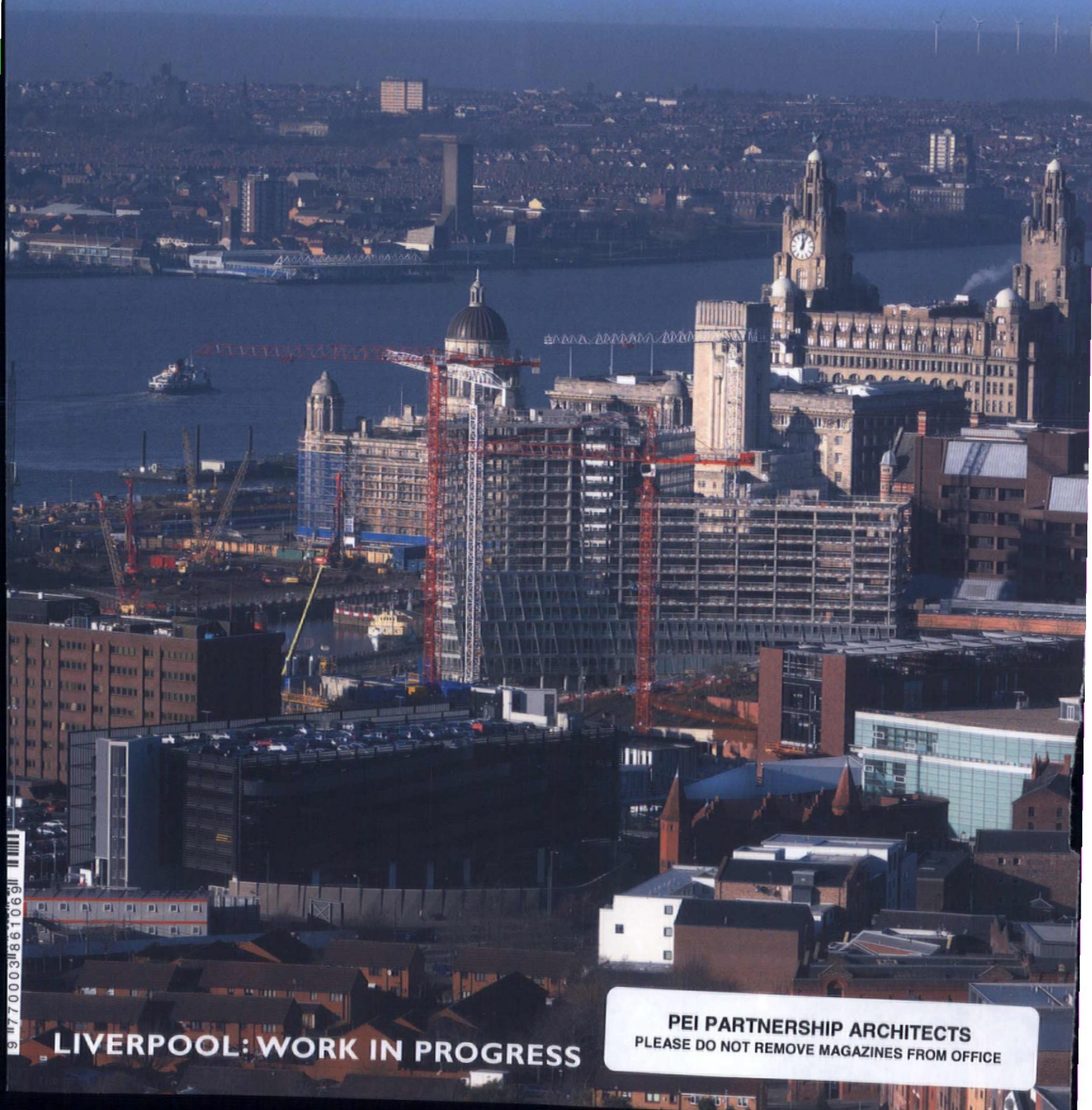


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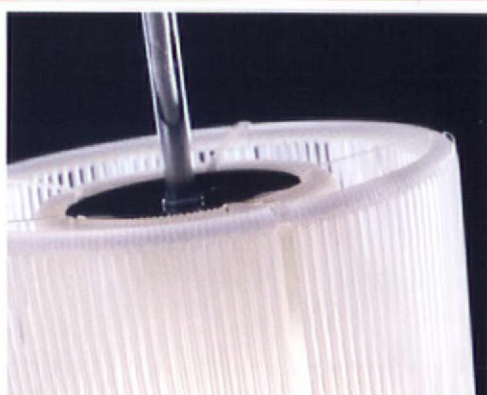
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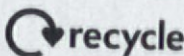
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Liverpool's changing skyline Photograph by PAUL MCMULLIN



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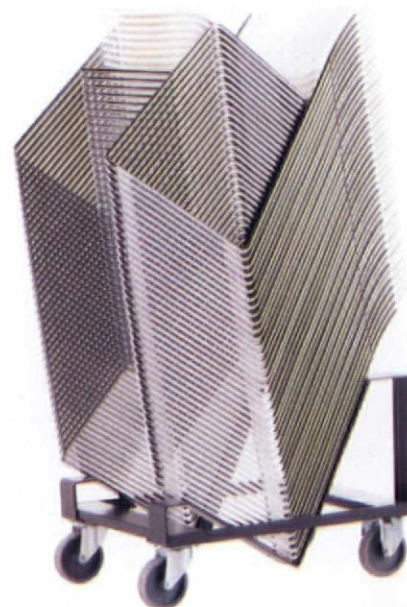
Blue eyes, Mandarin, Apple and Ayers Rock red offer inspiration and possibilities for all (colour) tastes and temperaments. The extra colours offer either clean lines or colour combinations to attract attention and add variety in the furnishing of different rooms. Effects which can also be achieved in combination with the existing colours Black, Coconut and Howe grey.

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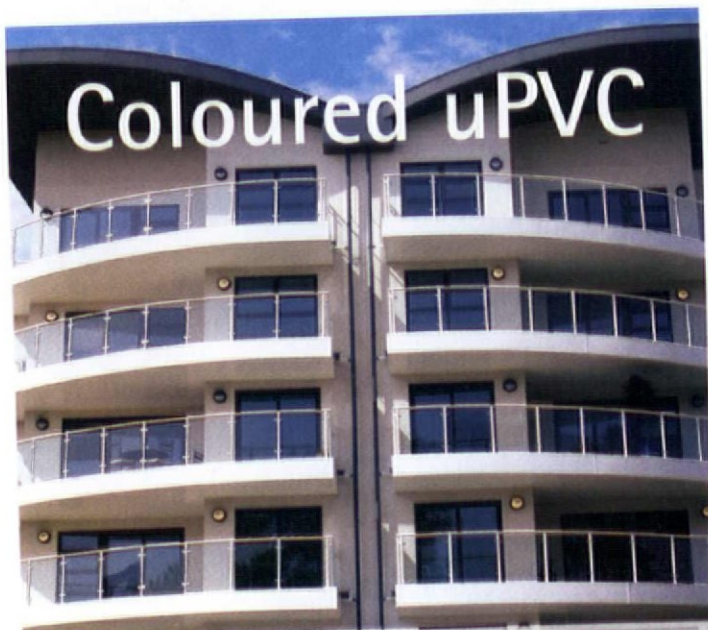


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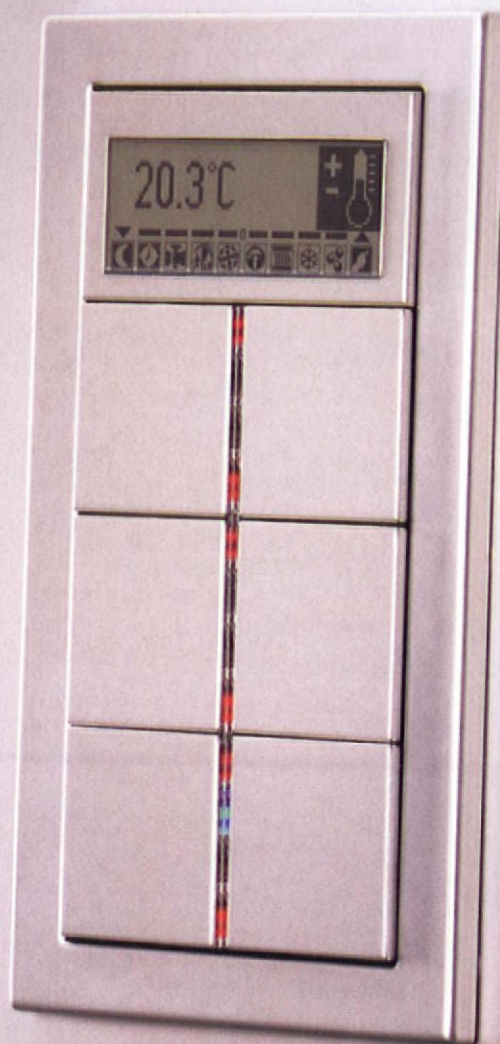
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Emerging Architecture

Next generation architects from around the world show and tell at the RIBA with a series of talks and an accompanying exhibition



**Taketo Shimohigoshi/
AAE + FAM Arquitectura
y Urbanismo**

31 January 18.30

Taketo Shimohigoshi will be talking about architecture in central Tokyo. Shimohigoshi has been considering the architectural landscape of Tokyo and the relationships between architecture and the overcrowded image of the city. He will talk about his ideas, using some of his projects by way of example.

The 11 March Memorial for the victims of the Madrid terrorist attacks was inaugurated opposite Atocha train station in Madrid on 11 March 2007, the third anniversary of the terrorist attacks. FAM Arquitectura y Urbanismo will talk about their design for the memorial, exploring the thought processes behind it, and the new construction methods they used to create it.



**Ecosistema Urbano
Arquitectos +
Unsangdong Architects
Cooperation**

5 February 18.30

Ecosistema Urbano Architects will talk about their Eco-boulevard of Vallecas which they define as a process of 'urban recycling'. Self sufficient 'air trees' provide temporary public, social and recreational spaces. Once the new suburban area and vegetation has developed to the extent that it no longer needs these air conditioned environments, they are easily dismantled, leaving spaces that resemble forest clearings.

Unsangdong principals Yoon Gyoo Jang and Chang Hoon Shin are both acutely aware of and responsive to the growing globalisation of architecture. Their new gallery is an assured piece of urban sculpture that clearly reflects wider international influences and brings a sense of verve to Seoul's tatty cityscape.

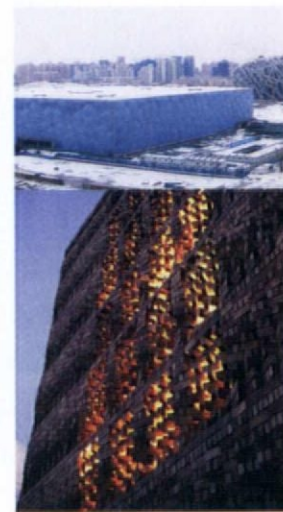


**FAR frohn&rojas +
Studio Tamassociati**

19 February 18.30

Founded in 2004, FAR frohn&rojas is a networked practice operating between Germany, Chile and Mexico. Looking at their 'Wall House' and placing it within the context of their other work, Marc Frohn (concept development & design principal) discusses his work approach of obsessively playing with the 'deep structures' underlying architecture, such as legal constraints, technological and ecological frameworks.

Studio Tamassociati is committed to policies that strengthen conditions of security and integration and that favour democratic growth, social justice and environmental sustainability. In this lecture, they will talk about their winning project, the Prayer and Meditation Pavilion, in Khartoum, Sudan and the ideas that shape the way in which they work.



**Chris Bosse +
Anagram Architects**

26 February 18.30

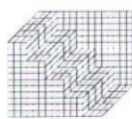
Sydney based, German architect Chris Bosse bases his work on the computational study of organic structures and resulting spatial conceptions. He pushes the boundaries of structure and architecture by means of digital and experimental form-finding. With PTW architects in Sydney, he was a concept architect of the Watercube in Beijing.

Anagram Architects was founded in 2001 in New Delhi. Their young practice works across a wide range, from modest residences to large public infrastructure facilities. They will discuss some of their most recent projects, including the offices of the South Asian Human Rights Documentation Centre in New Delhi, where they attempt to combine their own modernist training with traditional design practices with the aim of creating new experiences.

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A SCEPTICAL LOOK AT HEIKE HANADA'S WINNING ENTRY IN A MAJOR COMPETITION TO EXTEND ASPLUND'S LIBRARY IN STOCKHOLM; TILE OF SPAIN AWARDS; CAT VINTON WINS INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR; PETER COOK MUSES ON THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN DUBAI AND SUFFOLK.

LIVERPOOL STILL NEEDS VISION

Liverpool's year as European City of Culture follows its 800th city anniversary in 2007; the celebrations, therefore, have already begun. It is not so much the past which is encouraging, however, but the future emerging from the forest of construction cranes in the centre of the city. That future, as amply illustrated in this issue, is a heady mix of cultural, commercial, residential and leisure buildings at various scales, from pocket delights to megastructural shopping and conference developments. What the best of these buildings have in common is a clear programme and a clear sense of identity; they represent what can be done in a city which has too often resembled the girl in the nursery rhyme: when it is good it is very, very good; when it is bad it is horrid. Horrid behaviour is exemplified in the surreal story of the so-called 'Fourth Grace' building. The original competition-winning proposal by Will Alsop was cynically abandoned after it had contributed strongly to the successful City of Culture bid; abandoned not least because the joint city/development agency client failed utterly to produce a convincing brief.

That was bad enough; an entirely different proposal for the site, again pursued through an architectural competition, is now under construction but the architect, 3XNielsen, has also been dropped even though the building survives. This is pitiful, and whoever is responsible for this insult to architecture has done the city no favours. It is a sad fact that too many UK architectural competitions, sponsored by public bodies for public projects, end in failure. This is often because competitions are used as substitutes for real decision-making, which in turn derives from the absence of a coherent long-term proposition about (in this case) Liverpool's urban future.

Happily, there is ample evidence that hard thinking has been going on in relation to the most significant new investment in the city – the Paradise Street shopping centre by the Grosvenor Estate, that extraordinary testament to hereditary responsibility and property management. The £1 billion development is interesting from a design perspective because it is the reversal of the mall philosophy which has tended to dominate urban shopping centres across the world; more important for the city is the long-term commitment by a huge global investor, a commitment unthinkable only a few years ago, when Liverpool was mired in nihilistic political infantilism which provided a backdrop for systematic economic and social failure. It has somehow managed to survive that period and has come out fighting, as befits a world city with an extraordinary architectural heritage to match. If it manages to learn from some recent mistakes, as well as from successes, Liverpool can be truly great once again. **PAUL FINCH**



ADDING TO ASPLUND

Swedish critic Rasmus Waern takes a sceptical look at the winner of a major competition to extend Erik Gunnar Asplund's city library in Stockholm.

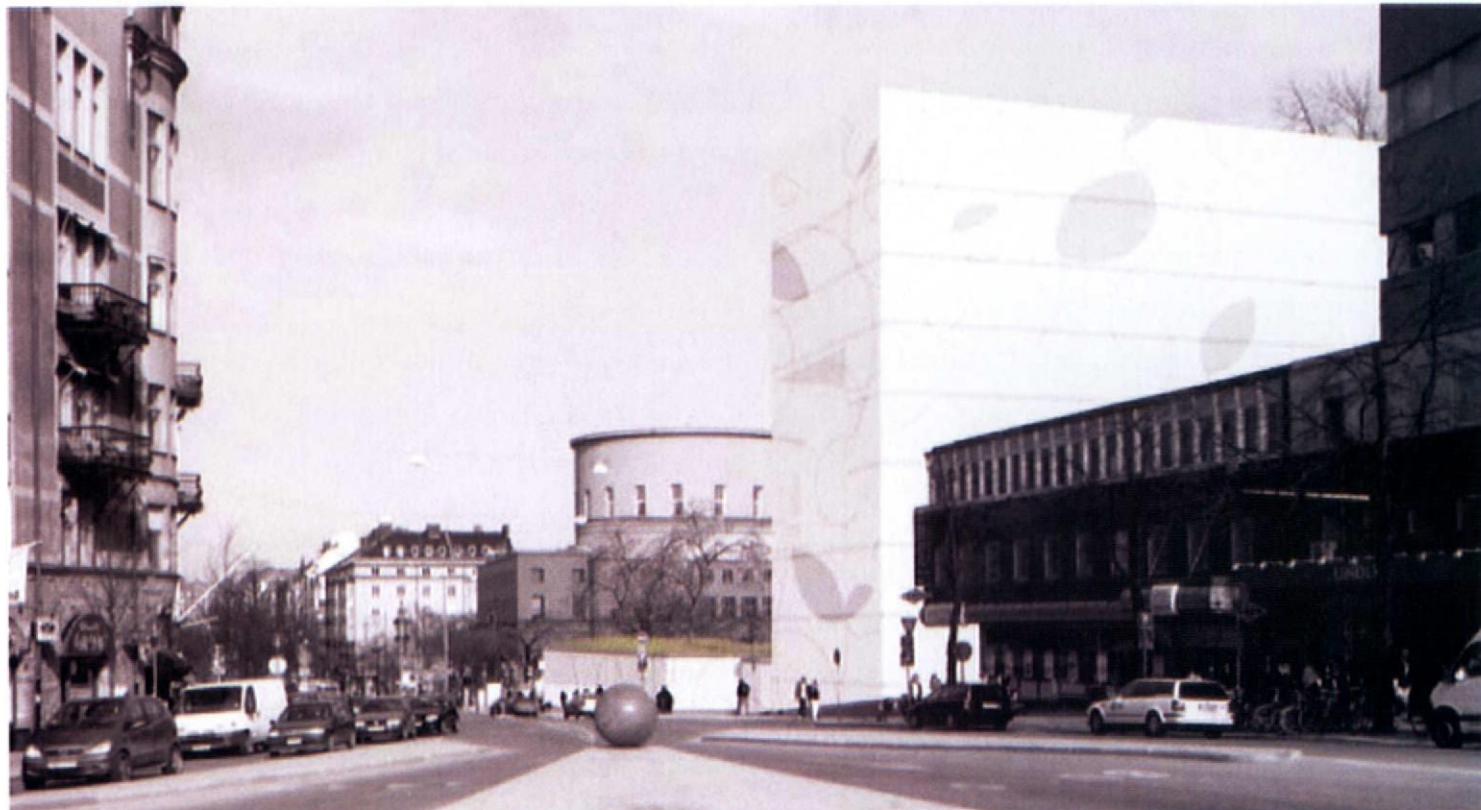
The outcome of the international competition for the extension of Asplund's famous city library in Stockholm was remarkably unspectacular. The winner – Heike Hanada from Weimar in Germany – made it all the way with a surprisingly conventional slab. The jury, with Adam Caruso and Kjetil Thorsen among others, praised with one voice the 'holistic solution that balances the loss of the historical buildings' that will have to be

demolished. They even marked the judgement by not giving out a second prize.

The huge competition – 1170 entries makes it one of the largest in the world – was divided into two stages. Six entries, representing six different approaches, were selected for further development (AR April 2007). Paradoxically, however, the sheer volume of proposals was effectively counterproductive to any sort of debate. It was not until the jury had refined entries down to six that public discussion was possible, even if none of the final submissions was received with any great enthusiasm. Nor was the winner greatly applauded. Heike Hanada's proposal is pulled back as much as possible, pledging respect to Asplund's building

by creating distance between it and her new block. This approach recalls 1950s Modernism with its penchant for monumentalising the old by setting it apart, rather than establishing an active relationship between old and new. The dialogue is now mainly between low and high and despite the play with the circle, the relationship of Hanada's new building to Asplund's masterpiece is passive. To accommodate the extensive programme with a more intimate solution was obviously not possible, according to the jury. And the existing lamellas were not well suited to being embedded in a superstructure. Despite their value in the townscape, their presence would inevitably conflict with any new plan.

