heating, air conditioning, communication networks and so on – surrounds a zone of book

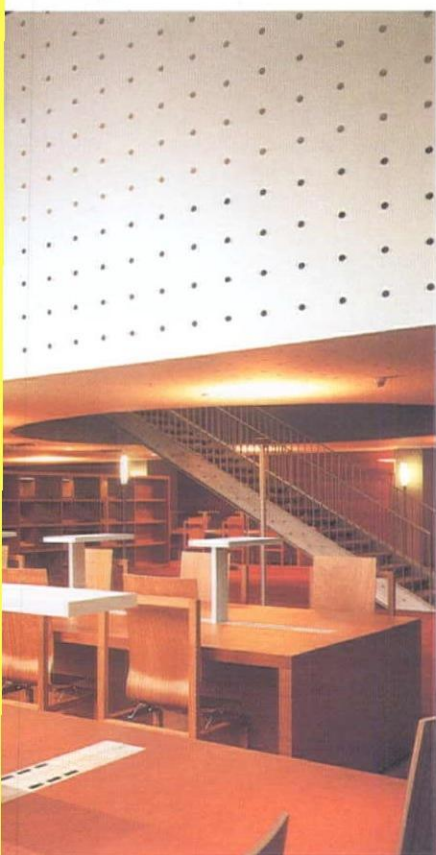
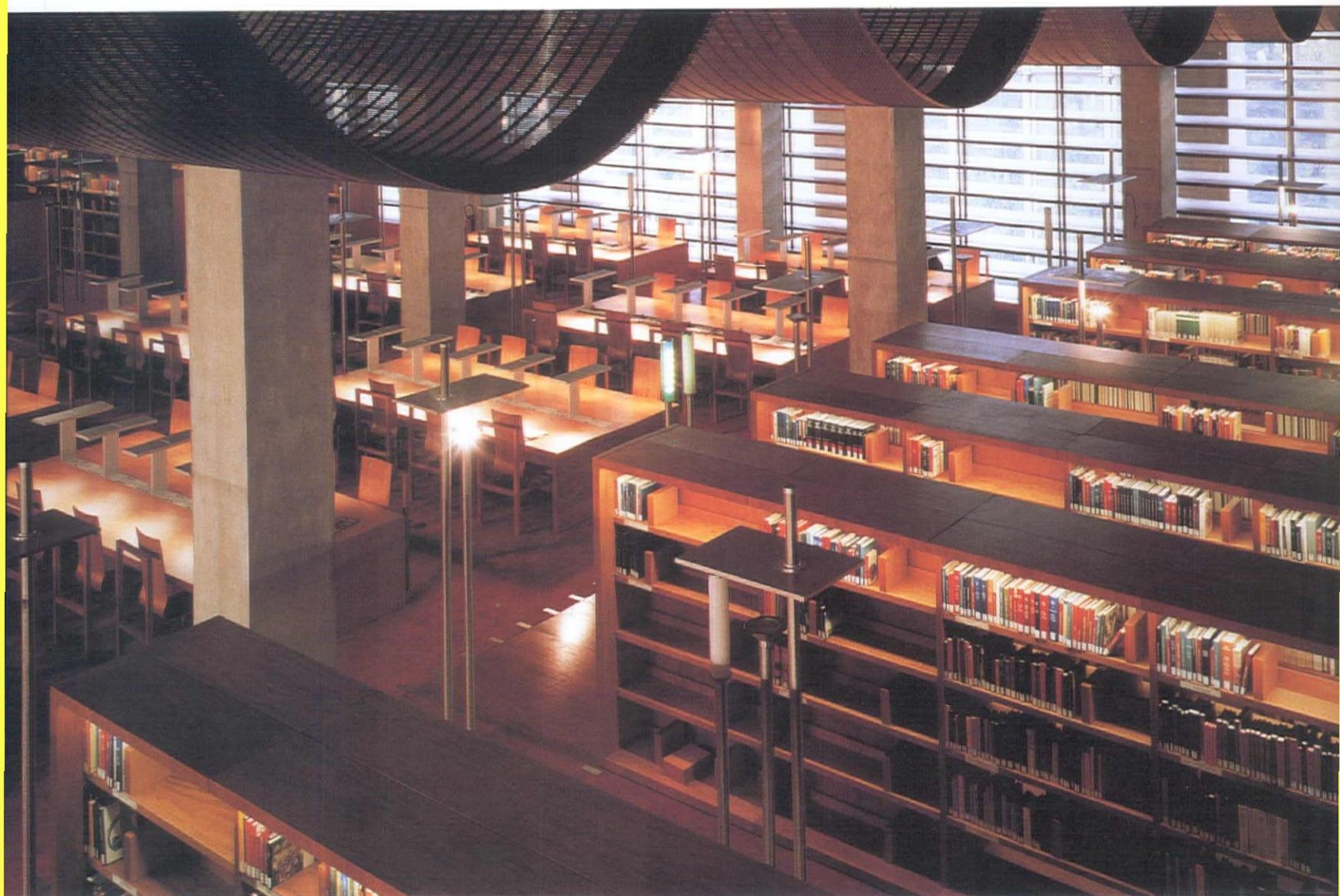
stacks, with reading rooms giving on to an inner glazed promenade around the forest. The walkway was conceived as a cloister, though, oddly, readers cannot get into the garden, only gaze at its green and mossy perfection.

Separation of the envelope and its content, Perrault points out, allows the architect freedom to extemporize and accommodate volumetric variations on each floor, like the double-height entrance hall, the lofty reading rooms at the lowest level, or the more intimate reading rooms.

Richness derives from Perrault's use of materials, in particular wood and raw steel mesh, used in a manner reminiscent of '60s sculptors, Donald Judd and Richard Serra, to define, or create hierarchies of, space. The results are opulent in places, even medieval. Perrault loops rust-coloured mesh like chain mail across ceilings above



9



wooden floors and rust coloured carpet, forms huge sheets of it into semi-opaque screens between book stacks and reading rooms and stretches fine metal webs across windows to soften light or across walls to attract it. Most spectacularly, metallic tapestries shimmering with light line the canyon walls of the deep escalator lobbies under each of the corner towers. Materials were chosen not only for their aesthetic qualities but for economies of scale, enabling a fast building programme to take place. For instance, steel mesh ceilings, rust-proof and light reflective, mask essential services and could be installed in enormous strips. Similarly the carpet was laid in swathes.

Throughout the library, plain wooden furniture – tables intimately lit, shelving, carrels and counters – is a solid counterpoint to the gauzy mesh;

the library chair, vaguely uncouth, contributes to the medieval cloistered atmosphere so deliberately cultivated.

The library is part of a system, linked to other libraries worldwide. When completed, it will house some 12 million books, 300 000 periodicals, and the latest multimedia and conference facilities. It will provide 2000 places for the general public, and more than 2000 for scholars who will be able to book their places and order their documents in advance. As with the British Library it is too soon to judge how well the building functions as a library. As a building it presents you with oppositions – between the forbidding grey exterior and the interior rich in colour, the busy grain of the city outside and the introverted cloister inside – and that is always intriguing. P. MCGUIRE

Formally inaugurated in March 1996, the BNP was the last of President François Mitterrand's Grands Projets, and the most monumental of his treasured marks on history. Concerned that the inauguration of the building, if not the finished library, should take place before his presidency ended, he took a close personal interest in its development. He was in the habit of referring to the building as his mausoleum.

Architect

Dominique Perrault Architecte

Engineer

Perrault Associés

Structural engineer

Sechaud & Bossuyt

Architectural steel mesh

GDK

Reading chair manufacturers

Martin Stoll

Table lamps

Philips Lighting

Furniture

Dennerly/Bel/Champs

Photographs

Georges Fessy 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11

Robert César ARCHIPRESS: 5, 7

Michel Denancé ARCHIPRESS: 1, 3

Marc Loiseau ARCHIPRESS: 2

**LIBRARY, STOCKHOLM,
SWEDEN**

ARCHITECT

KÅBE ARKITEKTER

(JAN HENRIKSSON

ARKITEKTKONTOR AND BSA

ARKITEKTER)

1
Henriksson's glass beak which leads
down from the 1878 Dahl building to the
dramatically converted 1970s
underground book stacks.

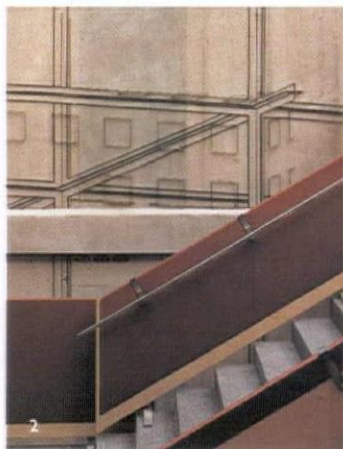
2
Detail of Henriksson's stair with leather
balustrade; concrete embellished by
Einar Höste.