Heike Hanada is, in a way, a typical entrant, ie, inexperienced. All six finalists were at best local names and there was a noticeable dearth of well-known designers in the starting field. Of the 1170 entries, only about 25 were submitted by architects with international reputations, among them Will Alsop, Ortner+Ortner, 3xNielsen, Heikkinen-Komonen, Itsuko Hasegawa, NOX/Lars Spuybroek, Florian Beigel, Bjarke Ingels, Abalos+Herreros and Michael Graves. Even if these did not prove successful, there was hope for a greater response from the huge body of entrants. But the current building boom is not good for uncertain projects such as open competitions. Some more experienced architects probably disagreed on the physical conditions for delivering a good building and therefore chose not to get involved. None of the more well-known





Cat Vinton's images of the lives of central Asian nomads, shown here dismantling the family yurt, won her first prize in the Travel Photographer of the Year competition. Her prize includes the opportunity to photograph the Dalai Lama in India. Amateur and professional photographers from 51 countries competed for the prestigious awards. As well as her evocative studies of nomadic life, Vinton's winning portfolio included a series of highly atmospheric images of the snowy Norwegian landscape. Winning images can be seen at www.tpoty.com and will be on show at the Exposure Gallery, 22-23 Portland Street, London, dates to be confirmed, as well as at an exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham next month. The judging panel included editors of German and British photography magazines and the travel editor of Tatler.

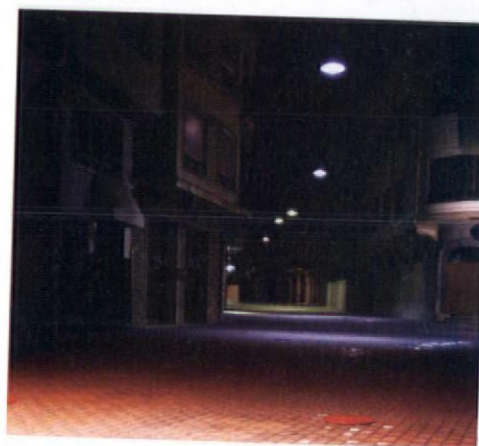
designers produced immediately convincing solutions, even if David Chipperfield's elegant terraces, Manuel Aires Mateus' striking void, the lesser known Swedish/Norwegian Fredrik Lund's witty landscape and the Finn Aaro Arto's careful expressionism all stood out.

In general, the building's functions were not strongly emphasised in the shortlisted proposals. The programme called for large lobby areas with close and direct connections between the servant and the served spaces. A slab solution is rather the opposite, dividing the functions in different levels. But though Hanada's proposal is a compromise, it is very buildable – it is hard to imagine a proposal that will be easier to execute. The minor question regarding the connection between bottom and top of the hill is convincingly solved, but

the architecture of the facades remains to be proven, and the interaction with the sightlines is a surprise, though the lower part compensates these shortcomings to some extent. However its qualities as a coherent piece of architecture and urban design will depend largely on the not yet presented design of the landscape.

The lack of an all over convincing solution unveils two deficiencies: the programme was very large for the site and the competition area was smaller than necessary. Many proposals in the final phase, including the winning one, extended the limits of the site. Despite these doubts, I wish Heike Hanada well in her execution of the project. She will need it. The Swedish building trade does not have a great reputation when it comes to respecting the integrity of a rookie.

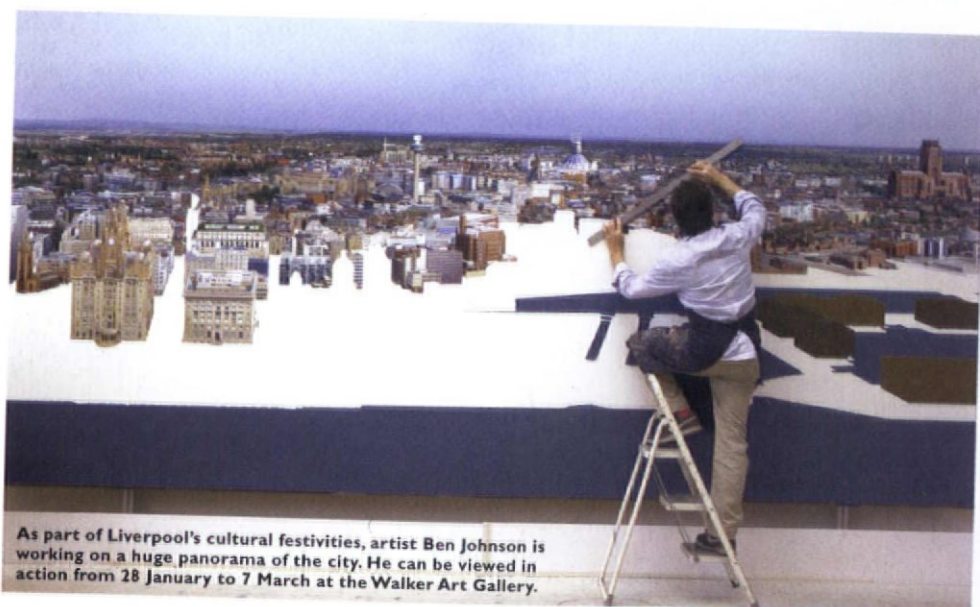
RASMUS WAERN



San Vicente Street by José Durán Fernández.

TILE OF SPAIN AWARDS

Now in their sixth year, the Tile of Spain Awards promote the creative use of ceramic tiles in architecture and interior design. Led by Eduardo Souto de Moura, the jury awarded first prize in the architecture category to José Durán Fernández's 'Colour Revolution' project. It involved the re-design of San Vicente Street in Burriana (Castellón), the intensity and colour of ceramic tiles giving the street a new identity. First prize in the interior design category went to the San Blas (Madrid) Municipal Health Centre, by Estudio Entresitio. Conceived by María Hurtado de Mendoza Wahrolén, César Jiménez de Tejada Benavides and José María Hurtado de Mendoza Wahrolén, the project was singled out for its coherence in the use of materials outside and inside, including ceramic tiles as a mirror to reflect light through patios and skylights. Around 100 projects were entered and the Awards are growing in popularity.



As part of Liverpool's cultural festivities, artist Ben Johnson is working on a huge panorama of the city. He can be viewed in action from 28 January to 7 March at the Walker Art Gallery.

Peter Cook

Compare and contrast: Suffolk and Dubai.

Some time ago I found myself returning to a well inhabited dining room in a pub in Suffolk, England. I realised that not only did it serve some of the best fish and chips on the East Coast, but that the room was filled with a bevy of familiar and well known London architects, Cambridge architects, London musicians, philosophers, art worthies and suchlike. Perhaps, hundreds of years earlier, it would have hosted the shakers and movers of the flourishing local community, except that the adjoining city of Dunwich had fallen into the sea, leaving the pub resting against hedgerows rather than streets.

Below, a series of lazy creeks and small rivers run between occasional monuments of high elegance: those grand Suffolk churches that afforded an architecture of considerable sophistication on the back of a flourishing Medieval wool trade. The wool business diminished and the sea encroached, but a collection of spirited minds still seem to enjoy the irony and pleasantness of it all.

I was strangely reminded of all this on my recent introduction to the very distant creeks and sands of Dubai. I could even expect to find some of those same London architects – as well as their New York or Berlin buddies – trooping into a foodie restaurant along with any number of imported cultural figures: opening a college here, establishing a theatre there and helping the city to announce itself to the world as a cradle for ideas. Of course, my train of thought could soon extend to a certain predictive irony; if oil is the new wool and computer-fashioned precast concrete the new stone carving and flint knapping,* might the whole thing not slide mysteriously into the sea one day and its curious, polyglot citizenry fizzle away, merely bequeathing a few strange tales? Perhaps of architects seeking riches, inventing mysteries, searching for clues, searching for significance among the shifting sands?

Such places collect ironies. Not far from Dunwich lies Orford, where a few months later



Zaha Hadid's Dubai Opera House, another gaudy bauble in the Emirates pipeline.

the Japanese architect Itsuko Hasegawa came over to make the sets for a performance of Benjamin Britten's 'Curlew River', the connection being that this Suffolk music drama had been based upon a Japanese *noh* play. Somehow, folding a culture upon a culture thrives in a territory that is slightly spooky, especially where there is a density of quizzical minds at work. Within a heathland that has become layered with forests, absorbing the coincidences of musical genius and painterly talent means that an unexpected lane will lead to a high tech recording studio, or a long, low malthouse will disclose a symphony orchestra in rehearsal. Behind the next hedgerow some philosophers are comparing the wine being grown in the field beyond with that lying in their cellars, while their neighbours behind another hedge are tuning-up racing cars.

In the same way, Dubai sits there as the plaything of a privileged world – with its hinterland scaled-up some dozens of times. The achievers of Pakistan or Iran rub shoulders with

the Germans and Brits – though *noh* plays or the English watercolour tradition are unlikely to be their tippie. Yet one suspects that when Dunwich thrived and the sheepskins were being packed into those old sailboats, life might have had a similar hustle and bustle about it.

Does our present architectural response have to push us back into the middle? Does this energetic, opportunist, enterprising new metropolis need to reproduce the blandest of quotations from Miami, Singapore or Düsseldorf? A life in the sun (or dextrously escaping from it) could surely result in some new activities and new typologies. If there is no need for hedgerows to shield the eccentric or the original enterprise, then couldn't those zany artificial palm-tree peninsulas and artificial oases host some form of studio/capsule/artificial hidey-tree? Somehow, I don't believe that my strange cross-recollection is entirely off the wall. History is too often treated as a one-way service. Cities are too often studied as a one-value system. Strange little places are too often dismissed as irrelevant to the urban experience.

One day the world will become bored by the en-suite bathroom, grilled sea bass, Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons', undulating concrete ribbons, the Picasso print, the *Time Out* recommendation (and yes, of course there's a *Time Out* for Dubai).

Interestingly, those rather older escape cities – Kyoto, Aspen, Poona, Vancouver Island or St Ives – have the reputation of attracting eccentrics. So how about a different kind of 'Club Med' for Dubai: reduced rates for inventors, composers, parrot-stuffers? And the architecture for such an enterprise? Well, the palm tree peninsulas are a start. Aren't they?

*A hard stone cut to reveal its glassy surface.



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Why Liverpool, and why now? Why devote a journal of architectural review to a city which has, for six decades, produced little architecture worth reviewing in the literal sense of rewarding a second view? An answer might begin by reminding that, while reviewing may be confined to evaluation of things as they are presented, criticism cannot but move toward questions of how they come to be produced, and hence to how to proceed in future. In Liverpool, these questions are acute; for what preceded its architectural decline was exceptional; of which, despite ruinous losses, enough remains to rebuke all but the best of what is now, to general astonishment, suddenly getting built there.

And now, too, there is Liverpool's accession to Capital of Culture 2008, which the EU surely invented as a way of enrolling provincial or failing cities (failing because provincial?) to the culture of capital, by 'regeneration', which seems to mean making them conducive to 'creative industries' and attractive to the supposed tastes of top executives. As if to demonstrate this dream, a crop of glossy magazines now advertise Liverpool property with images of penthouse views redolent of Chicago or New York – long a local fantasy, but now repackaged as lifestyle. Yet if EU policy seeks somehow to entwine 'regeneration' with 'regionalism', how does that work in a global economy where business is controlled from fewer and fewer cities? And still more in Britain, where cities have less power than their European peers, and don't correspond as municipalities to their real size? Thus, while Liverpool's inner population has fallen to 450 000, that of the greater Liverpool area (taking as template the 16-mile radius of Greater London) is 2 million. (This compares with the city-government *Land* of Hamburg's 1.7 million.) If, as Doug Clelland says (p80), Liverpool's governance has been dismal, so it has also been in other cities where leadership was drained by business' removal to London, and by the futility of service in municipalities as weak as those in Britain. Liverpool MP Peter Kilfoyle, when recently asked if he would consider becoming a US-style City Mayor, replied that such a governance could only be effective if applied not just to the present municipality but to Greater Liverpool.

In fact, as recent history notes, 'Liverpool has been a laboratory for almost every experiment in modern urban policy and planning', several of which, such as transfer of powers over large areas to the quango Merseyside Development Corporation (1981-95), weakened municipal authority. In 2000, with English Estates and the North West Development Agency, the City formed Liverpool Vision, a 'partnership company' that promoted much current development. Yet as Vision now winds up with problems (notably in transport) still unresolved, a familiar English gap returns between mere development and real urban design, which could be bridged only by a comprehensively empowered public authority, accountable to the entire (not just core) city, which would, as Trevor Skempton outlines here (p76), straddle the Mersey to include Birkenhead and the Wirral.

Nevertheless, Liverpool has improved since it was declared in 1994 an 'Objective 1' region for EU aid (as its per capita GDP was below 75 per cent of the EU average). If it is now above that, it is partly

because an influx of city-centre dwellers has lifted property prices so that, unlike the recently acclaimed Unity Building, new projects will not need public 'priming' funds. At King's Dock, years after needless demolition of the eighteenth-century Duke's Warehouse, an arena, exhibition hall, and conference centre is about to open (p58). A fine extension to the city centre's oldest building, the Bluecoat Arts Centre, is opening ready for the 2008 Liverpool Biennial (p82), and Rick Mather's JMU arts building (p62) is due to coincide with the Le Corbusier exhibition in the Lutyens crypt of the Catholic Cathedral. The biggest impact will be Grosvenor's Paradise Street scheme (p64) which will double the city's retail area. A quality of commissioning uncommon in commercial developments seems likely to make this a truly urban contribution. The same cannot be said for projects elsewhere in the city. Princes Dock, by the cruiseliner terminal on the north side of the Pier Head, is now a row of mediocrities. Yet this is where the Arena would have been better placed, with a revived Riverside railway station linked through the Waterloo tunnel which once led Pullman trains down to the liners.

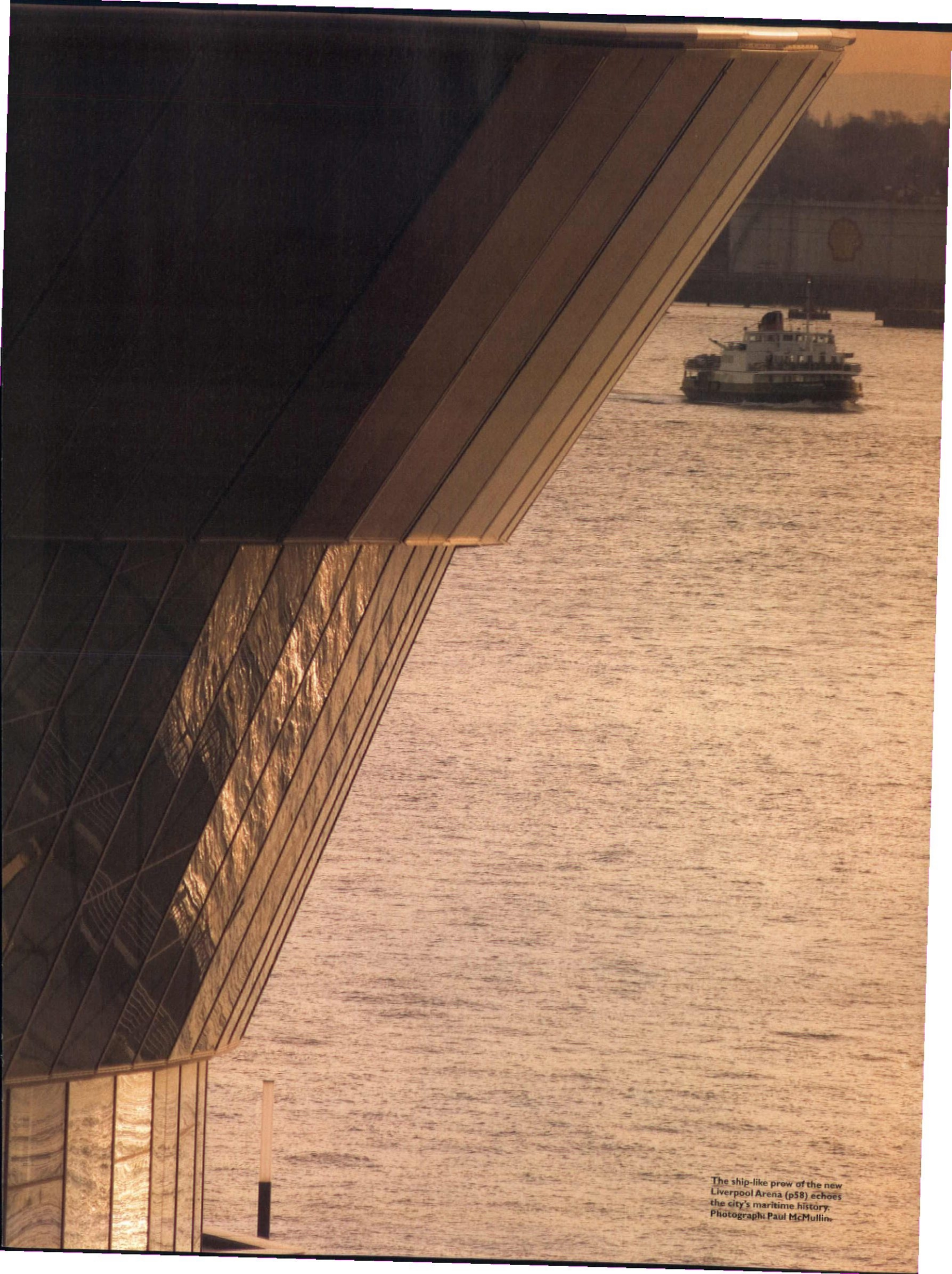
Current developments will certainly return Liverpool to the regional centre that it was. Whether it can recover the world significance that it once had (and, as David Dunster and Sean Griffiths show here, retains in mythic imaginations) is altogether more speculative. All British regional cities suffer from London's overbearing monopoly, subsidised by its role as national capital, of executive functions. Yet the colossal schemes now projected by Peel Holdings (p75), owners of the Port, show that a local propensity to dream big and showy has not gone away. Colin Rowe wrote that in its heyday, Liverpool displayed a 'characteristically local and enlightenment mix of information, elegance and megalomania'. But if the megalomania is back, will elegance and enlightenment follow?

In Liverpool, as Sean Griffiths writes (p24), it is this challenge from a grand and confident past that rebukes the present, and as David Dunster observes (p71), calls into question the very meaning of 'regeneration'. It also mocks facile claims to 'regionalism' when every development could have been planted anywhere. Kenneth Frampton's earnest call for 'critical regionalism' will only be fulfilled by truly local and independent governances. The 2006 Venice Biennale exhibited (and, despite its ostensive alarms, effectively celebrated) a world of terrifying megacities (AR September 2006) with scores of millions crowded into centres where capital currently finds it convenient to concentrate. Yet we see smaller cities such as Copenhagen and Melbourne each year listed as most civilised, and indeed wealthiest per capita. This is surely the direction now for cities such as Liverpool: to become really distinctive, and thus distinctly better. BRIAN HATTON

* Chris Couch, *City of Change & Challenge: Urban Planning and Regeneration in Liverpool*, Ashgate, 2003.

Acknowledgments: Guest Editor **Brian Hatton** and the AR editorial team would like to extend thanks to photographer **Paul McMullin**, who made Liverpool live on these pages, and to **Patrick Moran** and **Trevor Skempton** of the Merseyside Civic Society for their help and advice. Other contributors include architectural historian **Joseph Sharples**, **Sean Griffiths** of FAT, **Doug Clelland**, **Herbert J. Rowse** Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Liverpool John Moores University, and **David Dunster**, Roscoe Professor of Architecture at the University of Liverpool.

WHITHER NOW?



The ship-like prow of the new Liverpool Arena (p58) echoes the city's maritime history. Photograph: Paul McMullin.

Liverpool is a maverick city. It produces maverick talents; think John Lennon, George Melly, Beryl Bainbridge, Alexei Sayle, Ken Dodd, Roger McGough, even Wayne Rooney. In the world of architecture, it produced James Stirling, the best British architect of the last 50 years. Stirling was always something of an outsider, never quite of the mainstream. The same could be said for Liverpool. Never seemingly quite of England, Liverpool looks west: to Ireland, America and to the world. Liverpudlians – cocksure, streetwise and practitioners of a famous, scathing wit – have always thought of their city as the best in the world, an idea perhaps of its potential rather than reality, the wit as much self deprecating as directed at ‘woollyback’ outsiders.

A sense of ‘never quite making it’ always haunted my image of the city, perhaps because I was growing up there (actually, on the outskirts, from which I yearned towards its skyline on the horizon) during its most turbulent and demoralising period in the late 1970s and early ‘80s. That time was characterised by a virulent form of industrial strife with which the city became synonymous (ironic given the earlier sectarian politics there). Because of this unrest, Liverpool, along with the coalfields of south Yorkshire and the ‘Looney Left’ boroughs of London, became one of the major battlegrounds of Thatcherism.

One of my most vivid memories is of defiant City Council Deputy Leader, Derek Hatton, addressing a vast crowd from John Wood’s elegant eighteenth-century town hall. At the time this seemed like a revolutionary moment, a storming of the Winter Palace, when Liverpool finally detached itself from the rest of England. In fact, it was anything but. Instead it became the moment when the defiance was crushed, and the city was condemned to what seemed like a terminal decline marked by unemployment, the disaster of Hillsborough and the tragedy of James Bulger’s murder. The rise of Hatton and the Militant Tendency was, of course, a consequence of ongoing decline, captured vividly in local playwright, Alan Bleasdale’s seminal television drama, ‘Boys from the Blackstuff’. Long before the word regeneration came into common parlance, we see George, a former docker, dying of cancer – a metaphor for the city itself – wheeled in his pyjamas around a derelict Albert Dock, scene of his former glories, but now a ruin, a silted, muddy grave of the city’s former prosperity.

That Piranesian quality, born of tragic decay and hastened by riot, seems to have informed the city’s very making. Gilbert Scott’s outrageous Anglican Cathedral – a much underrated work – seemed, for years, the only survivor of some ancient apocalypse, sitting on a hill overlooking the grand river, but denuded of its urban quarter before the arrival, in the 1980s, of some decidedly mediocre housing schemes. Beside it lies the romantic canyon of St James Cemetery, with Gambier Terrace serenely above. Lutyens’ magnificent Catholic Cathedral – what an addition to the city that would have been, proof of Liverpool’s true greatness – but sadly a ruin before it was even built, only the crypt surviving as plinth to Gibberd’s pale shadow. Or, arriving by train, before you enter the graceful curving skeletal roof of Lime Street Station, there is the Edge Hill cutting, a terrifying monument of hand-hewn engineering, a hellish corridor carved through the topography by navy pioneers of Liverpool’s Irish contingent. And where the architects’ and engineers’ grand schemes, and the city fathers’ failures didn’t leave their mark, the Luftwaffe did: one of Liverpool’s most poignant monuments, the bombed-out St Luke’s Church, at the crest of Bold Street.



EMPIRE STATE

Decaying glamour
– Liverpool's
Hollywood disco
waits to be reborn.
Photograph:
Paul McMullin



Decay could be felt, too, in the detail of the city. Before its re-establishment as a gentrified place of aspirant wealth, Liverpool's fine Georgian quarter, financed on the back of the slave trade, was, for the most part, a ruin. I remember the patina of the bricks of these and other bombed-out houses from the Victorian period. They seemed encrusted with the detritus of human life, grown like a dirty moss on the very material of the city's fabric. This feeling was accentuated by the palimpsests of bill stickers pasted on the corrugated iron over windows of disused dwellings, and the peeling layers of wallpaper, like coalseams of memory, made visible by collapsing walls. To me, none

of this seemed in the least bit depressing. It was part of the romantic allure of the city which expressed itself in the dark music of the local bands of the 1980s – Echo and the Bunnymen, The Wild Swans, the Marshmallow Overcoat – with whose doomed perspectives I fell in love. For me, living on the outskirts, this dereliction exerted a powerful draw. I longed to be part of it, longed to be living in some inner-city slum rather than the prosaic banality of suburban comfort.

Amid the decay were also signs of what might have been. All Liverpudlians are immensely proud of those three great buildings on the waterfront. At the time of their construction, at the start of the twentieth century, Liverpool was unequivocally the second city of the Empire. Reminders of this fact once abounded. On the train from north Liverpool, after Sandhills Station, before descending into tunnels beneath the city centre, you used to see a series of magnificent factories of the sort that today would be converted into trendy lofts. On one of these, cast in large letters into the terracotta parapet, were the words 'Beattie's Edible Oils'. The next, surmounted by a monumental chimney, bore the words '1914 Powerhouse'. A poignant date, 1914 marks the beginning of the modern world, and that of the British Empire's and Liverpool's demise. Those buildings were short-sightedly demolished in the 1980s, to be replaced by a series of light industrial tin sheds, representing the replacement of one way of life by another.

Driving through Liverpool could also be a source of imaginary pleasure of the sort to which Aldo Rossi alludes in his notion of the Analogical City. Behind the Pier Head's three great edifices, runs a wide avenue called The Strand. To the north, this is the Dock Road, a scene of dereliction mixed with shiny constructions, like giant unlabelled tins, filled with molasses. Southwards, it passes the defunct Salthouse, Albert, Wapping, Kings and Brunswick docks, now sites of regeneration. But for a moment, as one drives past the Liver and Cunard Buildings, on this wide avenue, it is possible to imagine what might have been. For a fleeting moment, you can imagine you are in Chicago or New York, a feeling once intensified by the roar along the dockside of Liverpool's Overhead Railway, like Chicago's Loop and New York's 'El'.

There are now signs that what might have been, might come to pass; although the model seems now more Dubai than Manhattan. For, once a ruin, Liverpool has become a building site. Where Ken Dodd once hopped a fence in front of the mud-coloured concrete law courts as he escaped the press during his trial for tax evasion, cranes now adorn the sky, constructing a new shopping quarter on Paradise Street (p64). Among its endless Modernist Esperanto of polite retail boringness, there are one or two punctuations with a Liverpool accent. CZWG's marvellously vulgar Bling building on Hanover Street has won the hearts of Liverpudlians, who are notoriously vain, and recognise a reflection when they see one. Among the decidedly ordinary tower buildings being erected to the north of the Pier Head, as Liverpool tries to belatedly Manhattanise, is the odd one such as the Unity Building (AR April 2007) with its ziggurat top and dazzle camouflage cladding, that tries to create something different in the way that the Liver Building once did. Developers Maro saw their tower, designed by Ian Simpson, rejected by the local authority, on the grounds of its size. That was no reason to reject it. Liverpool can handle towers as long as developers recognise that this is Liverpool, a city of character and distinction – ie, it is not Manchester and not Leeds. So why did a developer commission a building indistinguishable from its architects' efforts in those cities?

Likewise, the prospect of Peel Holdings erecting rows of skyscrapers along the northern shore of the Mersey is depressing, not because they are towers, but because they look like they are in Dubai (p75). Where is the Bling? Where is the Romance? Where is the sense that Liverpool did not merely copy what went on elsewhere, it led the world. Oriel Chambers was one of, if not *the*, world's first glass office buildings. Without Birkenhead Park, there would be no New York Central Park, and the Liver Building famously pioneered concrete frame construction. The idea that Liverpool, a city of Empire, should be subject to such cultural imperialism is ironic to say the least. SEAN GRIFFITHS

A city's evolution can be read in its cartography and Liverpool is no exception. From the earliest medieval times, when the city began as a modest cluster of seven streets, through its Georgian and Victorian mercantile heyday, to a modern port city of the British Empire, Liverpool has focused on the River Mersey and its dockland landscape as a gateway to the world. The outcome was one of the greatest commercial waterfronts in Europe, lined with muscular warehouses. From this riverside core, the development spread out and up, adapting to the city's rolling topography. During the Second World War, the proximity of the city centre to the docks was its undoing, with large areas razed by German bombers. Decline in the 1970s and '80s compounded the misery, but as the city marked its 800th anniversary in 2007, there is hope of better times ahead.

The story of Liverpool's turbulent evolution can be vividly read in the city's cartography.



Above: the rapidly expanding city in a map of 1756 by John Eyles. Below: the Victorian metropolis.

MAPPING LIVERPOOL





1207 'Liverpool' created a borough by King John, its position on the peninsula between river and tidal creek making it a convenient harbour for communication with Ireland

Population 5715

1797 The city booms, but prosperity comes at a price - Brick is cemented to its fellow Brick by the blood and sweat of Bagshaw Stevens. The learned Athenaeum Club is founded

Mid 1660s Merchants displaced from London by the Great Fire and the Great Plague settle in Liverpool

1718 Bluecoat Chambers completed, showing Wren's influence

1792 Liverpool now handling a sixth of all tonnage from all English ports, compared with one 24th of all tonnage in 1716

1667 Sugar refining begins in the West Indies

1715 The first commercial enclosed wet dock opens in Liverpool

Population 70,000

1648 First recorded cargo from America arrives, 30 tons of tobacco

1698 Liverpool now has 24 streets 'mostly new built houses of brick and stone after the London fashion ... built high and built even'

1740 Liverpool overtakes Bristol as second port and takes a higher share of the slave trade. Manufactured goods exported by ship to West Africa are traded for slaves trafficked to the West Indies in exchange for cargoes of rum, sugar, tobacco and cotton

1207 1648 1660s 1667 1698 1700 1715 1718 1740s 1792 1797



*Throughout this large-built Town every
at of Negroes', according to the Rev William
ed by William Roscoe and his circle*

*1836 Opening of Lime
Street rail terminus*

Population 518 000

*1816 Leeds Liverpool Canal completed, linking
the port with the great manufacturing towns of
Lancashire and Yorkshire*

*1840 The Liverpool Sanitation Act leads to the appointment
of Dr Duncan as the country's first City Medical Officer and
to James Newlands' pioneering sewer system*

*1886 Liverpool linked with Birkenhead
by the under-river Merseyside Railway*

1801 1807 1816 1820 1836 1840s 1851 1864 1886 1891 1893

8 000

*1820 James Wyatt completes remodelling
of Town Hall, comparable with London's
Mansion House in its richness*








*1864 Oriel Chambers by Peter Ellis, an early
example of curtain wall construction that
outraged commentators – 'a kind of greenhouse
architecture run mad', Building News*

*1807 Abolition of slave trade assisted by Liverpool
MP William Roscoe, but trade continues to expand*

Population 376 000

*1893 Opening of the Liverpool
Overhead Railway along the waterfront
to alleviate docklands traffic congestion*

- 01 Albert Dock
- 02 Beatles Story
- 03 Bluecoat
- 04 Cavern Club
- 05 Empire Theatre
- 06 Everyman Theatre
- 07 FACT
- 08 LIPA
- 09 Liverpool Cathedral
- 10 Liverpool Central Library
- 11 Liverpool Town Hall
- 12 Maritime Museum
- 13 Mersey Ferries
- 14 Metropolitan Cathedral
- 15 Mr Hardman's Photographic Studio
- 16 National Conservation Centre
- 17 Neptune Theatre
- 18 Odeon Cinema
- 19 Open Eye Gallery
- 20 Passport Office
- 21 Philharmonic Hall
- 22 Playhouse Theatre
- 23 Register Office
- 24 Royal Court Theatre
- 25 St. George's Hall
- 26 Tate Liverpool
- 27 Unity Theatre
- 28 UL Art Gallery
- 29 Walker Art Gallery
- 30 Western Approaches
- 31 Williamson Tunnels
- 32 World Museum Liverpool

-  Hospital
-  Merseyrail
-  National Rail
-  Parking
-  Parking - Disabled
-  NHS Walk in centre
-  Toilets

↑ SOUTHPORT

AI

BI ↑



SCALE: 400M/3 MINUTES WALK

↓ LIVE
OTT



1965 Liverpool City Centre Plan provides an ambitious framework for redevelopment

1972 The South Docks, including Albert Dock, are abandoned and become silted

1988 Tate Liverpool by James Stirling crowns a major redevelopment of Albert Dock, the largest single conservation project ever undertaken in the UK

2002 Competition launched for the 'Fourth Grace' on a site next to the Pier Head; won by Will Alsop, from a shortlist of Foster, Rogers and Cullinan

2008 Redevelopment of Bluecoat as an arts centre by Dutch architects BIQ, and European City of Culture

Population 436 100

1965

1967

1972

1981

1984

1988

2002

2004

2006

2007

2008

1967 Gibberd's Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King completed, its radical circular form, reflecting Vatican 2, breaks with traditional axial organisation

1984 Liverpool International Garden Festival

2007 Allford Hall Monaghan Morris complete the Unity building, two new towers near the Liver Building, and Liverpool FC secures permission to build a new stadium in Stanley Park

win first League Bill Shankly red strip

Population 510 000

1981 Toxteth riots

2004 Plans for Fourth Grace shelved; 3XNielsen win competition for National Museum of Liverpool on adjacent site



1911 The concrete-framed Royal Liver Building by Walter Thomas completed on the Pier Head; together with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board (1907) and the Cunard Building (1916), these muscular 'Three Graces' give the city its distinctive waterfront silhouette

1941 Seven consecutive nights of bombing during the infamous 'May Blitz' kills 4000 people and destroys most of the city centre

1904 Charles Reilly becomes influential head of Liverpool School of Architecture (a post he held until 1933)

1933 Roman Catholic Cathedral by Edwin Lutyens begun, with a Brobdingnagian scale and ambition to rival St Peter's in Rome, but only the crypt will ever be completed

1961 City Planning Department established; Beatles first appear at the Cavern Club

1903

1904

1911

1914

1933

1934

1939

1941

1950s

1961

1964

1903 From an all Gothic shortlist, Giles Gilbert Scott wins the competition to design the city's first Anglican cathedral

1934 Mersey Road Tunnel opens

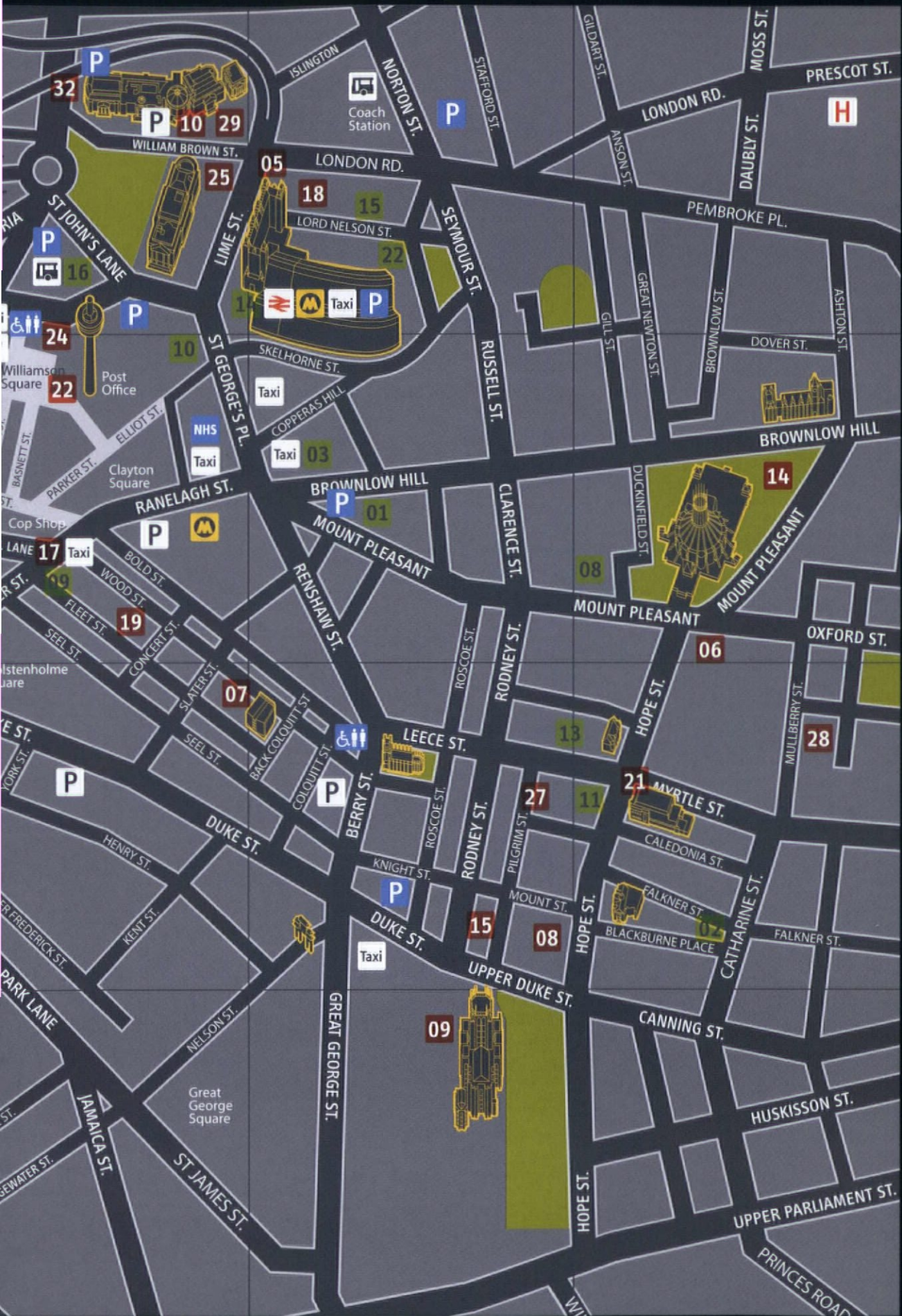
1950s Postwar rebuilding

Liverpool's population peaks at c900 000

1914-1918 First World War. Serious shipping losses

1939 Outbreak of Second World War

1964 Liverpool FC Championship under and adopt famous a



→ M62/CROXTETH HALL
HOSPITAL

1 → WILLIAMSON TUNNELS
ST HELENS / KNOWSLEY SAFARI PARK

2

3

4

ALEXANDRA TOWER ↗

Located at the north-west corner of Princes Dock, this 27-storey residential tower is currently under construction and is due to complete in early 2008. Its 201 apartments have views of the Mersey, with commercial units at ground level. Liverpool's residential high rise has come a long way since the grim Stalinist blocks of the '60s and '70s.
Architect: AFL Architects



KING'S DOCK TOWERS ↗

Trio of apartment block towers at the south end of King's Dock on a prime riverfront site which was formerly a car park. Providing 429 loft-living style flats, it forms a key residential component in the overall redevelopment of the King's Waterfront, next to historic Albert Dock. The site already houses the new Liverpool Arena (p58).
Architect: Glenn Howells Architects

ST PAUL'S SQUARE ↘

This £50m urban development aims to revive Liverpool's languishing CBD with a mixture of commercial and residential development arranged around a new public square. Commenced in 2007, it is due to be constructed in three phases, completing in 2010. Commercial blocks are limited to a height of eight storeys, with shops at ground level.
Architect: RHWL

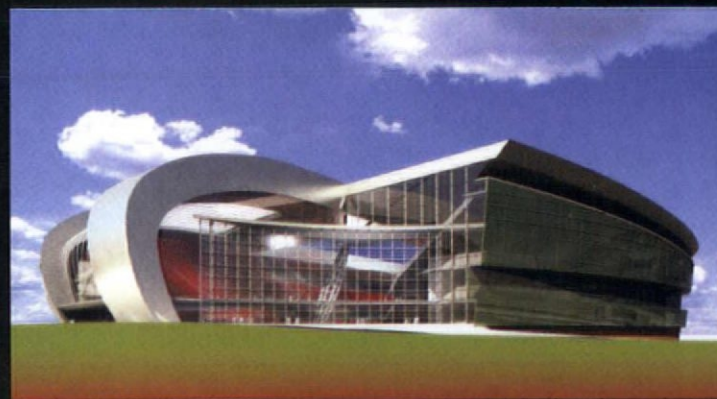


FUTURE VISIONS

AS REPRESENTED BY THIS PLETHORA OF SCHEMES CURRENTLY IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PIPELINES, THE FUTURE OF LIVERPOOL WILL BE NOTHING FANCY – A TRIUMPH OF COMMERCIAL VIGOUR OVER CIVIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SUBTLETY, BUT PERHAPS IT WAS EVER THUS. ACRES OF DOCKS WILL BE TRANSFORMED BY HIGH RISE, WHILE THE CITY CENTRE WILL BECOME A SHOPPERS' PARADISE. HERE WE LOOK AT THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME.