3
The new auditorium with its heavily
grooved concrete walls.

4
Nils Stenqvist's ceramics on the outside
of the auditorium.

5
The small circular balcony outside the
auditorium is supported on a flying
beam.

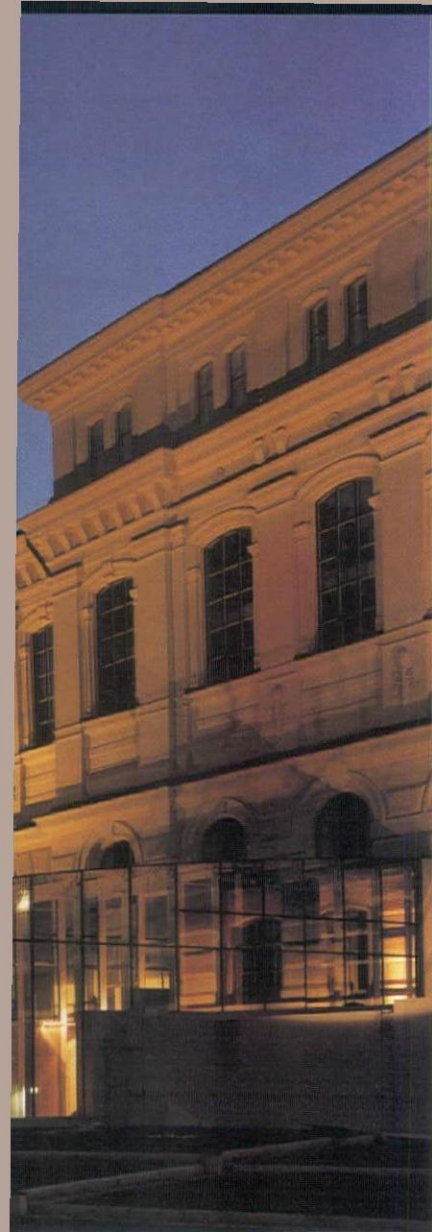
6
The new stair under the glass beak
descends to the exhibition hall and
relates all levels.



Royally renewed

Stockholm's Royal Library has had one of its periodic spurts of growth. The old building has been brilliantly added to and converted for modern uses.





The Kungl (Royal) Bibliotek in Stockholm is Sweden's national library and, almost ever since the present neo-Renaissance structure was erected in 1878 by F. G. A. Dahl, it has (like every house of a great living collection) been under pressure from its contents as more and more paper had to be accommodated. Spasmodically, the building has responded with painful conversions and expansions. The

last but one was an underground bookstore, created in 1971 to solve growth problems for the foreseeable future. Of course it did not, and a massive new transformation has recently been unveiled.

No additional buildings were allowed above ground in Humlegården, the little park which surrounds the Dahl building, so expansion had to be either off site or under it. Two

architectural firms, Jan Henriksson Arkitektkontor and BSK Arkitekter, were hired to find a solution and formed a special partnership (KÅBE Arkitekter). BSK undertook most of the heavy work: forming prodigious new book storage caves very deep underground and altering the Dahl building into reading halls, offices and work rooms. Henriksson's team was given the task of converting

the 1971 annexe into a new series of spaces needed by major modern libraries including an auditorium, exhibition gallery, and a microfilm reading area.

The latter has been firmly kept to the lowest floor, where the aficionados of the now rather dated medium can perform their rites in hermetic privacy. But all other levels of the old underground building are permeated by daylight.

**LIBRARY, STOCKHOLM,
SWEDEN**

ARCHITECT

KÅBE ARKITEKTER

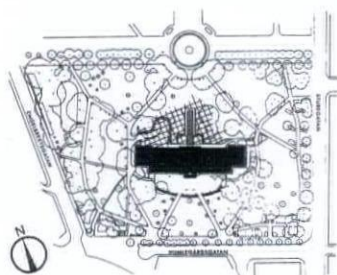
(JAN HENRIKSSON

ARKITEKTKONTOR AND BSA

ARKITEKTER)

7
Masonry ribbed vaults and bearing on
cast iron capitals in one of the special
reading rooms converted by BSK.

8
Henriksson's information hall in the
Dahl building has similar details to those
used in his underground part.



site plan

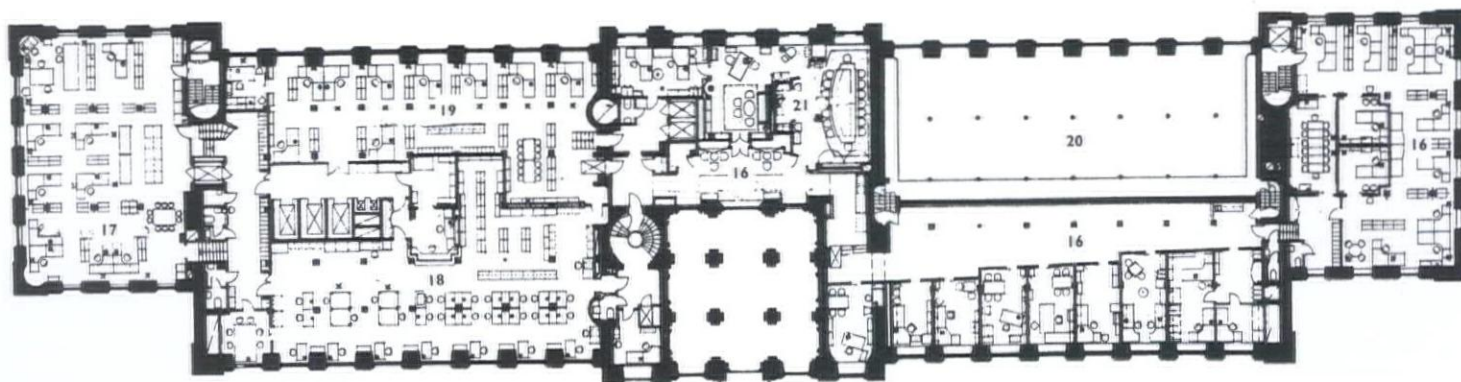
Henriksson has created a new entrance to the underworld which emerges curving downwards from the north side of Dahl's building. An elegant beak, with a smooth glass carapace propped off an inner frame of white steel, it shoots light down onto a generously wide slot. This has been cut down into the old concrete structure, so illuminating a progression of straight flights which descend first to a new circular lecture theatre, then go on down to the high yet welcoming exhibition space. (It should go without saying that, in a civilized country like Sweden, people who can't or don't want to use the stairs of this *promenade architecturale* are

catered for in a dignified and organized way.)

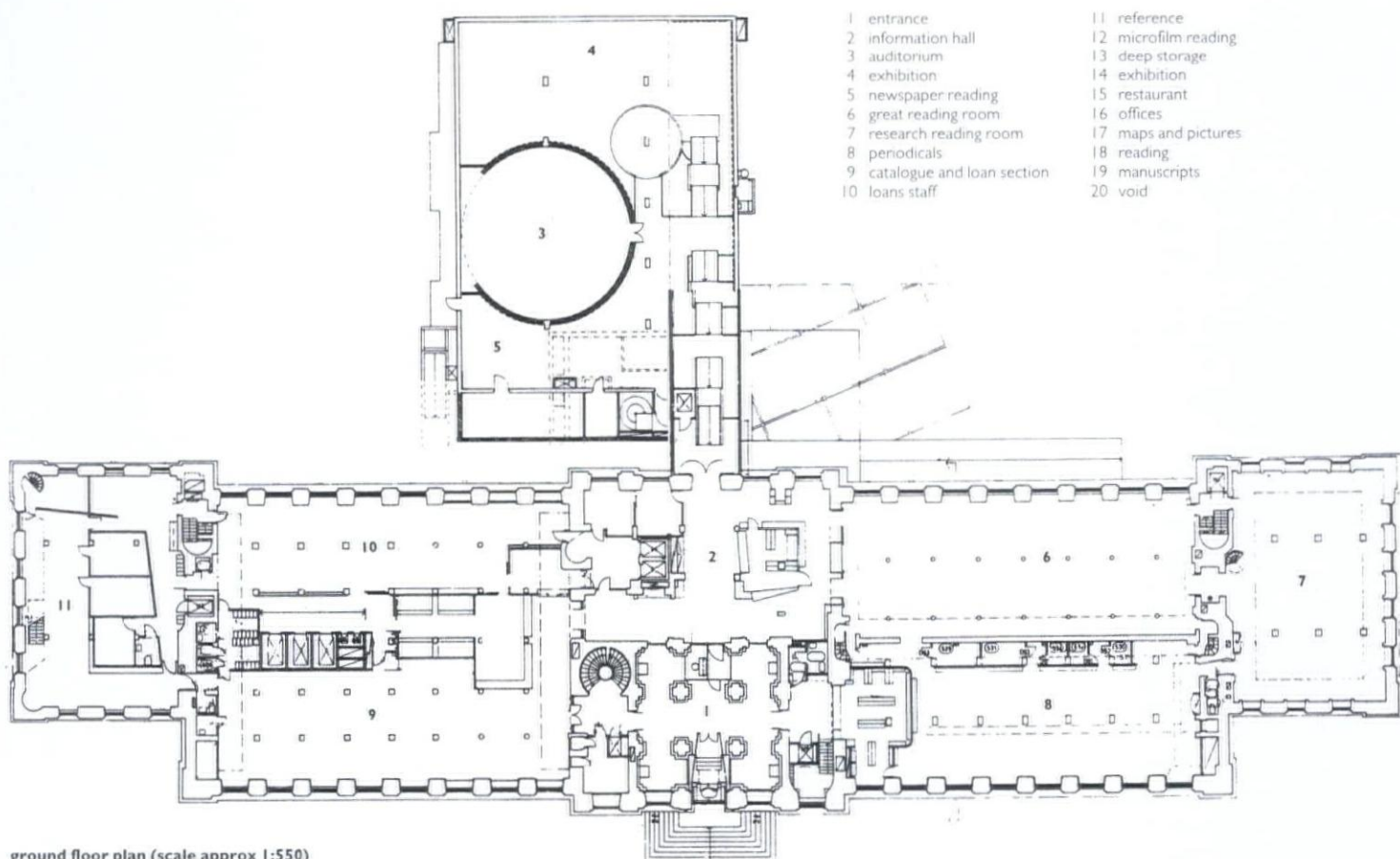
Details are carefully thought out. Leather balustrades and warm wood soften what could have been harshly austere stairs and intermediate spaces. A little circular balcony flies over the exhibition area supported by a diagonal steel beam, and acts as an amusing adjunct to the foyer of the round auditorium. Externally, this drum is decorated with blue and white ceramic patterns by artist Nils Stenqvist. Inside, the grooved curved concrete surface encloses gentle arcs of benches of leather and pale wood – again, a delicate juxtaposition of soft and light against hard and heavy.

Back in the old building, Henriksson's have done the

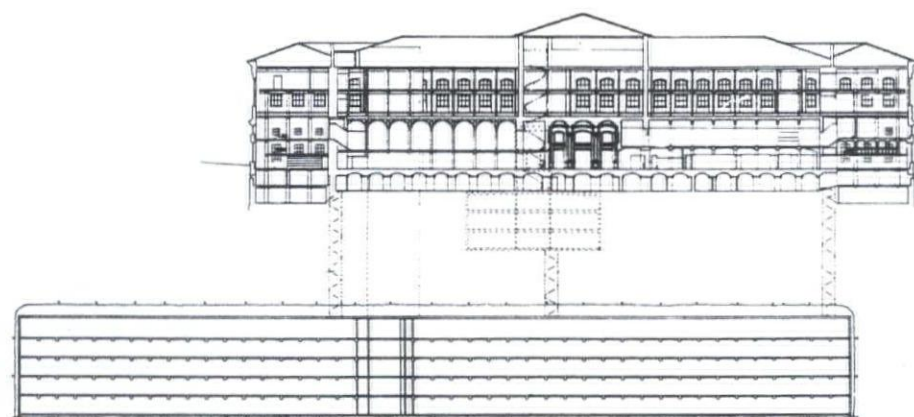




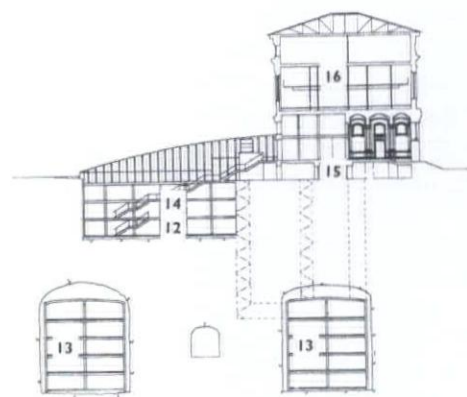
first floor plan



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:550)



west-east section



north-south elevation

**LIBRARY, STOCKHOLM,
SWEDEN**

ARCHITECT

KÅBE ARKITEKTER

(JAN HENRIKSSON

ARKITEKTKONTOR AND BSA

ARKITEKTER)

9
Conversion of Axel Anderberg's 1927
east wing research reading room. As
with all BSK's work on the old building,
additions are light and easily removable.

10
Dahl's cast iron and jack-arched great
reading room restored to its
nineteenth-century glory by BSK.



information hall which locks the
glass curve into Dahl's spatial
matrix. His spaces have been
restored to what BSK Arkitekter
believe is a reasonable
interpretation of his intentions,
with the old iron structure
decorated in patterns and
colours found in fragments of
ornament left over by previous
alterations. New interventions
are clearly such: light and
designed to be easily removable
when needs and fashions alter.
And, of course, they will – for
nothing can be so certain as a
library's need for change, and
one day in the not too distant
future even the huge new
underground caverns will begin
to seem very full. HENRY MILES

Architect

KÅBE Arkitekter, Stockholm: Jan Henriksson
Arkitektkontor (Jan Henriksson) and BSA
Arkitekter (Bo Bergquist)

Landscape

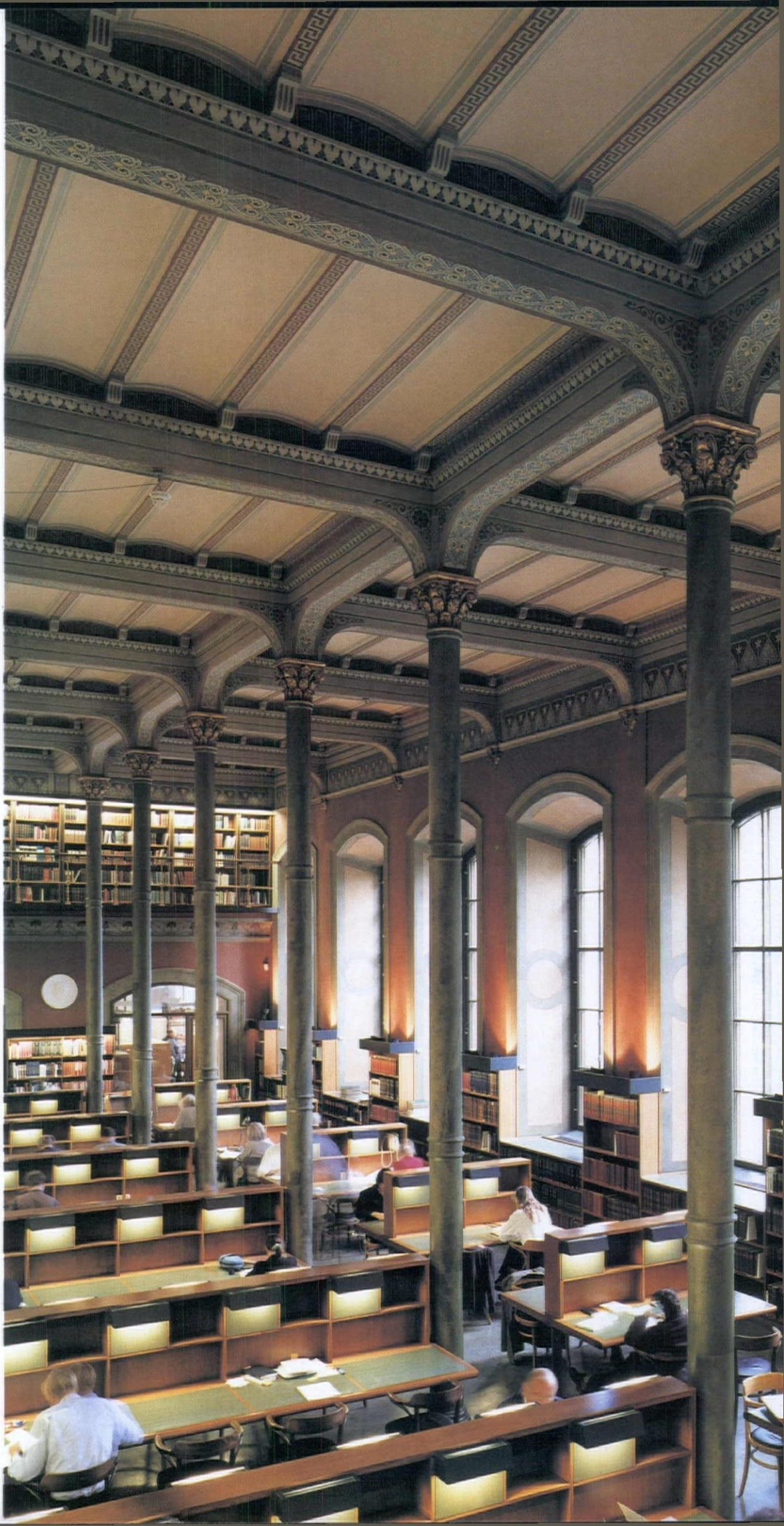
S. Koinberg AB Landskapsarkitekter (Hans
Lindquist)

Artists

Sivert Lindblom, Einar Höste, Nils Stenqvist,
Harald Lyther

Photographs

Åke Eison Lindman



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506

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Wicanders

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Fax: +44 1403 710003

507

Pierre du Midi creamy yellow sandstone flags with brown veining and fern fossils from

Stonell. The texture of sandstone, which is rougher than limestone, makes it slip-resistant and suitable for public spaces.