LIVERPOOL FC STADIUM ↘ ↗

By 2010, Liverpool FC are due to forsake their familiar stomping ground at Anfield for a new 60 000 seat stadium in Stanley Park in the north of the city. Fashionably asymmetrical, it boasts an enlarged Kop capable of housing 18 000 die-hards. You'll never walk alone.
Architect: HKS



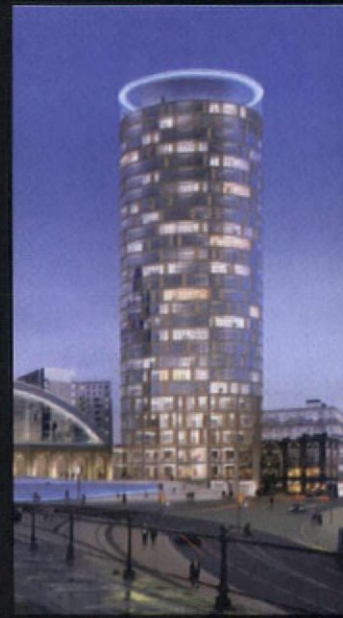
KING EDWARD TOWER ↗

Currently up for planning approval, this £130 million mixed-use commercial and residential tower is proposed for the site of the now demolished King Edward pub at the junction of Leeds Street and the Strand. At a soaring 54 storeys and 170m tall, it would be Liverpool's highest building, comfortably outstripping the existing St John's Beacon (a mere 133m), and the 54th-storey penthouse would also be the UK's highest dwelling.
Architect: Leach Rhodes Walker



CENTRAL VILLAGE ↗ ↘

In the context of this £160 million mixed-use development behind the old Central Station, 'Village' is perhaps a misnomer, though there is a bold attempt to create an urban colonnade at ground level. However, given the Lancashire propensity for rain coupled with the atmospheric turbulence generated by a staggered tower rising from 22 to 38 storeys, it remains to be seen whether the reality will match the visuals.
Architect: Woods Bagot



LIME STREET GATEWAY ↗ ↘

Major redevelopment around Lime Street Station to create a more coherent urban realm. The existing Concourse Tower to be remodelled.
Architect: Glenn Howells Architects



PRINCES DOCK ↗

The focus of the redevelopment of Princes Dock is this scheme on the north side of the dock for a residential tower with 183 apartments, together with a 150 bed hotel and offices. Though still huge, three storeys were lopped off the tower to secure planning permission. Architect: RMJM



WIRRAL WATERS ↘

No, not Dubai; the Wirral. Peel Holdings propose to invest £4.5 billion in a lavish 30 year regeneration of Wallasey and Birkenhead docklands. More than 500 acres of run-down brownfield sites will be energetically transformed into a gleaming Dubai-on-the-Wirral (p75). Masterplanners: Broadway Malyan

Developed by Beetham, who have already built high in Liverpool with the original Beetham Tower, this soaring 40-storey block on an adjacent site combines luxury flats with offices. Architect: Aedas



LIVERPOOL WATERS ↗

Proposed £5.5 billion regeneration of the northern end of Liverpool's docklands by Peel Holdings will create a daunting ensemble of 50 skyscrapers arranged around the docks, a marina and new public parks. Some see it as a cynical attempt to increase land values and only a fraction of it will be realised; others hail a brave new Liverpool world. Masterplanner: Chapman Taylor



NEW WORLD SQUARE ↘

Right next to the Pier Head this site was an important point of embarkation for emigrants to the New World. In place of Spanish architect Javier Hortal's original and somewhat bombastic proposal, this £130 million mixed-use scheme by John Lyall Architects includes a luxury hotel and 362 apartments designed to line the waterfront and a new square. Architect: John Lyall Architects



MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL ↗

The prominent 'Fourth Grace' site between the Pier Head and Albert Dock has been dogged by local and national controversy since Will Alsop's original competition-winning 'melting doughnut-on-stilts' was canned due to rising costs. In its place came a new brief for a Museum of Liverpool Life, intended to explore social history, and a new scheme by Danish firm 3XNielsen, conceived as an angular confection of inclined planes. Though it seemed that Liverpool would finally get its new waterfront landmark, the curse of budgets has struck again, with the 3XN team moved off the project in November last year. Architect: 3XNielsen



PALL MALL BUSINESS QUARTER ↘

Large-scale commercial, residential and retail development on the site of the old Exchange Station. Detailed masterplan submitted and sites being worked up. Masterplanner: RHWL



CHANDLERS WHARF ↗

One and two bedroom apartment block arranged around a landscaped courtyard in the city's Baltic Triangle. Architect: Falconer Chester Architects

CITY LOFTS ↗

Nine-storey apartment block sited on the east side of Princes Half Tide Dock. Follows on from the previous successful development of 21- and 11-storey towers on the east side of Princes Dock. Architect: Conran and Partners



THE GARDEN QUARTER ↗

Two-stage residential development of the former magistrates courts in Hatton Garden. The first phase includes two new blocks and the second involves the conversion of the magistrates courts. Architect: Chapman Robinson



PETER'S LANE ↗

Conversion of an existing pair of shops into a covered retail arcade linking the city's traditional shopping drag of Church Street with the major new development of Paradise Street (p64). The area was a churchyard until the Woolworths store was built in the 1920s and the aim is to recreate a new courtyard as part of the pedestrian link. Architect: Greig & Stephenson

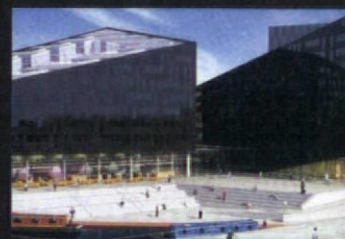


VERNON TOWER ↗

Currently on site, this new 22-storey tower forms the showpiece of the Sefton Street Quarter, a mixed development of housing, offices, retail and hotel. Behind, Scott's cathedral looks on wearily. Architect: Falconer Chester

CANAL LINK ↗

Ongoing proposal to connect Princes Dock with the Canning Dock via a 110m canal link across the Pier Head, thus linking the Leeds Liverpool canal with the South Docks and increasing usage. Developer: British Waterways



MANN ISLAND ↗

Though it lacks architectural charisma, this mixed development for the ill-fated 'Fourth Grace' site aims to improve the pedestrian experience in and around the Pier Head and Albert Dock. Its anodyne glazed volumes also form the backdrop to the new Museum of Liverpool Life. A missed opportunity that typifies Liverpool's muddled urban thinking. Architect: Broadway Malyan



NEW MERSEY CROSSING ↗

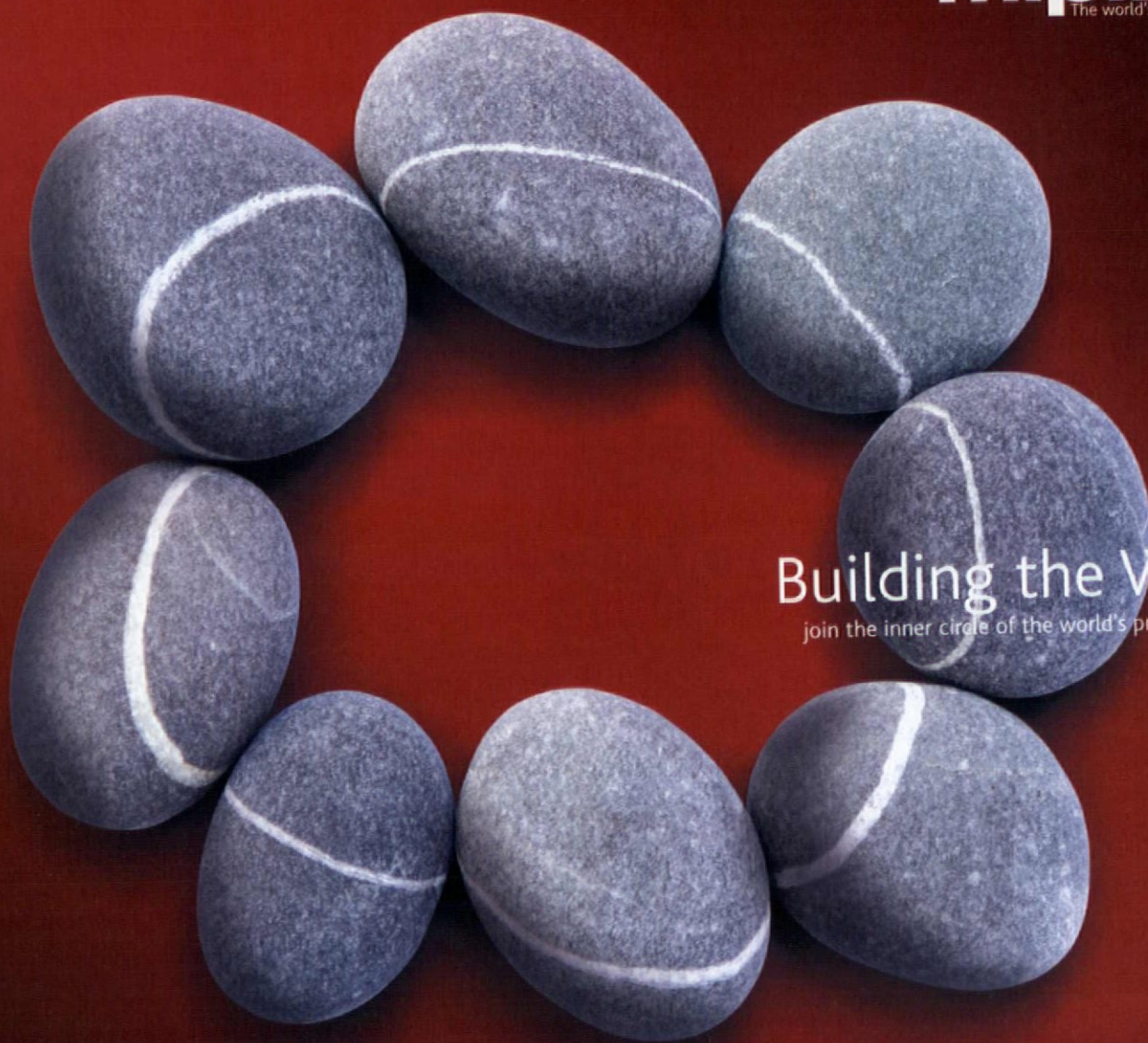
Due to open in 2014, this new bridge across the River Mersey is intended to relieve congestion on the existing road bridge between Runcorn and Widnes. Though the design is yet to be finalised, initial proposals show a cable-stay structure similar to the River Severn crossing, but with three towers. The cost is currently estimated at £390 million. Lead consultant: Gifford and Partners



QUEEN'S DOCK ↗

A 22-storey apartment tower forms the focus of this £15 million development on the edge of Queen's Dock. The slim tower contains 135 flats, and rises up from a cluster of three-storey blocks. A health club, shops and bars complete the scene. Though it's hard to fault the ambition of such schemes, given the city's current state of decay and decline, is grafting on a certain type of aspirational lifestyle the real answer to more deeply rooted urban and social problems? Architect: Chapman Robinson





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SHIFTED TIDEWAYS

LIVERPOOL'S CHANGING FORTUNES



Regarding Liverpool, all must commence with the Mersey. On the primacy of the river, all are agreed. So Henry James' *English Hours* began in a smoky dawn of arrival at the Mersey bar, and so do all the best books on Liverpool. In 1907, Walter Dixon Scott's summary of the city at its confident peak, *Liverpool*, opened with 'The River': '... not merely because Liverpool owes her actual existence to the River, but also because the whole quality, the "virtue" of that existence has been determined by the completeness of the dependency'.¹ Likewise, Quentin Hughes in 1964 opened *Seaport* – still the best introduction to Liverpool's architecture – with 'The River and the Docks'.² And Tony Lane began his 1997 social history, *Liverpool City Of The Sea*: 'In Liverpool the sea cannot be avoided. All roads converge at the Pier Head. The main streets collect the prevailing westerlies. Standing outside the Town Hall and looking down Water Street at high tide, inward and outward bound ships move across the frame made by the Cunard and Liver Buildings'.³

The Mersey launched the port and its shipping; as topography it is ubiquitous and transcendent. Its great width, huge skies, and broad slopes all incite to architectural gesture on a grand scale. Colin Rowe, who studied and taught there, echoed Dixon Scott in remarking their spur to Liverpool's self-imagining: 'Liverpool is, or used to be, grim but grand. It was dour, squalid, improbably Piranesian and, characteristically, was equipped with an apparently endless series of smokily stratified sunsets ... which served, occasionally, to contribute to a highly poignant magnificence. Also, it was never a completely provincial or pragmatic city and, from the late 18thC origins of its prosperity, it had typically indulged itself in fantasies which were likely to involve an unmistakably local (and Enlightenment) combination of elegance, information, and megalomania'.⁴

That provocative and 'fierce beauty', as Dixon Scott called the river's influence, has exceeded its utility to the port. It is now attractor to those converters of warehouse lofts to 'city-dwelling' who may make shopping rather than shipping the key to the city's future. Visitors will notice the towers rising north of the Pier Head, each angled westward to the view across the river, the Welsh mountains and the Irish Sea. They are the crest of a regeneration that began, very slowly, in 1987, by turning the Albert Dock to the Maritime Museum, Tate Gallery North, tourism, and apartments. Removal of the port downriver, rebuilding the Pier Head for cruiseliners, and the new King's Dock Arena, on the waterfront next to the Albert Dock, should now connect city and river in a way that was never possible when eight miles of docks monopolised the Mersey. Across the old dock road from the Arena is now the city's biggest building site: 42 acres, with streets and 40 individually designed buildings on a masterplan worked out between the city and developer Grosvenor Estates. Opening during Liverpool's year as EU Capital of Culture, and named 'Liverpool 1', this doubling of the city's retail centre is the largest of over a hundred projects which only now, 35 years after the closure of the south docks, are beginning to transform the city. It is ironic yet characteristic that 'Liverpool 1' is now rising on the site of the first of those docks, originally the very 'pool' itself of Liverpool.

The 'navel' of Liverpool

From its incorporation in 1207 to 1700, Liverpool scarcely grew beyond a grid of six streets, a castle, and church.⁵ Exposed to wind and surging tides, the Mersey was a dangerous channel, and the only haven for ships lay in the muddy creek that was the pool of Liverpool. The port of today is an entirely artificial creation that began only with the replacement of that creek, in 1715, by the world's first wet sea-dock, into which ships could sail at high water, and remain through all tides. Over the next two centuries, 50 more such basins would follow, enclosing 500 acres of water by 80 miles of quayside. Most were built along the Liverpool shore out into the river, which became flanked by continuous granite walls from Dingle down to Seaforth at the mouth; but in the nineteenth century, docks were opened on the opposite side of the Mersey, along the great 'Float', which ran inland from the locks at Birkenhead. Initially owned by the Corporation, and from 1857, a Trust, the administration of this vast estate on both sides of the Mersey became in effect, a city within a

city, planned and designed with a regulation unknown in English towns.⁶ This was a factor in Liverpool's peculiarly dirigiste, even paternalist, Tory politics (which controlled the city up to 1956) but also in the formal rationalism that would recur in Liverpool architecture.⁷

An example of this was the 1827 conversion of the first dock into Canning Place. Dominated by John Foster's massive Custom House, whose dome and Ionic west portico surveyed the docks, Canning Place became, until the Edwardian monumentalisation of the Pier Head, the civic focus of the port, whose brokers' axis ran from the Exchange behind John Wood's Town Hall, along Castle Street past Cockerell's Bank of England, and culminated in the shadow of the Custom House's north portico and mercantile pantheon. Its looming bulk (bigger than St George's Hall) reflected its national importance; for with the port's ascendancy, Liverpool Custom House became the Exchequer's biggest single source of revenue, leading Liverpool, uniquely, to be accorded its own Whitehall office.⁸

Schinkel in Liverpool

That Foster succeeded his father as Corporation Surveyor (also Dock Engineer from 1799 to 1825) aroused comment. The elder Foster oversaw a doubling of the docks and the building of fireproof warehouses such as the Goree arcades. In 1810, the younger Foster joined Cockerell in gaining the Aegina marbles, and on his return transfused Grecian style to Liverpool, where it persisted, as in Glasgow, over a century. Most of Foster's austere works are now gone; but one remains. Pevsner called it 'a stroke of genius': the romantic quarry of St James' Graveyard, now in the gothic shade of Scott's Anglican Cathedral, into which Foster led down, from his Doric Oratory and Gambier Terrace, a Piranesian descent of ramps and tunnels to his domed Huskisson Mausoleum.⁹

It was understandable, therefore, that when, in 1826, Friedrich Schinkel visited Liverpool on his research tour of Britain, he sought out Foster at his house in Mt Pleasant, opposite Edmund Aiken's Wellington Rooms, whose Grecian refinement he noted in his journal.¹⁰ But Foster was already at his office, and when Schinkel caught up with him, had little time to talk with his distinguished Prussian visitor, who noted Foster's income from the booming port around him. If Schinkel hoped to discuss the culture of the city, he would have done better at the Athenaeum club with its illustrious founder William Roscoe, self-taught biographer of Lorenzo di Medici, founder of Liverpool's art collections, and campaigner, as local MP, against slavery.¹¹ Schinkel, like many nineteenth-century visitors, experienced in Liverpool a mix of exhilaration and alarm, finding efficient models to imitate, but social disorders to avoid. Many in the city felt the same. For instance, James Newlands pioneered a sewer system long before Bazalgette in London. Such reformers promoted the 1846 Liverpool Sanitary Act and appointed the country's first Medical Officer of Health, the celebrated Dr Duncan, for whom, like Roscoe, two Liverpool pubs are still named.¹²