Stonell

Tel: +44 1892 833500

Fax: +44 1892 833600

508

Junckers' hardwood floors are made of timber from Northern Europe and North America, as well as plantations and sustainable forests in Asia. The floors – of woods including oak, beech, sycamore, ash – can be untreated or factory

sealed or oiled, and are installed by means of the firm's Quick Clip System. Shown here, Junckers' factory sealed Sycamore Classic floor.

Junckers Industrier

Tel: +45 56 65 18 95

Fax: +45 56 67 37 20

509

Stone Age has introduced a new limestone, imported from Israel, called Old Gold. The stone which was used over centuries to build Jerusalem is characterized by a fine grain and finish, and rich colour, and is a valuable

addition to the firm's range of over 50 limestones.

Stone Age

Tel: +44 171 385 7954

Fax: +44 171 385 7956

510

In his design of the CoBrA Museum of Modern Art in Amstelveen, south of Amsterdam, Wim Quist specified Forbo-Krommenie's Artoleum flooring in pale soft grey. The material is an Impressionistic version of linoleum, is available in a six colour series, each composed of five separate colours, and is bio-

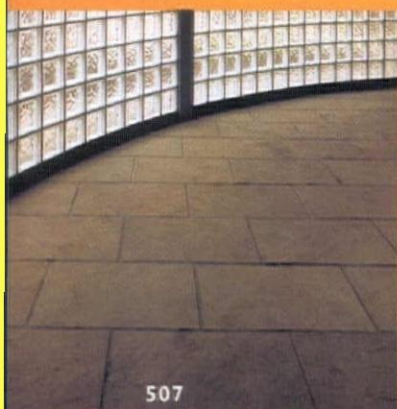
degradable. As well as providing an elegant floor for these luminous galleries, it is hardwearing, sound absorbent, colour-fast and resists marking by chemicals, cigarette stubs and impact.

511

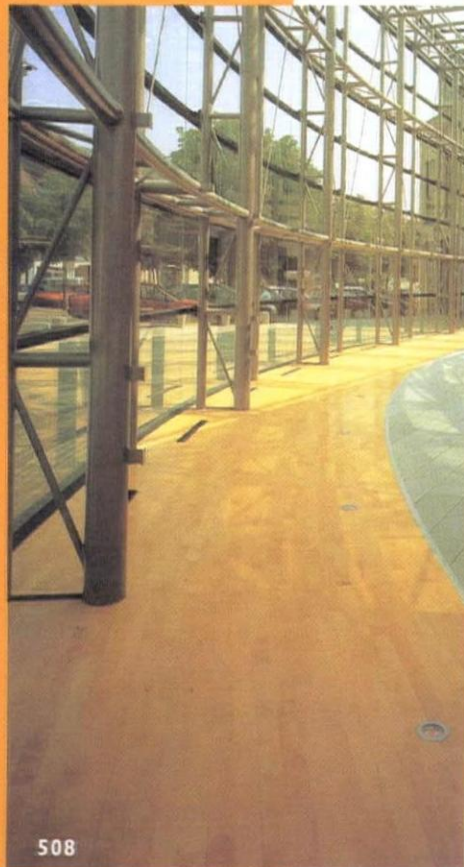
Forbo-Krommenie also supplies Marmoleum, a large range of specially formulated, coloured floorcoverings for a wide variety of buildings including gymnasiums, schools and hospitals. It includes Marmoleum Fresco and Mosaic, flooring which consists of coloured patterns precisely cut by aquajet.



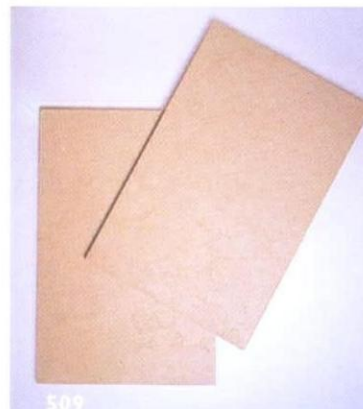
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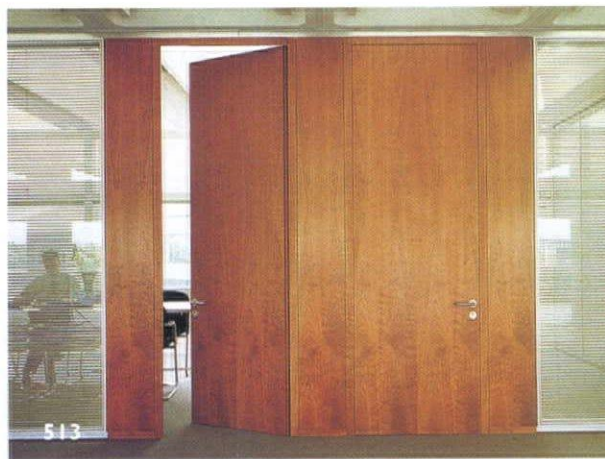
510



511



512



513



514



515



516



517

Shown here, Canterbury and Alhambra patterns from the Mosaic range.

Forbo-Krammenie
Tel: +31 75 6477 477
Fax: +31 75 6477 700

512
Pergo Original floor from Perstorp, manufacturers of a wide range of plastic laminates and composite materials for a variety of uses including flooring. Pergo Original flooring is 80 per cent wood, is durable, resists scratching and impact, is easy to clean and can be floated over existing floors.

Perstorp Sweden
Tel: +46 41 036 31 00
Fax: +46 41 036 33 70

513
Filo full-height flush doors from Lualdi Doors, are composed of solid wood leaves on timber or metal frames. Suitable for combination with flush glazing systems or solid walls, the doors are soundproofed and hinged at top and bottom. The doors are part of a wide range offered by the firm.

Lualdi Porte
Tel: +39 2 9789248
Fax: +39 2 97289463
Tel: +44 171 916 6166
Fax: +44 171 388 8118

514
American red oak, obtained through the American Hardwood Export Council,

supplied by Bruce Hardwood Floors, has been used in the restoration of eighteenth-century Ridgewood House in Sussex. The wood replaces the original hall floor, while American tulipwood was chosen for the barley-twist staircase spindles. American hardwoods grown as a managed resource include white oak, hard maple, black cherry, black walnut and American ash, all suitable for making handsome floors.

American Hardwood Export Council
Tel: +44 171 588 8811
Fax: +44 171 588 8855

515
Fusion's decorative glass provides architects with a

diverse range of interior elements, including partitions, balustrading, stair treads and signs. The firm has carried out pioneering work in sandblasting and kiln forming techniques and can produce annealed, toughened or laminated glass to meet safety regulations.

Fusion Glass Designs
Tel: +44 171 978 1777
Fax: +44 171 720 6564

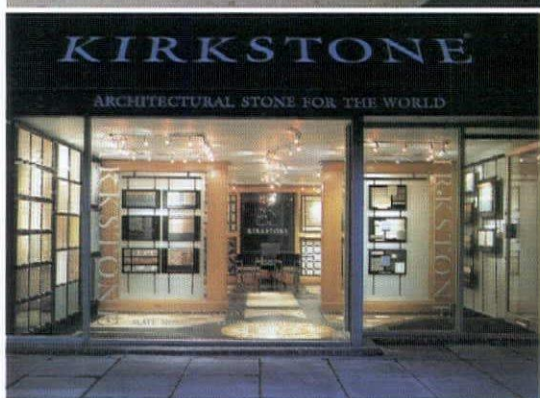
516
Armourcoat coloured polished plaster was specified by RMJM for a decorative wall in the entrance lobby of the Glaxo Wellcome building in Greenford, Middlesex. The colour was specially

developed by Armourcoat to echo the firm's corporate blue.

Armourcoat
Tel: +44 1732 460668
Fax: +44 1732 450930

517
Hawa-Variotec 100/G: Hawa's sliding glass wall system screening the cafeteria at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The system is composed of glass panels suspended from a modular track made up of straight and curved segments so that the wall can turn corners.

Hawa
Tel: +41 1 767 91 91
Fax: +41 1 767 91 04



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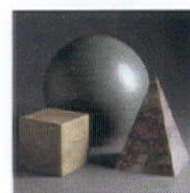
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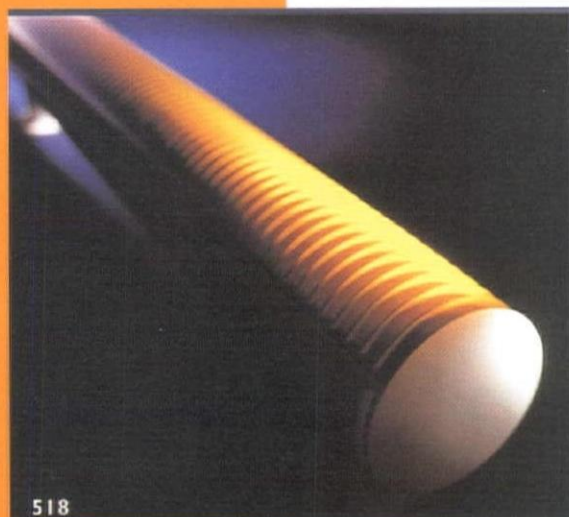
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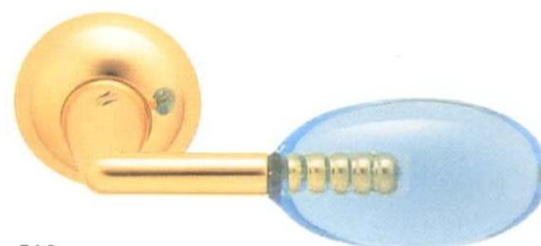
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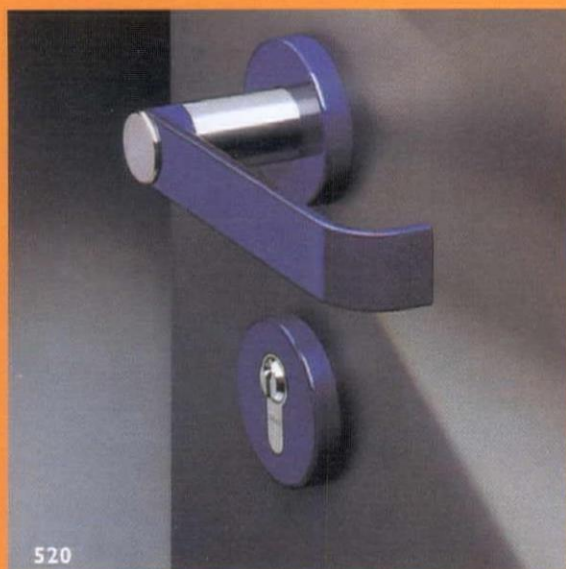
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518



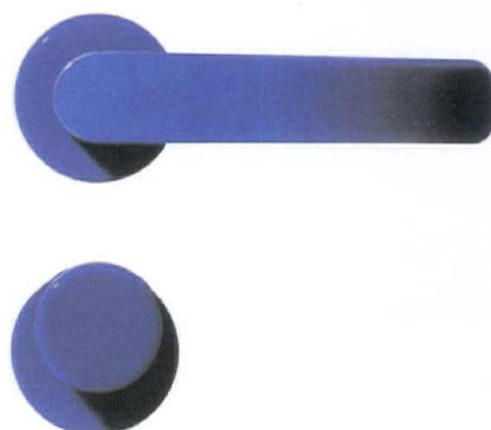
519



520



521



522



523

518
Radius: a radiator from Hudevad, circular in section and made of steel. The structure consists of convector fins welded on to flat tube and placed in a circular casing with profiled edges and grille. The radiator is supplied painted white but other colours are possible.

Hudevad Britain
Tel: +44 19 32 247835
Fax: +44 1932 247694

519
Aria: a series of brass and glass fittings including a door handle, window pull and coat hanger, by Carlo Bartoli for Colombo Design. The glass is available in five different colours and the brass can be finished in gold, nickel or silver.

Colombo Design
Tel: +39 35 49 49 001
Fax: +39 35 49 40 257

520
Normbau nylon and steel fittings include wall and door furniture and balustrading, from NT Normbau.

NT Normbau
Tel: +49 7843 7040
Fax: +49 7843 70443

521
02: Hewi's brightly coloured electronic door locking system, suitable for buildings like hotels and hospitals.

Hewi
Tel: +44 1634 377688
Fax: +44 1634 370612

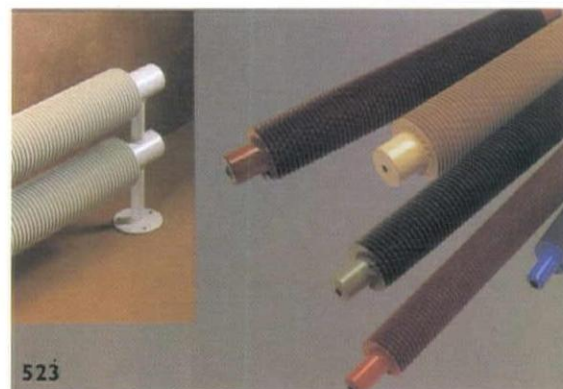
522
Béquille range of stainless steel door furniture,

including door, window and furniture handles and escutcheons, designed by Erik Magnussen for FSB.

FSB
Tel: +49 52 72 608-0
Fax: +49 52 72 608300

523
As well as manufacturing conventional radiators and convectors Meinertz Danica makes Finned Tubes for space heating. The latter are supplied in aluminium, copper, and various steels, in lengths up to 6 metres, with plain ends suitable for welding, or with welded sockets.

Meinertz Danica
Tel: +45 86 52 18 11
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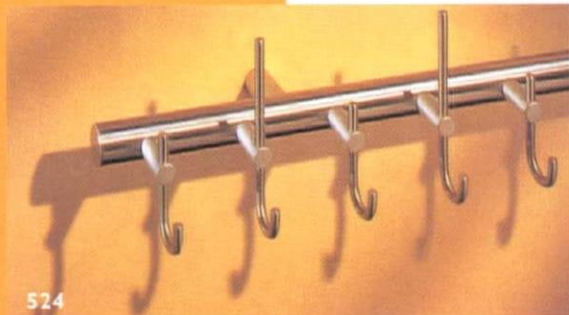
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524

524

Coat hooks, part of Vieler's elegant range of stainless steel products for cloakrooms. From Higrade.

Vieler International

Tel: +49 23 74 52 0

Fax: +49 23 74 52 226

Higrade

Tel: +44 1344 873388

Fax: +44 1344 874990

525

The range of 'd line' stainless steel fittings, designed by Knud Holscher Design, has been extended to include bathroom fittings. The range is comprehensive, including shelving, paper dispensers, waste bins, towel rails and soap and glass holders. From Allgood Bathline.

Allgood Bathline

Tel: +44 171 383 5801

Fax: +44 171 387 2549

526

HVI: Vola's electronic basin mixer with a fixed spout. Like the firm's other fittings – mixers, taps and accessories – it is made of solid brass and gun metal and available in one of 18 colours or finished in chrome, brass, gold, or platinum. The Vola range, designed by Arne Jacobsen, is built on a modular system comprising valves, handles, outlets, cover plates and accessories which can be used in an infinite number of ways to make fittings for kitchens and bathrooms.

Vola

Tel: +45 8939 5500

Fax: +45 8939 5511

527

In a private house, Jacob Blacker Architects specified Kirkstone Quarries' slate floor tiles for the bathroom

floor. Kirkstone, which has just established a showroom in London, is now selling stone from other countries – these include travertines from Italy and Turkey, granites and slates from Brazil, and marbles from Ireland – and ceramic tiles from Los Angeles, as well as the Cumbrian slates for which it is known.