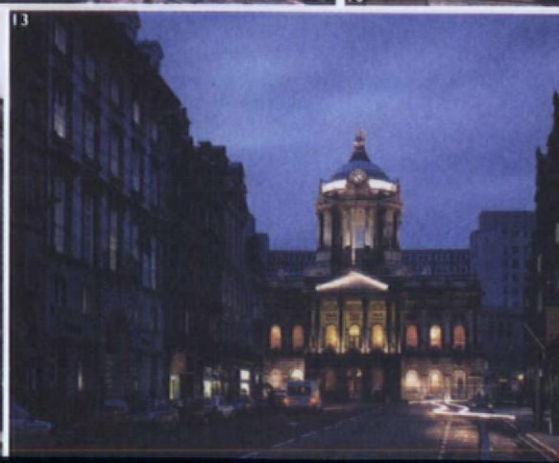
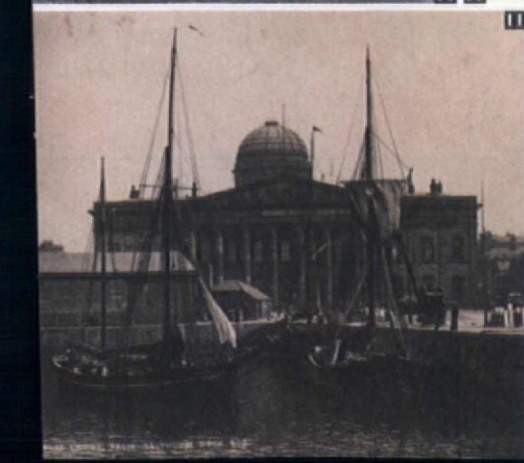
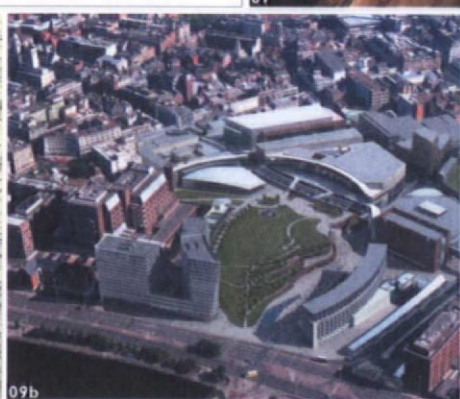
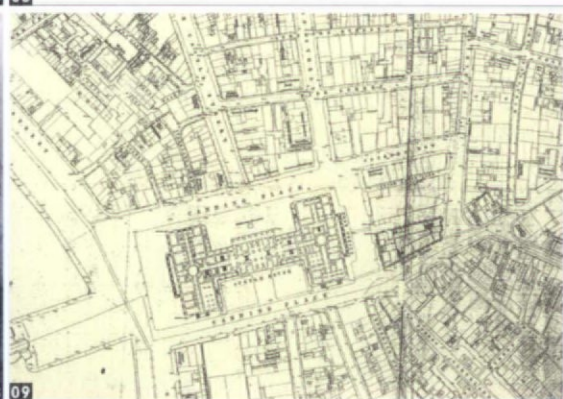
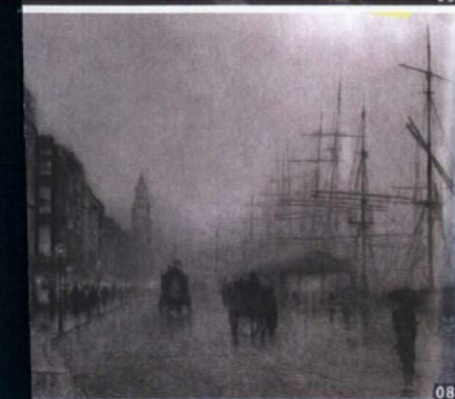
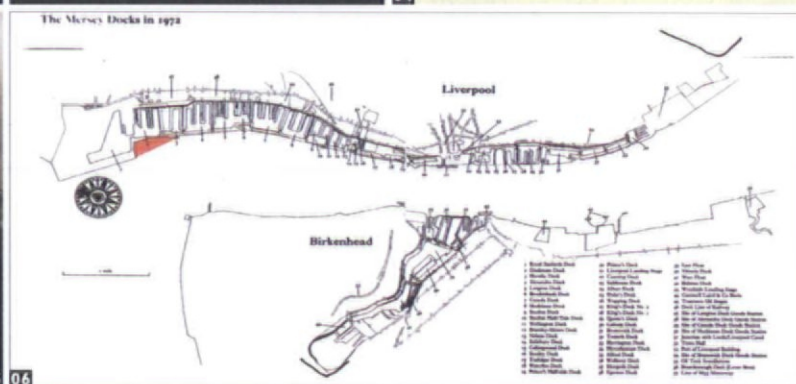
Visitors and visions

Liverpool's fame grew with its trade. In 1824, Donizetti made it the setting of a fanciful opera: *Emilia di Liverpool*. It also featured in journals, such as those of de Tocqueville and Emerson. Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a journal of his years there as US consul, and Herman Melville set his 1849 novel *Redburn* in the 'grand caravansary' of Princes Dock, after his stay there while visiting Hawthorne. Most decisive was Frederick Law Olmsted's discovery, on his arrival, of Paxton's new Birkenhead Park, where he found the picturesque landscape design which he had come to see, but adapted for the first time from aristocratic estate to a democratic park. Back in New York, Olmsted would translate Birkenhead, upscaled and Columbia-rugged, to Central Park.¹³

In 1842, a German visitor, J. G. Kohl, recorded the city in meticulous and admiring detail, noting that since 1800, its population had trebled to 300 000, while the port received annually 16 000 ships, with 10 000 owned there.¹⁴ By 1900, a million people lived on Merseyside, and with growing steamship size, one seventh of the world's tonnage was owned there. This



01 Original coastline of the Pool overlaid with the plan today. Steers' 1715 dock filled the mouth of the 'pool' but subsequent docks were extended into the river. In 1815, Steers' dock was filled to become Canning Place with Foster's Custom House at its centre. 02 Modern Liverpool painted by Walter Richards, 1907. 03 The working port in its heyday. 04 Benson's map c1860. 05 Overhead Railway and Liver Building, c1955. 06 Mersey Docks in 1972 with (in red) proposed post-Panamax quay, expected to receive the world's biggest ships by 2012. 07 View of the Mersey from above Seaforth Docks. 08 Atkinson Grimshaw view of the Dock Road, 1892. 09 Map of Canning Place and Custom House, 1905, as built on site of the original Old Dock. 09b 'Liverpool I', Grosvenor Estates Paradise Street project on the site of Canning Place. 10 St Nicholas (the Seamen's) Church, c1825. 11 The Custom House from Salhouse Dock. 12 View of South Castle Street looking south to the Custom House, 1905. 13 North Castle Street looking north to the Town Hall. Photograph by Paul McMullin.



fact, even more than the port itself, underlay Liverpool's great fortunes. So although other ports overhauled it during the twentieth century, the final collapse in those fortunes came after 1970, with the near-extinction of the UK Merchant Navy.¹⁵

The boldest engineer of the port that impressed Kohl and Melville was Jesse Hartley. In 30 years, he built as many docks; above all the Albert, which integrated wharf and warehouse with hydraulic lifts and cranes. Hartley disposed stone and iron with articulate gravity and functional grace; yet his powerful *architecture parlante* also ran to maniacally fortified towers and gates of minatory grimness. 'Granite was the material in which he delighted to work. His walls are built with rough cyclopean masses, the face dressed, but otherwise shapeless as from the quarry, cemented with a lime as hard as the granite itself.'¹⁶ As the century wore on, so extended and ramified the walls, locks and coulisses of the docks. In the fogs of the *fin-de-siècle* (praised by Oscar Wilde in a lecture at Birkenhead), the labyrinth of docks became a mysterious domain of symbols. In 1892, Atkinson Grimshaw painted the dock road as a rainy procession of masts and gaslamps in vaporous twilight. Yet Grimshaw's nocturnes were retrospects to a Georgian waterfront already overtaken by forces altogether more industrial and unknowable, sensed in the Piranesian images of Dixon Scott's visionary impression of 1907: 'It is a region, this seven-mile sequence of granite-lipped lagoons, which is invested ... with some conspicuous properties of romance; and yet its romance is never of just that quality one might perhaps expect ... Neither of the land nor of the sea, but possessing both the stability of the one and the constant flux of the other – too immense, too filled with the vastness of the outer, to carry any sense of human handicraft – this strange territory of the Docks seems, indeed, to form a kind of fifth element, a place charged with daemonic issues and daemonic silences, where men move like puzzled slaves, fretting under orders they cannot understand, fumbling with great forces that have long passed out of their control ...'¹⁷

The Overhead Railway

'Out of control' was what, by the year that Grimshaw painted it, the Dock Road had become – a continuous thoroughfare, parallel to the river, of all the port's traffic. Liverpool had brought the world's first public railway, in 1830, through tunnels down to the docks, and in 1886 opened an underground railway to the Wirral. Now it was decided to adopt from New York the solution of an elevated railway to run along the Dock Road, but to outdo New York's 'El' by making it the world's first electrified 'Overhead Railway'. 'The Dockers' Umbrella', as it became known, opened in 1893 and carried millions each year until its closure, to general dismay, in 1956.¹⁸

That dismay reflected its immense popularity, often from memories of the parade of ships and docks afforded to all who rode aboard it. That its appeal was immediate was evidenced in that, in 1896, it prompted Lumière's cameramen to film from it what may be the world's first 'tracking shot', running from Canada to Albert Docks, past timberyards, sailing-ships and giant steamers. Far from Grimshaw's nocturnes, this movie is a kinematic harbinger of a twentieth century that had not yet even begun. Without montage, it presents a single continuous view; but that is its key: a one-to-one correlation of lens to motif, which translates space, through 'real to reel' motion, into time. This new technique of the visible would open Dixon Scott's intractable dockworld to new eyes; and the tracking view from the Overhead would feature in every montage of modern Liverpool. Throughout Anson Dyer's 1927 'city symphony' film, *A Day In Liverpool*, shots from and of the Overhead recur as a motif of urban energy among streets, offices, exchanges, liners, cranes, brokers and dockers – the roaring scene that, surely also viewed from the Overhead, excited Karel Capek on his visit in 1924:

'But Liverpool is the biggest port ... there was something to see from Dingle up to Bootle, and as far again as Birkenhead on the other side. Yellow water, following steam ferries, white trans-atlantic liners, towers, cranes, stevedores, skiffs, shipyards, trains, smoke, chaos, hooting, ringing, hammering, puffing, the ruptured bellies of the ships, the stench of horses,

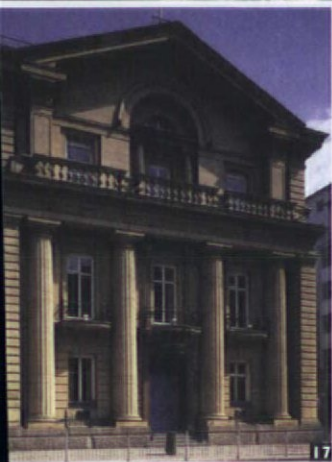
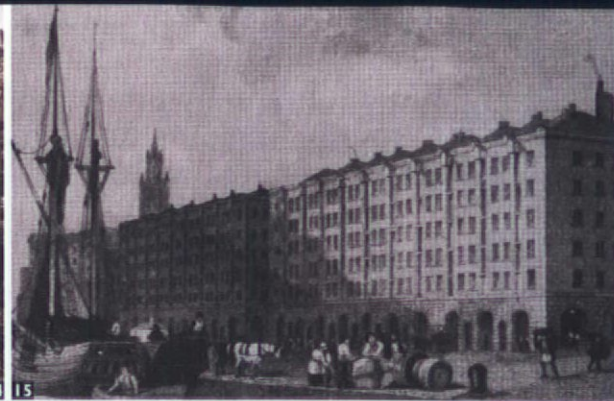
the sweat, urine, and waste from all the continents of the world ... And if I heaped up words for another half an hour, I wouldn't achieve the full number, confusion and expanse which is called Liverpool.'¹⁹

Indeed, a half-hour was the Overhead ride from Dingle to Bootle, which unfolded not just a pageant of ships, but Liverpool's master-narrative, which was recorded by countless eyes and amateur cameras following Dyer and Lumière. In architecture, 'narrative' is a line, like a rope, which twists spatial and temporal events together into organised and self-evident form. We can say, then, that the era of the Overhead was when Liverpool attained a comprehensible form as, in effect, a linear city running parallel to the river, from the airport at Speke to the Formby dunes where Hawthorne and Melville strolled. This was the premise of a project which, in 1994, when Merseyside was designated 'Objective 1' for massive EU funding, I exhibited in Milan with architects from the group NATO (Narrative Architecture Today) – to use the EU fund to build a new Overhead that would remagnetise the Mersey as a linear city.²⁰

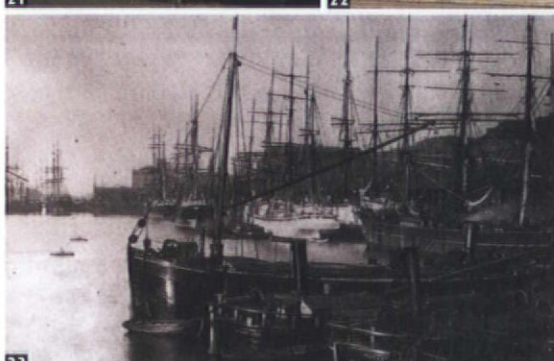
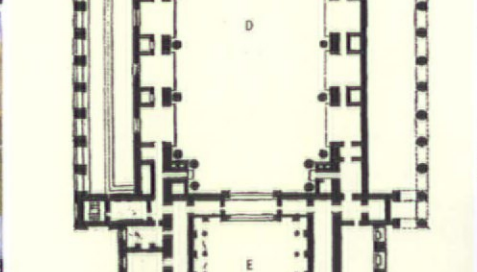
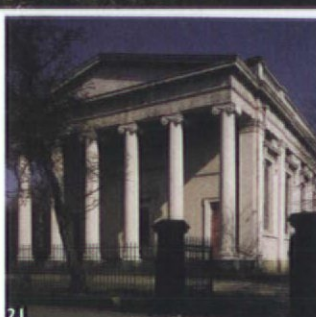
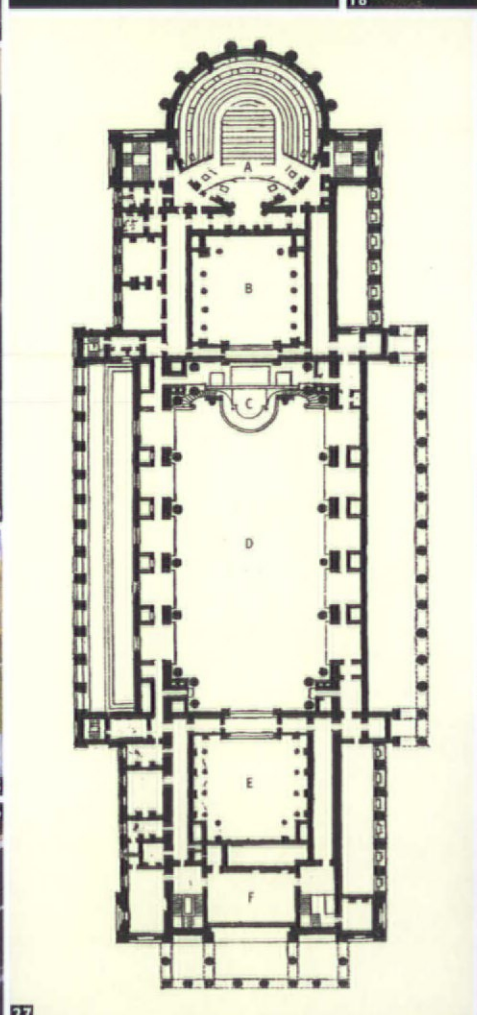
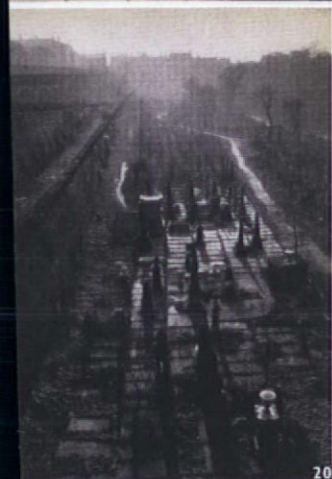
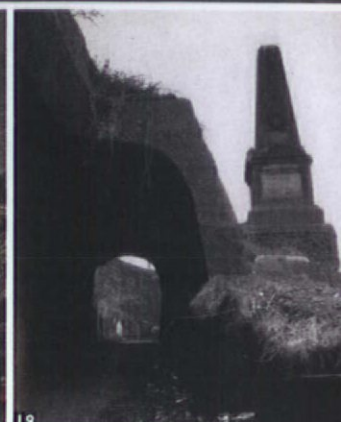
Contenders at the Pier Head

The fulcrum of the Overhead was the Pier Head; yet, as Lumière's film shows, when the line opened, that climactic trio of giant buildings that became twentieth-century Liverpool's world-image did not yet exist; the Pier Head was what it had always been – the pier for ferries to the Wirral, which drew to it the focus of the tram system. What transformed it was the liners, which began to moor there on the mile-long floating landing-stage, adjoining Princes Dock station with its awaiting Pullman trains. Yet in 1900, this great threshold was still in effect an island, cut off by George's Dock. It was the Dock Board's decision to close that basin – which was big, but too small for the latest steamships – that created the site for the enormous monuments and plaza that ensued. Yet how much of it was planned? Adrian Jarvis has described the Dock Board's bluff and opportunism in using the south end of the dock as site for a new headquarters to impress investors.²¹ This they completed by 1907, with no plan for what might fill the other sites; so that when, in 1911, the taller, American-scale Liver Building rose on the north site, they were put out, and were with those who thought that the Cunard Building in the middle, should be lowered. Peter de Figueiredo has cast light on the Pier Head development; yet much remains obscure as to how this most monumental parade actually came about.²² Evident however, is that, as with Canning Place, the civic domain again benefited from translating the functional rationality of the dock estate into formal rationality in the city plan. As the Custom House had arisen on the Old Dock, flanked by quaysides that became Canning Place, so now George's Dock was divided by extensions of Brunswick and Water Streets into the insular sites on which arose the three giants of the Pier Head.

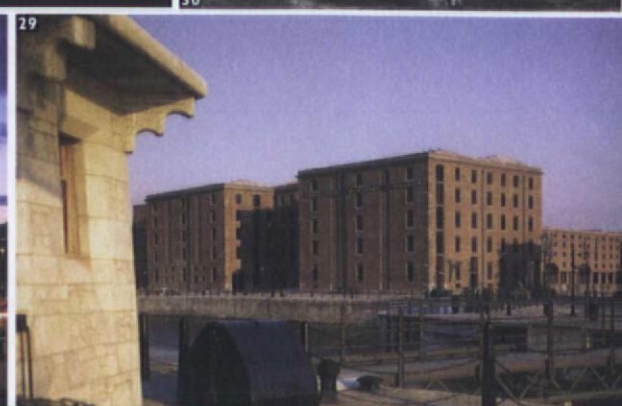
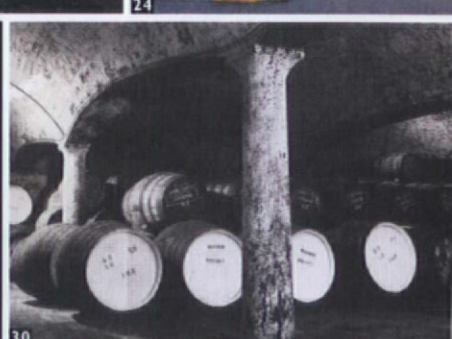
On the Pier Head trio, much has been written about their variable elevations, but not enough about their site plan. The significance of the Pier Head is that only there are reconciled two contradictory pulses in Liverpool urbanism. One, modelled by the docks, and evident in the Georgian districts and Lancelot Keay's housing and boulevards, is towards formal ensembles; but the other is to showy and extravagant one-offs – 'iconic' solitaires: the Town Hall, Custom House, St George's Hall, two totemic cathedrals, Rowse's Mersey Tunnel towers, St John's beacon and the fantasy of the '4th Grace'. Whatever the merits of the various designs for the '4th', none of them followed the logic of the prime trio. Which was: to maximise their power as freestanding monuments to themselves, but also to affirm the transcendent order of the civic domain. This they do by squarely measuring their sites (on rational commercial grounds) and conforming as blocks to streetlines in a disciplined rhythm of solid-void-solid-void-solid. The utopia of the block-as-single-monument grid is of course Manhattan, whose pragmatic ideology was celebrated in Rem Koolhaas' *Delirious New York*. Yet, beyond the Pier Head, grids and planned layouts do not reappear in Liverpool until the Georgian districts and Princes Avenue. The most consistent grid indeed, is Birkenhead, laid out by shipbuilder Laird and his Scottish architect Gillespie Graham, running a mile from Hamilton Square to Birkenhead Park.²³ But unlike



14 Exchange Flags c1910. 15 Goree Piazzas showing arcades, c1825. 16 Goree Piazzas from underneath Overhead Railway, looking north along the Dock Road (the Strand), c1955. 17 Bank of England, Castle Street, by C. R. Cockerell, 1846-48. 18 St James's Cemetery laid out by John Foster Junior, c1825. 19 St James's Cemetery ramp and tunnel. 20 St James's Cemetery showing Huskisson Mausoleum. 21 St Bride, Percy Street, 1829-30, by Samuel Rowland. 22 The Wellington Rooms by Edmund Aikin (1814-16). 23 Princes Dock, c1890. 24 Pier Head group from Salthouse Dock. The Docks Building in foreground, Liver Building behind. Photograph by Paul McMullin.



25 John Eyes' map, 1765, showing the Old Dock, later Canning Place and Custom House. 26 Pier Head plan showing first proposal for new canal. The canal will run beside the new Museum of Liverpool by 3XNielsen and will bring pleasure barges from the Leeds Liverpool Canal via Stanley and Princes Docks to Canning, Salthouse and Albert Docks and the marina at Brunswick Dock. 27 St George's Hall plan from *The Builder*, 1855. Key: A, small concert room. B, civil court. C, organ. D, concert hall. E, Crown Court. F, Grand Jury Room. 28 St George's Hall evening view. Photograph by Paul McMullin. 29 Albert Docks warehouses, 1843-47, by Jesse Hartley. 30 Albert Dock warehouse cellars.



Glasgow, Liverpool has tended to be a city of objects rather than streets; and for all the Greek influence, there was no local equivalent to Glasgow's Thomson. This helps explain the confusions that blew up around the '4th Grace'. American writer Stanley Reynolds, who lived some years there, called Liverpool 'a Contrary Mary of a city'. Contrary, surely, was to wish for an 'icon' which was imagined somehow both to complement yet outdo the 'iconicity' of the great trio. Contrary too, was to object to a '4th' because it would block a view of the trio from the south docks which, as nobody could enter there until recently, had never been intended; and which, in the Edwardian boom, was anticipated to be soon occluded by another massive business block. In fact, the last scheme that grasped the logic of the Pier Head was proposed in the 1940s by Alderman Alfred Shennan, a political and architectural conservative. His ambition to replace most of the city with giant Beaux-Arts blocks looks mad – the effusion of an architectural Walter Mitty.

Yet not all crazy was Shennan's insight that the Pier Head trio are not quite aligned, but in fact tangents on a subtle curve that imply extrapolation. He thus proposed to extend the Pier Head with four more Liver Building-size edifices, so as to create an arc of seven monumental island-blocks centred on the Docks Headquarters. A case, in Rowe's terms, of 'local megalomania'? But it was also, and characteristically, a Liverpool myth of its unfulfilled conjectural identity as 'some kind of place', as 'a contender' – as Marlon Brando said he could be to Rod Steiger in *On the Waterfront*.²⁴

Paragon and paradigm

Whether or not Shennan's plan was a contender, it was the last gasp of a grand formalism that had recurred in Liverpool since Foster's time. Of this propensity, St George's Hall remains the opulent paragon that confronts all who step out from Lime Street Station. It is entirely apposite then, that the Hall stands for the city on the cover of Joseph Sharples' *Pevsner Guide*. By a typically local stroke of inspired opportunism, the Hall in fact combined two entirely different programmes. There were two competitions, one for concert halls, another for law courts. When it was found that the same 22-year old, Lonsdale Elmes, had won both, the city decided to unite them in a single grandiose monument. To help Elmes in this vast undertaking, which included a pioneer air-conditioning system, C. R. Cockerell was appointed advisor, and after Elmes' death in 1847, chief architect. The rich interiors of the concert halls are largely Cockerell's. The exterior, however, is Elmes' own synthesis of programme, formal composition, and sublime massing. Most remarkable is that its principal address is not the conventional portico at its south end, but the long colonnade which, flanking the plaza along Lime Street, overwhelms and astonishes the arriving visitor, who, on approaching its portals, finds them inscribed with the imperial capitals SPQL – 'The Senate and People of Liverpool'.²⁵ And if, to a visitor, this unPalladian massif recalls the extended frontality of Berlin's Altes Museum, then the square columns that articulate its wall may summon the name of Schinkel. Did Elmes, who visited Berlin only in 1842, draw from Schinkel? Certainly, Alexander Thomson, who not only drew, but developed on Schinkel, was in no doubt as to Elmes' achievement. St George's Hall, he declared, was one of what were 'unquestionably the two finest buildings in the kingdom'.²⁶

Elmes completed a couple of other Liverpool buildings;²⁷ but his early death denied him the range of Thomson's urban work in Glasgow. So while he created a paragon, he produced no paradigm. A paragon is a star of excellence, but a paradigm sets a pattern for reiteration; it is an example to typology. Their difference may parallel Giedion's distinction in *Space, Time and Architecture* between 'constitutive' and 'transient' phenomena in nineteenth-century architecture. 'Transient' were styles and fashions; 'constitutive' were those industrial and commercial programmes where efficient deployment of new techniques engendered model spaces for the future. 'Constitutive' then, and paradigmatic in Modernist eyes, were two office buildings erected but shortly after St George's Hall by an obscure Liverpool builder Peter Ellis: Cook Street, and Oriel Chambers, which took the logic of commercial space to luminous conclusion by hanging

continuously glazed walls across an iron frame. Glasgow also had iron-frame pioneers, including Thomson; but as Francis Duffy noted, 'What is remarkable about Oriel Chambers is that the architect ... wanted neither the Georgian domestic-cum-college solution of the Inns of Court nor the normal sub-palazzo facade with its implication of one organisation standing alone. Oriel Chambers, in both plan and elevation, is almost programmatically modular – a neat aggregation of small undifferentiated units, which is exactly what it is. This is the novelty of Oriel Chambers – not only is the plan a succession of small office suites, which are highly adapted to the needs of small businesses, but the facade also carries the same message. Neither palace nor college, Oriel Chambers created a stylistic precedent for countless office buildings'.²⁸

A precedent and a paradigm – but not one that was immediately appreciated. For *Building News* it was 'a kind of greenhouse architecture gone mad', and the local *Porcupine* called it 'hard, liney, and meagre'.²⁹ Looking back now on those radical cast-iron frames that, ahead of the Americans, Glasgow and Liverpool produced in the 1860s, and noting the absence in Britain of their further development, we might trace there, around 1870, the discrete inception of that slow falling-away from industrial innovation and that shifting back of wealth to London that not only led to the decline of the North, but British near-abandon from the Modern Movement in twentieth-century architecture. When, in the 1930s, wondering what became of early British Modernism, Pevsner wrote 'Nine Swallows, No Summer', Oriel was surely one of the 'swallows' in mind.

But perhaps Oriel displeased locals because it abstracted from a Gothic model in a city that remained mostly Classical – as on the 'acropolis' opposite St George's Hall, 'that superb stretch of smutted greek', as Dixon Scott called it, of the Art Gallery, Museum, and Library. And indeed, to eyes now less Modern than Post-Modern, what may strike from the Oriel is less a paradigm of rationality than something both more abstract and more wilful. So that when, in the 1960s, James Stirling drew from Oriel in his Leicester Engineering Laboratory, his model was neither its chamfered details nor even its functionalism, but the geometric glass cascade of its atrium walls.³⁰

Giedion's Modernist antinomy between 'constitutive' and 'transient' might now be disputed. In St George's, was not the 'sublimation' of programmes, literally into the 'hybrid sublime', of abstract massing incipient of another kind of modern, that 'great lobotomy' which Koolhaas found between floors of dissociated programmes contained within the ecstatic figure of the skyscraper? With its perverse programme of trial-concert-trial-concert, St George's Hall may be seen as a horizontal skyscraper quite as 'delirious' as any New York tower; or, viewed as a landlocked liner, a Foucauldian 'heterotopia' as odd as a floating asylum.³¹

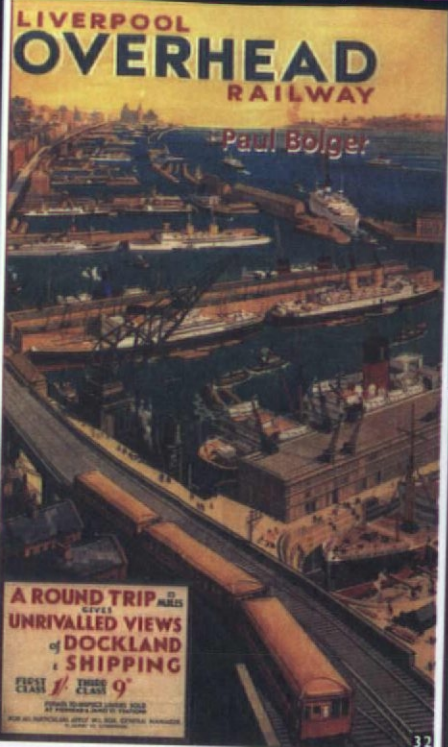
Such imaginings, Aldo Rossi might have described as 'analogical'. The 'permanences' which constituted, for Rossi, 'The Architecture Of The City', are typologies and monuments, beneath or among which drifts or haunts an 'Analogical City': a psychic double more metaphysically 'true' than the actual. In this oneiric museum, St George's 'acropolis' and Oriel Chambers are joined by objects, places, zones, tunnels, holes that are architecturally neither paragon nor paradigm. As George Melly, locally-born blues singer and surrealist 'agent' observed to me, Liverpool is strewn with such analogical traps, few of which correspond to any usual sense of architectural 'quality'.³²

The Liverpool School

Quality, nevertheless, was the ideal of those patrician philanthropists – 'Liverpool Gentlemen, not Manchester Men' – who in 1883 founded the Roscoe Professorship of Art, and in 1895, the first university school of architecture. They aspired to raise the standard not just of design in Liverpool, but of civic culture altogether. Indeed, in its first decade the school ran a remarkable integrated course which, inspired by the Arts & Crafts movement, taught art, design, and trades within a single, municipally funded 'School of Architecture and Applied Arts'. Quentin Hughes described this bold experiment, which saw artists and tradesmen



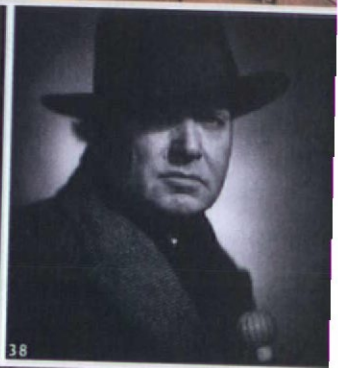
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31 Beneath the Overhead, morning, 1954. 32 Overhead Railway, 1930s poster as book cover. 33 The Overhead Railway looking north to Goree Piazzas, 1920s, as illustrated on the cover of *The Docker's Umbrella* by Paul Bolger. 34 Oriel Chambers, 1864, by Peter Ellis. 35 Oriel Chambers' atrium as shown in *James Stirling Buildings and Projects, 1950-1974*, vol 1, editor John Jacobus. 36 16, Cook Street, 1864-66, by Peter Ellis. 37 Philharmonic Hotel by Walter Thomas, 1898-1900. 38 Charles Reilly, photograph by Chambré Hardman. 39 Athenaeum Club, 1924, by Harold Dod. 40 Cunard Building, 1914-16, by Willink & Thicknesse. 41 India Buildings arcade, 1930, by Herbert Rowse.



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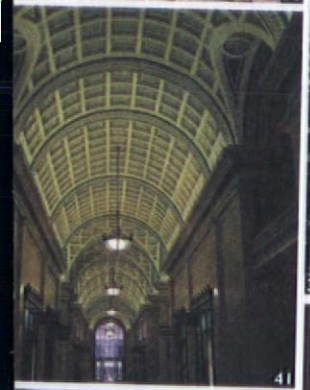
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42 Martin's Bank HQ, 1932, by Herbert Rowse. 43 Mersey Tunnel, Birkenhead flue tower, 1934, by Herbert Rowse. Photograph by Chambré Hardman. 43b Mersey Tunnel, Georges Dock flue tower by Herbert Rowse. Photograph by Paul McMullin. 44 *Aquitania* at the Pier Head, 1919. 45 *Aquitania* with Parisian monuments superimposed, as illustrated in *Vers une Architecture* by Le Corbusier. 46 Gladstone Dock gate, as illustrated in *Towards a New Architecture*, editor Frederick Etchells.



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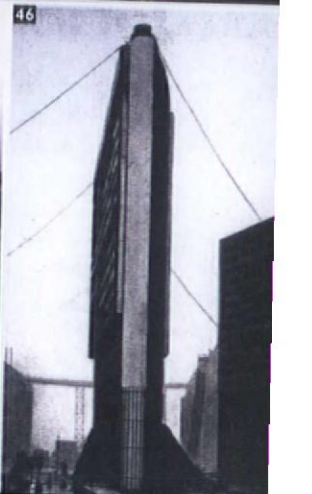
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from the school collaborate on the splendid interiors of the Philharmonic Hotel, as forerunner to the integral ideal of the 'Basic Course' at the Bauhaus.³³ The 1902 Education Act, however, sundered the universities from local funding. The art school went off to a new building where later the Beatles fermented,³⁴ and in 1904 the university appointed as Professor of Architecture Charles Reilly, who took the school in a new direction, and through personality and publicity over the following decades made it known across the world.³⁵

That direction was westwards. Reilly was a typical Edwardian in that, while he was in reaction against the Gothic Revival and Victorian stricture (Lytton Strachey was living nearby in Rodney Street), he evinced little interest in advanced European developments. Aware, nevertheless, of the unstemmable tide of big business, and funded by William Lever (Lord Leverhulme, who also endowed the university school of civic design, while building by his Wirral soapworks the garden suburb of Port Sunlight), he sailed in 1909 to America, in search of a model to adapt to the new city, to teach, to promote, and thereby to promote the Liverpool school. Chris Crouch has shown how Liverpool was already long open to US models and contacts;³⁶ but on Reilly the American way of amplifying Beaux-Arts composition to steel construction and huge commercial projects now exercised an overwhelming persuasion. As Colin Rowe put it, Reilly 'believed that the message had been delivered by McKim, Mead, & White'.³⁷ Thus, US trips and internships became a feature of the Liverpool curriculum, which then began to bear influence on the city itself. In consequence, Liverpool and Glasgow (with Burnet's work) were the only British cities to retain to 1939, some architectural independence of the kind that had flourished in provincial centres in the nineteenth century.

Finest and most conspicuous example of 'Liverpool neo-grec' was Willink & Thicknesse's Cunard Building. Completed in 1918, it was the third of the Pier Head trio, and quite the most refined – a very grand palazzo which housed not only Cunard's headquarters building but a lounge and restaurant for first class passengers awaiting embarkation at the landing-stage, its site matching Cunard's New York office on Battery Park, No 1 Broadway. While Willink went on, with Harold Dod, to design the new Athenaeum club, the most successful architect of the Liverpool School, with the greatest impact on the city between the wars, was Herbert Rowse. For Holt's Blue Funnel Line he built India Buildings and for Martin's Bank its headquarters, two of the huge blocks which endow Water Street with its epic New York 'canyon' prospect down to the Mersey. Not least New York about Water Street was that architects put their offices on the top floors of their own buildings – Rowse over Martin's Bank, Willink aboard the Cunard, and Aubrey Thomas atop the Liver Building.

Rowse displayed an evolution from Beaux-Arts, through Art Deco, to the brink of Modernism in his last big job, the Dudok-influenced new Philharmonic Hall, which opened in 1939. His most haunting endowments to the city, however, are not in Liverpool but in Birkenhead. They are the enigmatic towers which, from the far embankment, echo those on the Pier Head and kindle, by their spectral correspondence, an idea of the city's transmarine extension to its metro-colony on the Wirral (or New Jersey). Abstract and pharaonic, with sleek Art-Deco detail, they are in fact flues of the Mersey Tunnel, engineered by Mott & Brodie, and opened in 1934. Rowse also designed the tunnel's hieratic portals, but streamlined its three-mile carriageway so rationally that when Maxwell Fry brought Walter Gropius to lecture at the university, he took Gropius through the tunnel.

Doubtless, Fry (a 1924 Liverpool graduate) also showed to Gropius Frederick Etchells' recent translation of Corbusier's *Vers Une Architecture*, which was illustrated with Liverpool works – notably Cunard's Aquitania and a striking whole-page photo of a Gladstone Dock lock-gate, anticipating the skyscraper profile of Milan's Pirelli tower, entitled simply 'Liverpool'.

By Reilly's retirement in 1933, Modernism was reaching Liverpool. Indeed, Reilly brokered the Modernist design of his recent graduate

William Crabtree for the Peter Jones store on London's Sloane Square, modelled on works of Erich Mendelsohn who, while in Britain, lectured twice at Liverpool. Meanwhile, Fry, a partner with Gropius, tried to get him a post at the university. But would Gropius have fitted at Liverpool? The expressionistically supercharged Arts and Crafts ideal that launched the Bauhaus had turned to industrial design, but Gropius still spoke for a social functionalism likely to be misunderstood in a liberal academy which, in Rowe's account, was disposed by degrees towards Modernism, but, as in the America of 'The International Style', in essentially formalistic terms.³⁸

Yet Liverpool's largest Modernist initiative was one of Britain's most extensive programmes of social housing, under the city architect Lancelot Keay. Characteristic was the deck-accessed inner-city *Siedlung* of St Andrews Gardens, designed by local graduate John Hughes after a trip to Germany. Characteristically 'contrary', too; for this housing was, as George Orwell noted, commissioned by Liverpool's Tory council: 'Here therefore you have what is in effect Socialist legislation ... done by a local authority. But the Corporation of Liverpool is almost entirely Conservative ... On the other side ... you have Port Sunlight, a city within a city, all built and owned by the Leverhulme soapworks ... Looking at the Corporation buildings ... and Lord Leverhulme's ... you would find it hard to say which was which'.³⁹

Liverpool interrupted

By the time of Orwell's *Diary*, Leverhulme was dead, and his company Unilever had built a big headquarters building at Blackfriars in London. Up the Thames at Millbank, the ICI, another huge combine of northern chemical companies, had built a still bigger headquarters. The deal that created ICI was conceived in 1926 aboard Corbusier's favourite, Aquitania, and its largest element was the United Alkali Company which was based in the Cunard Building.⁴⁰ Neither ICI nor Unilever had history or interests in London; but its monopoly of national government led both to erect massive Beaux-Arts headquarters there that would have been better designed in Liverpool, had they remained in the city where they had grown, and which now needed their new dynamism. For within a few years of their move, Liverpool was suffering the aftermath of the Wall Street crash.