Kirkstone Quarries

Tel: +44 171 381 0424

Fax: +44 171 381 0434

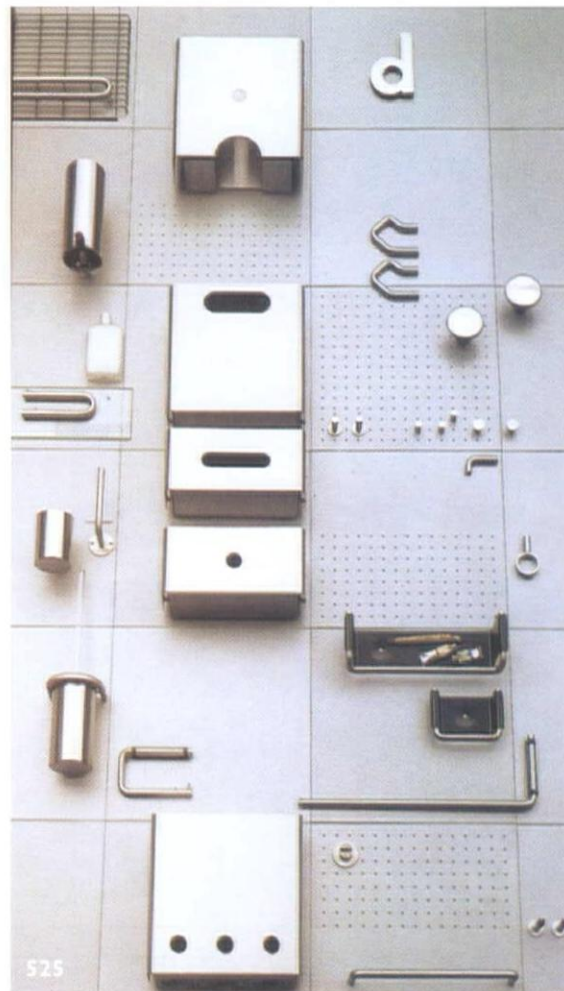
528

Isole-Colonne chromed bathroom mirror with shelf, by Anna and Carlo Bartoli for Colombo Design.

Colombo Design

Tel: +39 35 49 49 001

Fax: +39 35 49 40 257



525



526

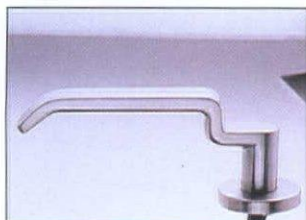


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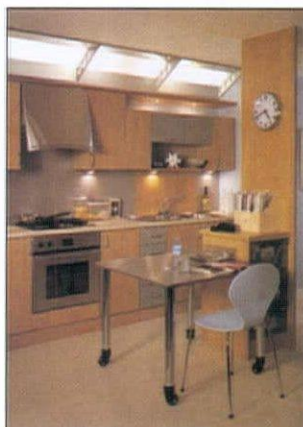
Specifiers' information



Glutz

Illustrated is the Assoluto door handle. An example from the Glutz high specification range of door and window hardware now available through the John Monaghan Group Companies and in Scotland from the Thomson Brothers Group of Companies. The Glutz range includes door handles, pull handles, window handles, mortice locks and accessories, available in satin or polished stainless steel. For more information contact: David Allison at John Planck Ltd. Tel: 0171 608 0074

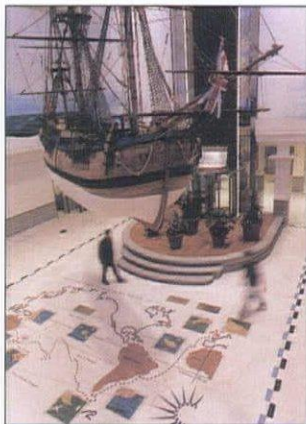
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Paula Rosa Kitchens

Paula Rosa, the prestigious manufacturer of top quality kitchens introduces three new ranges for 1998: Piccadilly, Greenwich and New England. In addition, two existing designs, Inca and Burlington, have been extended to offer a wider choice of colours and accessories. Piccadilly (shown) is a simple, modern kitchen with clean lines. Piccadilly has a matt Oak and/or grey metallic finish with a choice of matt stainless handles or nickel chrome knobs. Piccadilly can be finished with glass doors in satin aluminium frames. All Paula Rosa kitchens are made to order at the Paula Rosa factory in West Sussex. For more information telephone 01903 743322.

901 on AR enquiry card



Quiligotti Terrazzo Flooring

An intricately detailed Terrazzo mural floor design celebrating Captain Cook's historic circumnavigation of the world has been created by Quiligotti. Each of the 300mm²-sized mural floor tiles were manufactured by Quiligotti using its advanced cutting system, believed to be the only one of its kind in Britain capable of taking design data direct from an architect's CAD system. Quiligotti's unique cutting system automatically reproduces architects' designs from CAD disks into desired tile matrix layouts with pinpoint precision for lettering and graphics. For more information call 0161 727 1000 or Fax: 0161 727 1122

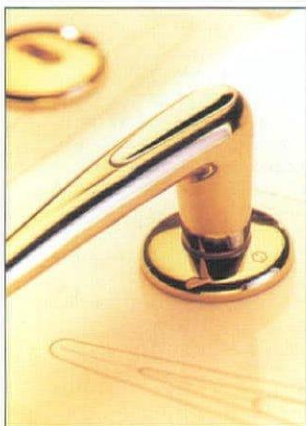
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Primo Range from Abloy

Abloy Security has a broad range of practical, well-designed door and window furniture to suit a variety of decorative styles. The elegant Primo range, features classic lever and pull handles in a range of finishes including zinc, stainless steel, brass and aluminium. Developed by top Finnish architects and designers, the ageless range is functional, hardwearing, dependable and easy to use. Finishes include polished brass, chrome and polyester paint. Standard colours are red, white, blue, black but there are 180 RAL colours available. For more information tel: 01923 255066

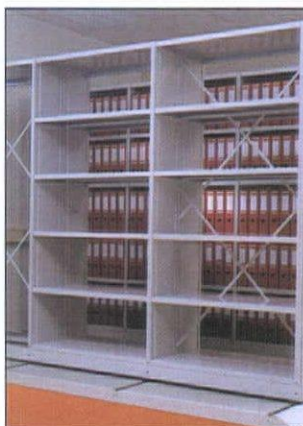
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Hoppe (UK)

'Stilla' is a stylish new high quality handle from HOPPE (UK). A combination of different materials help to create a contrasting play of colours on the handle surface. 'Stilla' is available as a rosette door set handle, tilt and turn window handle, handle for gear-driven windows and as a knob lever set. The range comes in three beautiful finishes, polished brass, brass/chrome and brass/black chrome. There are some 7,600 standard products in the HOPPE range and the companies manufacturing output exceeds 77 million items. For more information tel: 01902 790909.

904 on AR enquiry card



Forster Ecospace

An entirely new range of highly versatile mobile shelving - called FOREG 2000-L - is being introduced by Ecospace, the specialist suppliers of mobile, static and library shelving systems. Available in three different standard heights of 1.7 metres, 2.0 and 2.3 metres, shelves - with a loading capacity of 50kg - are adjustable in 20mm increments to allow maximum use of available storage space. Further information on the full range of FOREG shelving systems and the technical services offered by the company is available from Forster Ecospace Ltd, Masons Gate, Towns End, Marsh Gibbon, Near Bicester, Oxon OX6 0EY. Tel: 01869 278002 Fax: 01869 278003.

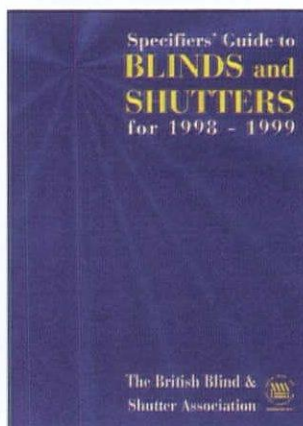
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Modulus Flooring Systems

Some 3,000 square metres of Modulus Quintessence and Kinetics cut loop tufted carpet tiles feature throughout The Foundation, Capital Bank plc's new group training and development centre in Chester. In this Atrium entrance hall, both main carpet and inlaid decorative theme design have been laid in Modulus high performance Quintessence tiles. Constructed in Solutia 6.6 nylon fibre and with an extra heavy duty pile of 1300 gms/m², they combine the appeal of 'wool look' carpet with heather blended tones achieved by using pre-dyed colours. Glazed Nectar is the principal background shade. Tel: 0181 941 7833 or Fax: 0181 941 7820

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Specifiers' Guide to Blinds and Shutters

The British Blind and Shutter Association is pleased to announce the publication of its 1998-1999 Specifiers' Guide to Blinds and Shutters. It includes a glossary of product terminology, an A-Z listing of BBSA member companies detailing the products and services available from each, a product guide and an invaluable directory of trade and product names. If you are involved in the specification and purchase of internal and external blinds and shading systems, security shutters and grilles and control systems, then the BBSA Specifiers' Guide 1998-1999 should be indispensable. For a copy call the BBSA, 42 Heath Street, Tamworth, Staffordshire B79 7JH. Tel: +44 (0)1827 52337 Fax: +44 (0)1827 310827

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Specifiers' information



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Technocover

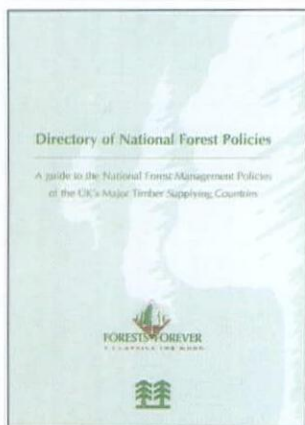
Technocover, the designers, manufacturers and fitters of high quality access covers and associated products, is now supplying, free of charge, an 86-page ring binder Working Manual and CAD disks for all its products. The manual contains its Solo-Lift range of upstand and solid top hinged and assisted covers that comply with HSE requirements for manual handling.



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Lignacite at the Ruskina Library

MacCormac Jamieson Prichard specified Lignacite's Apollo Shotblasted White Dolomite for the new Ruskina Library at Lancaster University. The architect's design, elliptical in shape, is an arresting monument and deserving memorial to the great Victorian art critic and social reformer. The White Dolomite masonry is laid using a format of horizontal and soldier courses, with brands of grey green precast concrete containing granite aggregate, thereby enhancing the architect's impression of cupped hands protecting a treasure. The main area of elevation is over 30m long by 10m high, making it one of the largest unbroken panels of blockwork in the UK.



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Forests Forever

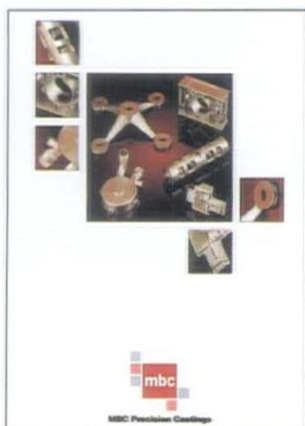
Forests Forever 'Directory of National Forest Policies' has been extended with the addition of reports on Ghana and Latvia. The publication gives a comprehensive guide to the national forest policies implemented by those countries supplying the vast majority (90%) of Britain's timber. The directory reveals the true picture: that the vast majority of Britain's timber supplies are from countries with long-established, well developed, comprehensive forest management programmes. The two new reports on Ghana and Latvia give details of the countries' forest resources, contact Graham Bruford at Forests Forever on telephone 0171 839 1891.



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White Partridge

White Partridge Ltd has developed a completely new design of solar shading system which features a unique, aerofoil blade with a streamlined, 'continuous' appearance. Manufactured from strong, non-corrosive aluminium, Apollo, is suitable for all types of buildings. The system is available in three standard blade widths - 200mm, 250mm and 300mm - and the pitch of blades can be selected to suit each individual application. A controllable version of the system is also available. Several different finishes are also offered. For more information, call 01204 709419, Fax: 01204 708955.



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MBC Precision Castings

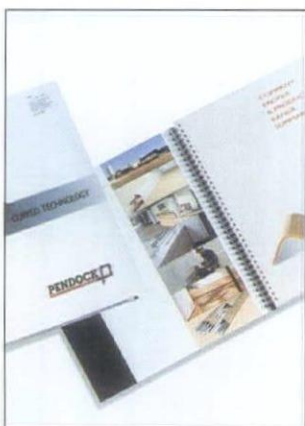
Manufacture high integrity investment castings which are individually designed with the aesthetic appeal of the architectural industry and which provides the opportunity for the wide scope of design required by the curtain wall and building industry. Materials include stainless and aluminium/aluminium bronze with a maximum weight range of up to 40kgs and up to 1.5 metres long. Castings have been supplied to many prestigious contracts throughout the world. For further information contact Jim Welsh on 01527 527501 or fax 01527 502533.



913 on AR enquiry card

New Pyrovista Data

Mann McGowan have published an updated edition of their Pyrovista technical leaflet. The new data included in the leaflet includes details of fully glazed pattern 10 doorsets, double glazed units, anti bandit glass, as well as a list of projects completed so far. Pyrovista is a complete fire resisting glazed screen system, manufactured from a cellulosic core, with quality timber lippings to give an excellent finished product. An installation product manual and computer aided design package, providing details of how to construct the system on site will also soon be available. For a copy of the latest technical brochure, please contact Tel: 01252 333601 Fax: 01252 322724.



914 on AR enquiry card

New Technical Manual from Pendock Ltd

The new 140 page technical publication entitled, "Casing and Enclosure Systems" is now freely available from Pendock Limited, Telford. The Pendock range of casing and enclosure systems are the first modular family of timber products specifically designed to enclose services, structure and perimeters in a functional and aesthetic manner. The new publication is designed to provide comprehensive details on all product ranges, allowing for architects and specifiers alike to order direct from the publication. Copies of the manual can be obtained direct from Pendock Limited. Telephone: 01952 580590 or fax: 01952 587805.

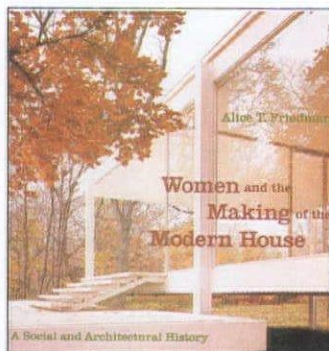


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Coral Nuway offer an unrivalled range of proven, protective systems for floorcoverings. Together they represent over 100 years' experience in solving problems associated with soiling with significant savings in maintenance costs. Tuftguard (illustrated) has fibre piled rubber strips in a choice of colours, alternated with aluminium, brass or coloured uPVC scraper bars. Various options are available including Flameguard for buildings with stringent fire regulations. For details of the full Coral Nuway range, tel: 01952 680400.

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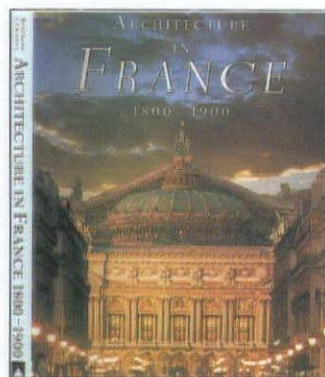


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books

Public spirited

CIVIC REALISM

By Peter G. Rowe. London: MIT Press. 1997.
£25.50

It is not often that questions about the form and appearance of cities which surface every time we are concerned about urban affairs, get the academic support those in the trade need so urgently. Rowe, an academic who uses his feet and eyes as well as his pen, has brought a small but powerful *tour de force* into the field of reflection on the public responsibility for the streets, squares, parks and other public spaces of our cities.

If New Labour really wishes to address this neglected field of political responsibility then they could do worse than read this entertaining book. Like Simon Schama in *Landscape and Memory*, Rowe drifts enthusiastically off the rigour of the thesis into the passionate stories of Siena's political structure, Italian post-war neorealism, New York city games, the values of car culture, and the complexities of nationalism in former Yugoslavia. But the stories, and the cooler analysis of the teamwork between politicians, architects and citizens in Barcelona's public space achievements, and the grand projects of Paris give substance to the philosophical discussion on what is public, or civic, and how realism must be understood as an open question.

If it is true that the organizers of the Triennale di Milano dedicated to *Le architetture dello spazio pubblico* are desperate at the lack of examples from the British Isles, then Rowe's book should be fondled by all architects bidding to be urban designers. Most are way off track. Unfortunately there are also too many fellow travellers in Europe as well. The battle has just begun. But there are two questions to be understood first: one, that the private sector is incapable of shouldering the responsibility for that space which is public or civic, though it has an important contribution following public or civic initiative; two, architects must forget that a building alone is not the instrument to solve an urban space. Rowe shows us how to understand our urban identity: 'After all, civic realism, in the end, is not so much a thing as it is a practice'. To this we should add that those in the trade also need talent. DAVID MACKAY

The historical avant-garde

MODERNITY AND ITS OTHER; A POST-SCRIPT TO CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

By Gevork Hartoonian. Texas: Texas A&M
University Press. 1997. \$49.95

These are 'rather dense theoretical considerations', by the author's own admission, and if

you persist and read the whole thing, you essentially find an apology for the way in which American architecture developed from its country's commodity-based culture, while flying various structuralist and Post-Modernist banners in acts of self-identification with its European cousins and (more to the point) the transatlantic critics.

The anti-chronological structure of Hartoonian's writing and his ability to turn the perceptive criticism of others, particularly Frampton, into something incomprehensible hide an occasional spark, including some sharp and intensive writing on Kahn and Ando. But since Hartoonian writes with the charmless if fashionable over-accuracy of a lawyer – substituting 'tectonic discourse' for 'building', for example – and gives no credit to his readers' ability to develop their own parallel thoughts, you here know that you are deep inside someone's private territory and resistance is useless.

Perhaps this has something in common with Hartoonian's weary conclusions on 'weak thought theory' – that architecture just washes by. The visual symbols thrown up by Venturi and others are presumably indications not of waving but drowning. In the US, he suggests, only Kahn and Mies achieved anything else. But surely we (that is, those of us who have a little more sympathy than Hartoonian for what he calls 'the project of the historical avant-garde', ie, Modernism) knew that anyway.