Where did decline really begin? 'The onset of the end is always discrete' wrote Hans Magnus Enzensburger in *The Sinking Of The Titanic*. Was it that moment in 1876 when, overhearing his snobbish slights against her husband, Mrs Frederick Leyland confronted James McNeill Whistler amid the gilt and turquoise panels of the Peacock Room? A Liverpool shipowner of some cultivation, Leyland invited the American artist-dandy to his home at sixteenth-century Speke Hall, which Whistler drew. Leyland also acquired a rich art collection, yet kept it not in Liverpool, but in Kensington's Princes Gate, where, as signal to high society, he commissioned Whistler to decorate a salon. Had Princes Gate been in Liverpool, this keywork of the Aesthetic Movement, characteristic of Liverpool's role in Henry James' 'Gilded Age', might have set off a local Jugendstil like those of Glasgow and Vienna. Moreover, Leyland could have kept an eye on Whistler. For, left unsupervised at Princes Gate, Whistler was profligate not only with his talent, but with Leyland's money, painting over antique Spanish leathers and then, as much a parvenu as his patrons, demanding 2000 guineas for unspecified work.⁴¹

The Peacock episode was a significant straw in the wind; for it indicated the weakness of new provincial cities in relation to the old money, advantage and privilege of London. Initially *pieds à terres*, then main homes, then entire corporate headquarters, shifted in the early twentieth century from the North to London. When Sir Henry Tate, Liverpool sugar magnate, endowed a national gallery of modern art, he did so in London. When Dr Ludwig Mond made the greatest-ever bequest of old masters, acquired from wealth in the Merseyside chemical industry, it was not to Liverpool or Manchester, but to the National Gallery in London. When Sir Thomas Beecham founded an orchestra with money from his family's drug company in St Helens, he did so in London. Against this trend, some Liverpool firms held out. As late as 1970, the only clearing



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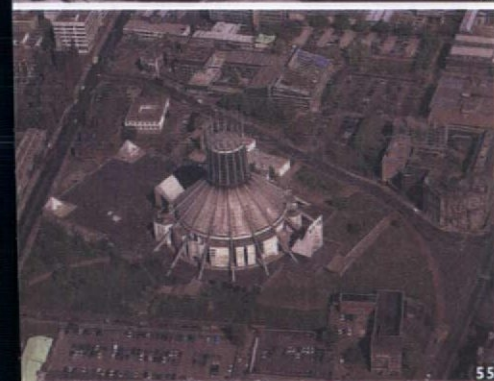
47 Duke's Dock warehouse, 1811, demolished 1970s. 48 Cotton Exchange, 1905, by Matear & Simon. 48b Cotton Exchange as altered in 1972. 49 St Andrew's Gardens, 1935, by John Hughes. 50 New housing, c1935, project led by Sir Lancelot Keay. 51 Anglican Cathedral by Giles Gilbert Scott, 1904-78. Photograph by Paul McMullin.



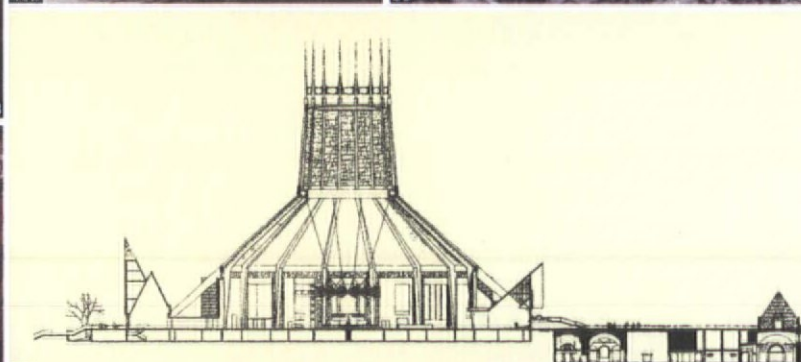
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52 Artist's perspective, c1938, of the proposed Catholic Cathedral by Edwin Lutyens with Anglican Cathedral in the distance. 53 Catholic Cathedral crypt by Edwin Lutyens, 1933. 54 Catholic Cathedral section showing Lutyens' crypt and new design by Frederick Gibberd, 1962. 55 Catholic Cathedral aerial view. 56 Aerial view of the Catholic Cathedral site, 1920s, the city's main Workhouse. 57 Aerial view of Port Sunlight before completion, Illustrated London News, 1898. 58 Port Sunlight, houses, 1892 by Douglas & Fordham. 59 View of the Overhead Railway, 1920s, with, in foreground, Goree Piazas and White Star headquarters; in middle ground, Sailmakers Row; and beyond, Canning Place with Custom House. All but the White Star HQ demolished, 1947-67. 60 The Sailors' Home, 1845, by John Cunningham. Demolished 1967. 61 St Andrew's University halls of residence, 1964-68, by James Stirling, montage showing the halls as if dock piers and warehouses. 62 Montage by James Stirling for Roma Interrotta, 1978, showing all of his works to date as a capriccio upon the Nolli 1748 Map of Rome.



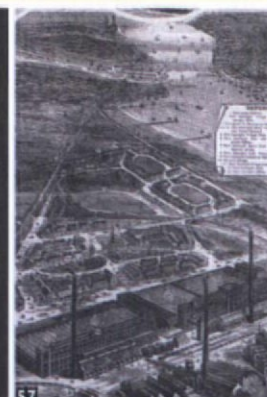
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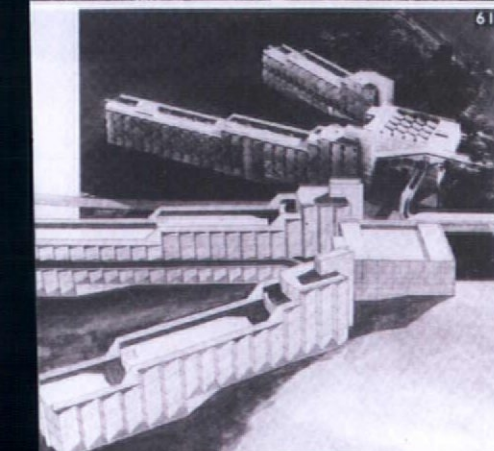
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bank not London-based was Liverpool's Martin's Bank, a distinguished architectural patron. When the Smithsons' Economist Building opened, it housed a branch of Martin's. But in 1971 Martin's merged with (was swallowed up by) Barclays.

Maxwell Fry, who grew up amid Liverpool's patrician Unitarian shipping culture, described its decline after 1920: 'Once ... everyone lived in the towns they worked in ... thus everyone was involved according to their interest with the life and fortune of the city; for good or ill, but involved. [But time would] disperse our leaders and set about the disintegration of the city. As surely as B's machine-baked loaf superseded our homemade bread, as inevitably then were B's absorbed into greater enterprises ... So degraded what had been particular and special, individual and unique ... The destruction when it finally came was hydra-headed. If the motor-car dispersed the vital essence, leaving the great houses around the park to be converted into flats, it was but one of many agents that severed the links that had joined us for so long ... This tiny community was of consequence for the greater unit that enclosed it because it was representative of an attitude to life that, if not destroyed, now lies quiescent until better times, if ever, call it forth'.⁴²

And Mario Praz in Liverpool about 1930, admiring the 'black and green' of Speke Hall and then the waning Georgian streets, caught the same melancholy: 'Some day, perhaps, it will be possible to walk through these streets as among the ruins of another Pompeii; and here a pillar, there an ornamental architrave, there a balcony of Grecian design, will recall the history of a great emporium of the North, which lived and prospered beneath the thousand small Vesuvii of its factories, and then decayed when the focus of traffic moved away to the west'.⁴³

Ten years later, the 'air and silence' of Praz's 'provincial Bloomsbury' was shattered by the Blitz. Typically of aerial bombs, their main victim was not their target, the port, but the Georgian quarter. The great dock-gates remained intact; but South Castle Street and the Custom House copped it. Its dome was burned off and its rotunda opened to the sky until, in 1947, it was, as Rowe put it, 'senselessly and expensively demolished'; for its great stone hulk withstood, and could have been retained. Indeed, worse than the Blitz, the result of civic self-hatred and flight of leadership lamented by Fry, were the 'clearances' after 1945. South Castle Street and Canning Place were not just flattened; they were erased from the map. Sailmakers' Row, the Sailors' Home, and the Piranesian Duke's Warehouse went to be replaced by car parks; while an act of civic vandalism replaced the Cotton Exchange's grandiloquent hall and Neo-Baroque front by the coarsest grade of commercial block.

Yet such demolitions were trivial compared with the calamitous concept of 'overspill', which compounded a falling population by the idiotic policy of 'New Towns'. Overspill made sense for London's eight million people and 36-mile diameter. In contrast, it should have been evident that the provincial cities' problem was not that they were oversize but that they were too small to compete with London. Yet Liverpool got three New Towns – Winsford, Skelmersdale, and Runcorn – whose effect, just as its economy capsized, was like trying to cure anaemia by bleeding. 'Change and Challenge' – the city's slogan of that time – would have been more aptly 'Drain and Damage'. For Liverpool, the '60s were a delusive decade, whose two great symbols ought now to be acknowledged disappointments. First was the Catholic Cathedral. Lutyens' original vision, abandoned in the '50s by a spiritless hierarchy, was sublimely greater than its substitute wigwam – cheap, crude, and corny – which looked better as building site than finished. Second was the Beatles. Had they emerged in Hamburg, they could have recorded locally with Polydor. But in Britain, despite Brian Epstein's brilliant enterprise, they had to go to London to get a contract. The consequence was that, for all the famed associations, the economic benefits to Liverpool of 'Merseybeat' were nearly nil.⁴⁴

James Stirling, or Liverpool dispersed

There was grey irony in Stirling's engagement – ultimately ruined – at Runcorn.⁴⁵ For if New Towns drained investment that the city never

got, then Stirling was doubtless the best architect that Liverpool never had. Son of a marine engineer, and conceived, it seems, aboard a ship in New York, and born in Glasgow, Stirling grew up in Liverpool.⁴⁶ Colin Rowe was percipient when, introducing a book on his student and friend, he devoted 3500 words to, 'an absorbing and lavish mosaic of the Liverpool ... that he and Stirling inhabited'.⁴⁷ Rowe sifted the local tesserae which, mixed with those of wider provenance, would emerge, transformed, throughout Stirling's work. They included, as well as such a 'local deity' as Cockerell, the presence there, 'absolutely different', of the exiled Polish School of Architecture, with 'their flamboyance ... half Corbu, half ... Beaux-Arts'. But also Rowe himself, relating Corbusier to the Villa Capra and Modernism to mannerism; about whom gathered a gifted circle of students such as Thomas Stevens and Robert Maxwell, whose work, when shown at the Architectural Association was dubbed *Maniera Liverpooliana*.⁴⁸

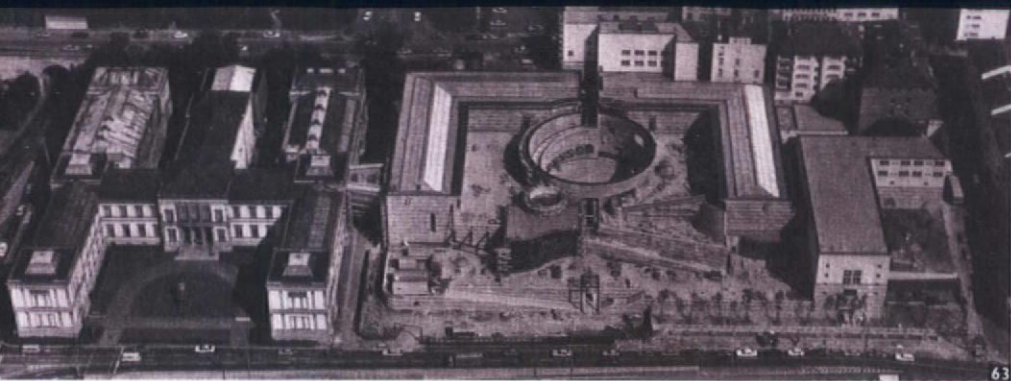
'Northern' references were evident in Stirling's earlier work – Preston housing, Oriel Chambers at Leicester; but for those knowing Liverpool and alert to his ways of adapting and transposing forms, displaced traces of the city recur throughout. So, while the flue vane in the yard of the Florey Building is the kind of marine toy easily found in Stirling, the building itself is both ship and graving dock: a ship from outside, propped up by struts the way a ship is in drydock, with hanging gangways; while within, the battered courtyard walls are like those of the graving dock. Likewise the Venice Biennale Bookshop, which Stirling cartooned as a barge, while its entrance end is a crane-gable like a port warehouse. Indeed, Stirling's similar long U-plan for housing on a Rotterdam pier was illustrated by Rowe and Arnell beside one of Hartley's Albert Dock warehouses which Stirling later adapted for the Liverpool Tate.

Many more such links might be drawn, from those Stirling made himself to uncanny parallels which only a local might spot, as in his drawing of the Columbia U. Chemistry Building, where a giant truss, swerving into Chandler Hall, summons an apparition of the Dingle truss where the Overhead Railway swerved into a sandstone cliff to suddenly become a tunnel. Moreover, when you see his later drawing of it as a wreck, uncannily like the Overhead's ruined viaduct in the Blitz, you sense a working-through of some interior daemon.

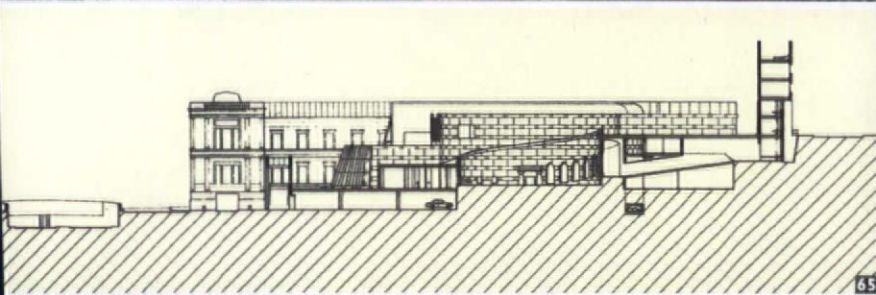
This daemon drove the perverse capriccio of his own works which, for *Roma Interrotta* in 1978, he scattered across the Tiber on Nolli's Map, 'to achieve a density ... similar to that evolved by history'. Calling it a 'Piranesian' work of an MFA – 'Megalomaniac Frustrated Architect', he railed against New Towns which 'have a debilitating effect upon old towns which they were intended to enhance by relieving pressure ... At another level is the destruction by planners of magnificent nineteenth-century cities, eg Liverpool, Glasgow, Newcastle, all in the name of "progress", which means demolition of so-called "out of date" buildings and replacement with a lethal combination of urban motorways and commercial architecture, here termed "block modern" (cf blockhouse, blockhead, blockbuster, blocked) ... Thus cities have lost their identity, and townspeople are numbed with problems of memory'.⁴⁹

The MFA is also a displaced and dispersed architect. The dense collage which Stirling wanted would not be realised in his home city, but only by analogy elsewhere. At the Stuttgart Gallery, Stirling built, *inter alia*, an abstract analogy of Liverpool. There is a local sandstone (which he used also in Berlin) like that of Woolton Quarry; the ramps like St James quarry graveyard and 'Splendid Terraces' advocated by Rowe in *Collage City*, references to Schinkel, and Neo-Classic statues amid motifs mechanic and marine. For Konrad Adenauer Strasse, read the Dock Road. Most of all, there is the path across and through the ivy-eaved circular courtyard, like that across wartime Canning Place and through the sky-exposed rotunda of Foster's fire-bombed Custom House.

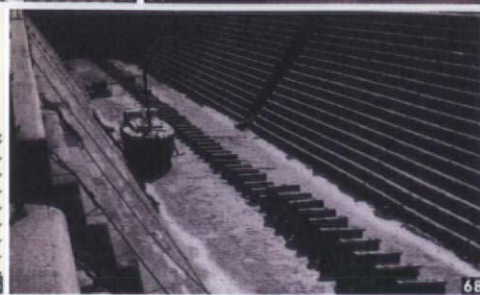
Like the Custom House, the Stuttgart museum had been bombed, as Anthony Vidler remarks on its courtyard: 'This rotunda, without dome and open to the sky ... is no more than the "shell" of the Pantheon, blasted open and left to stand as an absent presence, a space returned to the city by an act of violence to a monument ... The message seems



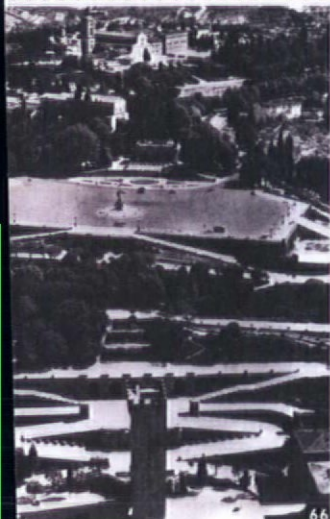
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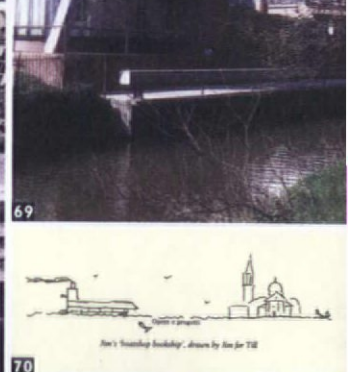


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63 Aerial view of Stuttgart Staatsgalerie by James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates, 1977-83, with Konrad Adenauer Strasse in foreground. 64 Stuttgart Staatsgalerie circular courtyard with ramp through the building. 65 Stuttgart Staatsgalerie section ascending from Konrad Adenauer Strasse, following passage and ramp through the building. 66 Piazzale Michelangelo, Florence, with ascending ramps, among the 'splendid public terraces' illustrated in *Collage City* by Colin Rowe. 67 St James's Cemetery, Liverpool, with John Foster's ramps ascending to Gambler Terrace (also by Foster, early 1830s). 68 Dry dock by Jesse Hartley with boat propped up for repair. 69 Florey Building, 1966-71, by James Stirling, showing props as if supporting a boat under repair. 70 Venice Biennale bookshop 1989-91, sketched as a steamboat by James Stirling. 71 Muller Pier housing, Rotterdam, 1977, by James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates. 72 Stuttgart Staatsgalerie, circular courtyard by James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates. 73 Custom House, Liverpool by John Foster, 1828, in a ruined state with the cupola burned off and rotunda exposed to the sky, in a 1940s drawing.