TIMOTHY BRITAIN-CATLIN

Japanese vision

JAPAN 2000: ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN FOR THE JAPANESE PUBLIC

By John Zukowsky. Munich: Prestel. 1998. £35

This is not, as its name might suggest, a 'design primer' (as in 'How to Design Things for the Japanese Public'), and nor is it sociological research (as in 'What the Japanese Public considers Architecture and Design to be'). Instead, this book documents the roles played by government agencies in the development of architecture and design in post-war Japan. This theme may not be easily rendered into an alluring title, but it does, in fact, make for a fascinating, and even inspiring, success story.

Given the ubiquitousness, now, of stylish and high-quality Japanese products in streets and homes around the world, it is easy to forget the ridicule that a 'Made in Japan' label attracted, not so many years ago. Shoddily-made copies of Western designs have been replaced by innovations in styling, technology, and even in 'lifestyle programming' – as, for example, with the Sony Walkman.

This book, which is a series of invited essays and galleries of illustrations, gives a lively

overview of the steps leading to Japan's transformation. The key developments are discussed, and the chief players speak. There is, however, no real bibliography, and no links are given to other sources which could expand on the information given in this book. This is a great pity.

By not clouding the issues with a myriad details, however, the book does give a clear view of 'The Big Picture', which allows us to see, I think for the first time, how the architect Arata Isozaki and the designer Takuo Hirano, collaborating with a handful of unusually visionary politicians, managed – by their own works and by enabling the works of others – to transform Japanese design, the way that the world sees Japan, and the way that the country sees itself. Their efforts have been continual, but gradual, and it is only now, by comparing what Japan was with its modified form, that we can see the power of their quiet revolution.

The Japanese bureaucracy does not come out of this report unscathed, however. Most are clearly interchangeable with the lethargic and obstructive bureaucrats of any other nation. But, this story does show the potency of inspired political leadership, and it should be of particular interest to anyone (a name comes easily to mind) who is currently involved in 're-branding' their nation. **TOM HENEGHAN**

Designs taking off

THE MODERN TERMINAL: NEW APPROACHES TO AIRPORT ARCHITECTURE

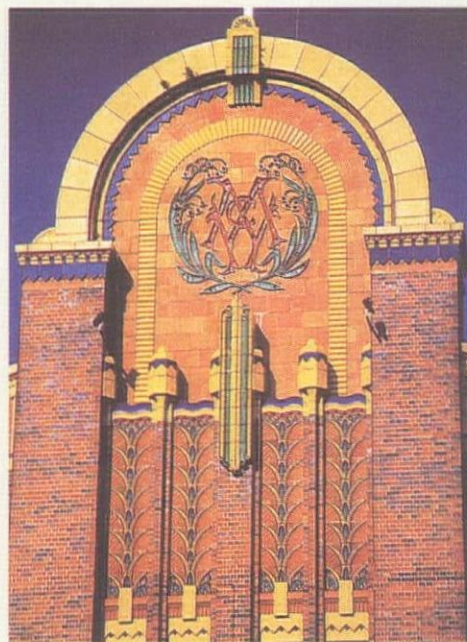
By Brian Edwards. London: Routledge. 1998. £49.50

Returning from a visit to Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur new international airports, I could identify with Brian Edwards' reference to an emerging new generation of airport terminals. It began perhaps with Stansted, and worldwide as an international building type sometimes with local flavour relating to culture, climate or site but more typically spawning landmark buildings in the grand scale tradition of metropolitan railway stations.

The large scale of these airports is a common feature often hard to comprehend from drawings and photographs. This increase in scale is directly related to larger aircraft and ever increasing passenger throughputs.

There is a need for architects and operators alike to have concise information about current and future airport projects. The Modern Terminal seeks to evaluate and illustrate many of these. There are some omissions, notably Denver, infamous for its ill-fated and possibly ill-conceived baggage handling system but in general the key airports are well documented.

McWhirters department store Fortitude Valley, Queensland, Australia from *The Spirit of Progress, Art Deco Architecture in Australia*, by Patrick van Daele and Roy Lumby, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1997. Art Deco in which abstraction could be married to a degree of representation was a perfect expression of an emerging country: both modern and heraldic simultaneously, and Art Deco landmarks like this one still punctuate Australian towns and cities. Lumby has made a loving and detailed survey, spectacularly photographed by van Daele.



It would have been desirable to have described the terminal plan/sections and their airfield layout characteristics in a consistent graphic technique for comparative purposes. However, this is compensated for by the inclusion of the architect's own drawings of airport structures.

Airport buildings like their railway forebears symbolize gateways to their regions. They celebrate travel and motion. They are places of arrival (and departure). They are people places above all, sometimes shopping centres with aircraft attached and other times highly functional transport interchanges. The differences in their architecture are examined and the comparisons are informative.

Brian Edwards shows terminals and their architecture to be unashamedly modern and rightly distinguishes between the architect's main objective to provide flexibility and functionality in the buildings, shaped by space, structure and light leaving the details of the more changeable functions like retail for others to determine differently over time.

Edwards alludes to contemporary terminal buildings which are environmentally conscious, now much less specific, more flexible in their conception allowing for inevitable change to occur through the life of the building without compromising the overriding

architectural statements of the whole. There may well be evolving the next new generation of airport terminals. **MARCUS LEE**

Swedish Steiner

ERIK ASMUSSEN, ARCHITECT

By Gary J. Coates. Sweden: Bygghälsan. 1997. SEK 595

Erik Asmussen will be familiar to many AR readers for his memorable group of buildings at Järna, the main Steiner colony in Sweden, south of Stockholm (see for instance AR July 1980). Of the Steiner architects, Asmussen seems the most accomplished, producing buildings which are well-sited, sensitively composed, and not excessively quirky.

He is of Danish origin, born in 1913, and like others of his generation found initial inspiration in the work of Asplund. After studying architecture in Denmark and working for Kay Fisker he moved to Sweden in 1939. For 20 years he worked for Nils Tesch, one of the best Swedish post-war functionalists, but a visit to Steiner's Dornach in 1949 laid the foundations for a change of direction. In the late 1950s Asmussen planned his first Steiner school, and in 1960 he set up his own office to begin the work at Järna which has continued ever since. Involving schools, library, hospital, and theatre as well as housing, it is almost a small town in itself, built slowly and carefully by the community. The buildings are organic in their irregular articulated plans and close response to site, but they also have the tell-tale rounded and angular Steiner profiles. Much in them is ecological and humane: questions of unfolding space, of view and light and colour are engaged, while the mechanism and artifice that poisoned so much modern architecture is avoided.

Gary Coates, a young American admirer, has written a sympathetic text while his wife Susanne has painstakingly redrawn the plans and sections, so with excellent colour photographs by Max Plunger the work is well documented. The text is fluent and readable, but consists mainly of descriptions of the work, with a relatively short treatment of Asmussen's earlier history and little on Steiner's theory.

Asmussen himself seems a wise but modest man who prefers to let his work speak for itself, and fair enough: but for the complete outsider this leaves an uncomfortable sense of having to take or leave it. One can respect the value of Steiner's ideas as counter-culture and critique without necessarily having to swallow them whole, but this requires thorough, systematic and critical understanding. Coates has produced an admirable documentation of a significant architect, but we still need a fuller critical analysis. **PETER BLUNDELL JONES**

DELIGHT



TREASURED IN MEDIEVAL RUSSIA AND STILL FORMING PART OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN DEVOTIONS, SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL EXAMPLES OF THE ICON MAKER'S ART ARE NOW ON SHOW IN LONDON.

Since the establishment of Byzantine Orthodox Christianity in Russia at the end of the tenth century, icons have played a fundamental part in both public and private devotion. The icon represents a bridge between heaven and earth over which the believer crosses to the regions of the spirit from the realms of daily life. Liturgical proceedings in Orthodox churches are dominated by huge tiered screens of icons (the iconostasis), and worshippers traditionally make direct physical contact with an icon resting on the *analogion* (lying place) in the centre of church, paying tribute with a kiss and by the lighting of a candle. Icons of name saints accompany children through life and couples are presented with icons on marriage. In Orthodox homes, the 'beautiful corner' is the focus of daily spiritual life, containing icons before which family prayers are said.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Russian icon painting evolved to unprecedented heights, producing images that embodied immense spiritual power and technical mastery. Some

remarkable examples of the icon painter's art are currently on show in the Sackler Galleries at London's Royal Academy. Originating from the medieval Moscow school, the icons are distinguished by a combination of sensitive modelling, skill of composition, subtle handling of spatial depth, calm flowing outlines and harmonious interplay of colours. Figures tend to be elongated with small hands and feet, features are delicate and expressions calm and concentrated, as in the example shown above, an icon of Saint Boris and Saint Gleb dating from the late fifteenth century. Sons of Vladimir, grand prince of Kiev, Boris and Gleb were murdered by their half-brother Syvatopolk and were subsequently canonized during the eleventh century to become the first saints of Russia.

CATHERINE SLESSOR

The Art of Holy Russia: Icons from Moscow 1400-1660 is at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, until 14 June.