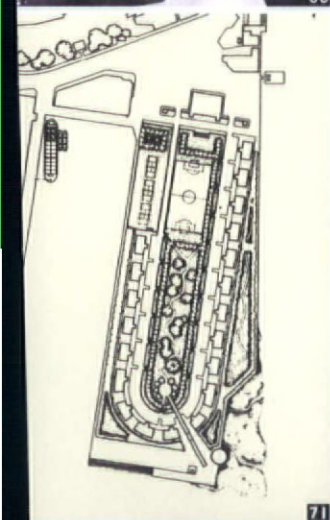
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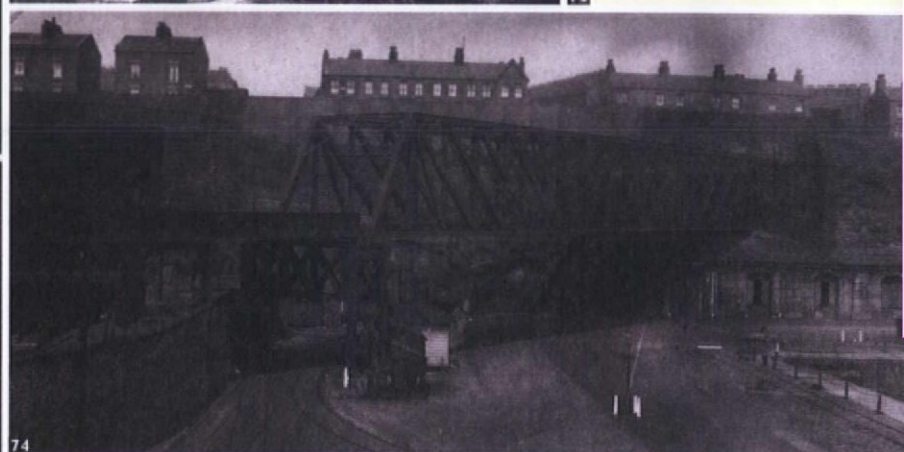
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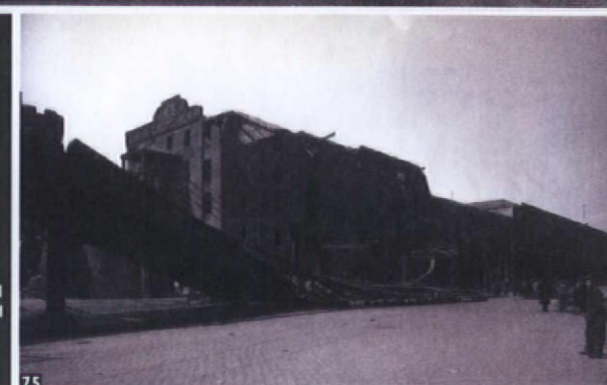


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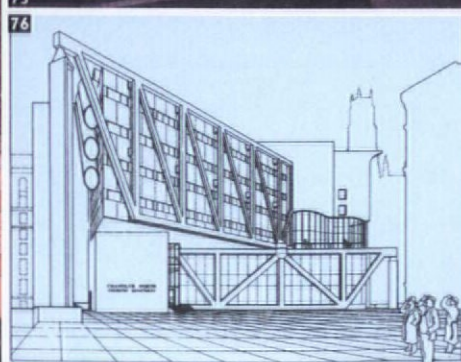
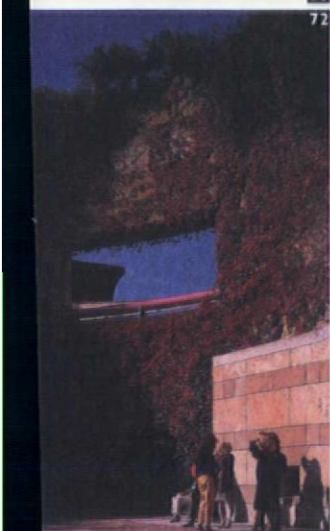


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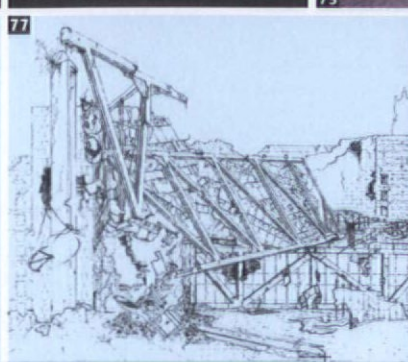
74 Overhead Railway, truss at Herculaneum Dock carrying the railway into the Dingle tunnel. 75 Overhead Railway, wrecked viaduct at Canning Dock after bombing in May 1941. 76, 77 Columbia University, chemistry department extension, 1980, by James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates. Two drawings by Richard Portchmouth, showing the proposed truss and as if ruined after the rejection of the project. 78 Tate Gallery, Liverpool by James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates, 1984, inserted into Jesse Hartley's 1847 Albert Dock warehouse.



75



76



77



78

to be one of indeterminacy, of discomfort with the monumental face of past institutions, revealing the elements of architecture in order ... to facilitate their dispersion into the city fabric'. Vidler is examining here Rowe's question as to the 'absent face' of the Stuttgart elevation.⁵⁰ He suggests that the 'face' is absent because the museum is – as Rowe himself appreciated – not an isolated object. With its climbing path across a sloping site amid neighbours, it identifies completely with the city. Yet, for all its contrapposto and distracted face, to a viewer across the Adenauer Strasse, the Stuttgart museum presents definite frontality, fulfilling Rowe's provocative dialectic.⁵¹

In cities, one condition alone can offer this simultaneous address and reserve: that is where a port not merely flanks but fronts the water with not one but multiple 'faces'. A city which can present this countenance to the sea, no matter how compromised or distracted the landward body behind the face, will always inspire ideas of adventitious arrival. Again, the River is the key (the quay!) to that recurrent provocation which Liverpool makes, and which makes Liverpool.

Liverpool located

In 1957, Stirling wrote 'Regionalism and Modern Architecture',⁵² observing that while architects had taken, in the wake of Wittkower, a 'neopalladian' turn, there was renewed interest in vernacular and early modern models which evidenced a return to regional resources. Indeed, Stirling himself was doing so. Yet, if he refrained from a simple call for 'the regional', it was because he was also engaged with the unlocal valencies of both technology and high Modernism – he cited Eliot's *Waste Land*. This ambivalence corresponds to the case of a city like Liverpool, which went from negligible to all-but global without a midway of provincial; yet now finds itself strangely *déclassé*, surrounded with monumental evidence of a distinctly local identity which, paradoxically, entrained a global scope that seems now beyond its reach.

Architectural 'regionalism' has a problem with cities, and particularly with 'provincial' cities, which today means nearly all those not in the magic circle of six or seven 'global cities'. Even Kenneth Frampton's elaborated idea of 'critical regionalism' as resistance to corporate forces, relies mostly upon maintenance of historically local – usually preindustrial – tectonic practices. This leaves at a loss cities such as Liverpool and Glasgow, whose architecture was developed by a capitalism which then forsook them as executive locations, leaving them to branch-plant and back-office roles. They are not, in the old sense 'provincial'; yet nor can they be said, at present, to compare with the likes of those German and European cities that successfully compete with the magic 'global' centres. Current revamps of the northern cities are attempts to re-attract executive powers, so that they can, actually, be cities once again, with the real vocation of cities. Whether that can happen in a UK where executive functions are so completely monopolised by London, remains doubtful. We can be certain, however, that mere 'branding' of location with facile citations of former character won't conjure the reality anew. Wherever tradition was, and whatever character could be, can come only through what Adorno called 'a comprehensive substantial force'.⁵³ Which is to say that the real task now is to renew location through new vocation. BRIAN HATTON

Footnotes

1. Dixon Scott, Walter, *Liverpool 1907*, Neston, Wirral: Gallery Press, 1979. First published as *Liverpool*, London: A&C Black, 1907.

2. Hughes, Quentin, *Seaport*, London: Lund Humphries, 1964. Republished with postscript in 1993, Liverpool: Bluecoat Press. See also his *Liverpool City of Architecture*, Liverpool: Bluecoat Press 1999.

Nikolaus Pevsner included Liverpool in his 1969 *South Lancashire*, but this is now largely superseded as a guide to the centres of Liverpool and Birkenhead by Joseph Sharples' excellent *Pevsner Guide Liverpool*, Yale University, 2004. The outer districts of Greater Liverpool, including the Wirral, will be covered by forthcoming new Pevsner Guides.

3. Lane, Tony, *Liverpool City Of the Sea*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1997. First published as *Liverpool, Gateway of Empire* in 1987 (London: Lawrence & Wishart). Lane's is quite the best explanation not just of Liverpool's social history, but its incorrigible mythos of itself.

4. Rowe, Colin, 'James Stirling: A Highly Personal and Very Disjointed Memoir', in *James Stirling Buildings and Projects*, eds Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford, London: Architectural Press, 1984.

5. On Liverpool's history, the classic work is Ramsay Muir, *History of Liverpool*, 1907. See also the comprehensive *Liverpool 800: Culture Character & History*, ed John Belchem,

Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006, and Peter Aughton's vividly documented *Liverpool: A People's History*, Lancaster: Carnegie, 2003.

6. On the docks, see Q. Hughes *op cit*; Hyde, Francis E., *Liverpool & The Mersey 1700-1970*, Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971; Jarvis, Adrian, *Liverpool Central Docks 1799-1905*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1991; Ritchie-Noakes, Nancy, *Liverpool's Historic Waterfront*, HMSO, 1984.

7. On Liverpool politics, see Tony Lane *op cit*; also Belchem, J., *Liverpool 800, op cit*, and *Merseyside. Essays In Liverpool Exceptionalism*, Liverpool: Liverpool University, 2000; also Waller, P. J., *Democracy & Sectarianism: A Political and Social History of Liverpool 1868-1939*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1981.

8. Henderson, W. O., 'The Liverpool Office In London', *Economica* vol 42, 1933.

9. There seems to be no monograph on Foster. On St James' graveyard, see Q. Hughes, *op cit*, J. Sharples, *op cit*, and Jim Moore's *Underground Liverpool*, Liverpool: Bluecoat Press, 1998.

10. Schinkel, K. F., *Journal of Visit to France & Britain in 1826*, ed Bindmann, D., Yale University, 1993.

11. See Macnoughton, D. A., *Roscoe of Liverpool*, Birkenhead: Countywise, 1996, and *The Athenaeum Liverpool 1797-1997*, Liverpool: Athenaeum, 1997.

12. See the booklet published by John Ashton and Maggi Morris at Liverpool University Department of Public Health in 1997, *The Pool Of Life. A Public Health Walk In Liverpool*.

13. A collection of accounts is compiled by Gladys Mary Coles in *Both Sides Of The River*, Wirral: Headland Publications, 1993. Olmsted related his 1850 visit to Birkenhead in *Walks and Talks of An American Farmer in England*.

14. Kohl's account is included in Ritchie-Noakes, 1984, *op cit*.

15. Tony Lane, *op cit*.

16. Picton, J. A., *Memorials of Liverpool 1873*; quoted in Q. Hughes *Seaport, op cit*, also Ritchie-Noakes, 1984, *op cit*. See also Ritchie-Noakes' *Jesse Hartley*, Merseyside County Museums, 1980.

17. Dixon Scott, *op cit*, pp27-28.

18. 'On the Overhead Railway', Bolger, Paul, *Liverpool Overhead Railway*, Liverpool: Bluecoat Press, 1997, also Jarvis, Adrian, *Portrait Of The Liverpool Overhead Railway*, Hersham: Ian Allan Publishing, 1996.

19. Capek, Karel, *Letters From England*, 1924.

20. Triennale di Milano, *I Racconti dell'Abitare*, Milan: Editrice Abitare Segesta, 1995, two vols.

21. Jarvis, Adrian, *Liverpool Central Docks, op cit*.

22. de Figueiredo, Peter, 'Symbols of Empire. The Buildings of the Liverpool Waterfront' in *Architectural History*, 2003, Vol 46, pp229-254.

23. See the article in this issue by Trevor Skempton, p76.

24. Shennan's plan was exhibited as a model for a 1947 exhibition, see illustration p73. A memorable rendering of a Liverpool 'Mitty' was Albert Finney as Eddie Ginley, nightclub compere turned amateur detective in Steven Frears' 1971 film *Gumshoe*.

25. Sharples, J., *op cit*, p54.

26. 'An Inquiry as to the Appropriateness of the Gothic Style', 1865-67, in Stamp, Gavin, *The Light Of Truth And Beauty: The Lectures of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson*, Glasgow, 1999.

27. Notably the Collegiate Institution of 1843, transformed into apartments in the 1990s by developers Urban Splash and architects Shed KM.

28. Duffy, Francis, 'Office Buildings and Organisational Change', in *Buildings and Society*, ed King, Anthony D., London: Routledge, 1980.

29. Sharples, *op cit*, p19.

30. The glazed atrium of Oriel Chambers was illustrated in John Jacobus' introduction to *James Stirling Buildings & Projects 1950-1974*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1974.

31. See Rem Koolhaas' 'Delirious New York', and Michel Foucault's 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias'. In *Towards An Architecture*, the Aquitania is mounted with Parisian monuments, as if digesting their heterogeneous programmes within its hull.

32. Aldo Rossi cited as model for his idea of 'Analogical' a passage from C. G. Jung, who, in his autobiography *Memories Dreams Reflections* recounted his dream about Liverpool. Melly's observation was in a personal interview.

33. Hughes, Quentin, 'Before The Bauhaus', *Architectural History*, vol 25, 1982. See also Couch, Christopher, *Design Culture In Liverpool 1880-1914*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002.

34. See Davies, Peter, *Liverpool Seen*, Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 1992, and Grunenberg, Christoph, *Centre Of The Creative Universe. Liverpool and The Avantgarde*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006.

35. See Sharples *et al*, eds, *Charles Reilly & The Liverpool School of Architecture 1904-33*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996. Catalogue of an exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery.

36. Crouch, *op cit*, chapter 5, *Liverpool, the United States, and the Beaux-Arts Vision*.

37. Rowe, 'A Highly Personal ...', *op cit*.

38. Rowe, *op cit*.

39. Orwell, George, 'Diary entry, 27 Feb 1936' for 'The Road to Wigan Pier' in Coles *op cit*. On St Andrews Gardens, see Sharples, *op cit*, and Sharples *et al, op cit*.

40. Hardie, D. W. F., 'A History Of The Chemical Industry in Widnes', ICI 1950, ppix, 202.

41. See Merrill, Linda, 'The Peacock Room, A Cultural Biography', Yale University Press, 1998.

42. Fry, Maxwell, *Autobiographical Sketches*, London: Elek Books, 1973, chapter 5, 'Community'.

43. Praz, Mario, *On Neoclassicism*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1969, chapter 5, 'Georgian Houses'.

44. However, there remains Lutyens' cathedral crypt, and Paul McCartney's endowment of the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts [LIPA]. See Sharples, *op cit*, p84, and p238.

45. Hatton, Brian, 'The Future in Ruins. Stirling's Southgate Demolished', *Blueprint* 70, 1990.

46. Girouard, Mark, *Big Jim: The Life & Work of James Stirling*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998.

47. Caragone, Alex, *The Texas Rangers*, pp120-122, London and Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995.

48. Rowe's account of this exhibition is in Jacobus, *op cit*, p14. (The 'dubber' was Banham.)

49. *Roma Interrotta* was published as a book, but also as *AD*, Vol 39, no 3-4, 1979. Rowe was another participant, with 10 others including Rossi, Rob and Leo Krier, and Venturi.

50. Vidler, Anthony: 'Losing Face' in *The Architectural Uncanny*, MIT Press, 1994. Rowe's remarks on 'face' to which Vidler responds are in Rowe, 'A Highly Personal ...', *op cit*.

51. Rowe, Colin: 'The Provocative Facade: Frontality and Contrapposto', in *As I Was Saying*, Vol 2, MIT Press, 1996.

52. Stirling, James, 'Regionalism and Modern Architecture', *Architects' Yearbook*, No 8, 1957, also in Maxwell, Robert, ed, *Stirling Writings On Architecture*, Skira 1998.

53. Adorno, Theodor, 'Valery Proust Museum', in Vidler, Skira 1998. 'Once tradition is no longer animated by a comprehensive substantial force, but has to be conjured up by means of citations because "It's important to have tradition", then whatever happens to be left of it is dissolved into a means to an end'.



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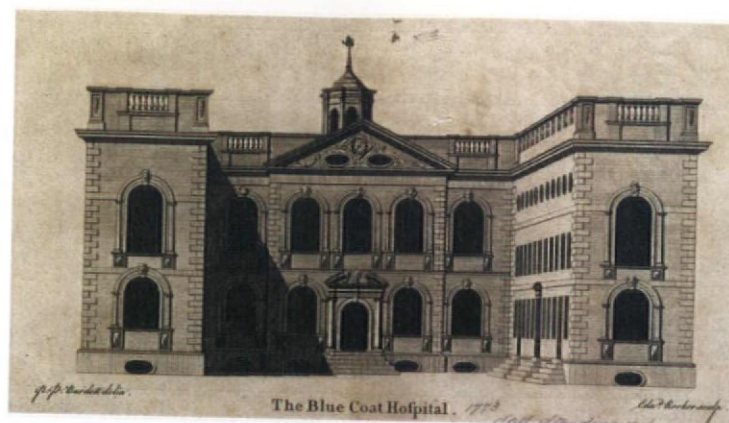


THE BLUECOAT

52 | A brief history of the Bluecoat, Liverpool's great survivor, now being recast for the twenty-first century.



The cobbled entrance courtyard. The Bluecoat's handsome proportions make it perhaps the city's grandest secular building; certainly its most indomitable.
Top right: 1773 drawing of the courtyard.



Despite its long history, Liverpool has kept few of its early buildings. The city's development was driven by commerce, from the opening of the Old Dock in 1715 until the mid twentieth century, and it has always been unsentimental about preserving its past. Remarkably, however, the grandest secular building from the beginning of this period has survived, right in the heart of the modern city.

Begun in 1716, the Blue Coat School was built as a residential school for poor boys and girls. Of mellow red brick, with painted quoins and small-paned sash windows, it encloses three sides of a tree-shaded, cobbled courtyard, with a 'secret' garden, just off what is now Liverpool's main shopping street. Its architect is unknown, though it has been linked with both Thomas Ripley, who designed a long-vanished custom house for Liverpool, and Thomas Steers, the dock engineer.

In 1906 the school moved to the suburbs, and the old building faced demolition. It was saved by the formidable partnership of Charles Reilly, recently appointed head of the Liverpool School of Architecture, and W. H. Lever, the Merseyside soap magnate of Port Sunlight fame. Lever made it available to house Reilly's thriving school. Other parts were occupied from 1907 by the Sandon Studios Society, establishing an arts community that continues to this day. The Sandon was a notable arts club, with Augustus John and Charles Rennie Mackintosh among its honorary members, staging a lively programme of exhibitions, concerts, amateur theatricals and events that make the Bluecoat arguably the UK's oldest arts centre. The Society was not provincial: in 1911 it displayed a selection of works from Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibition, and in 1931 it showed Epstein's controversial *Genesis*, attracting nearly 50 000 visitors in a month.

Reilly's school moved out during the First World War, and in 1925 the building was again on the market. This time a public appeal, driven by Sandon members, raised funds for it to be purchased and run by a charitable trust, the Bluecoat Society of Arts. For many years it housed the studio of architectural sculptor Herbert Tyson Smith. Repaired after severe bomb damage in 1941, the Bluecoat has since flourished as a centre for contemporary visual and performing arts and literature, with a renowned exhibition programme and participation in the Liverpool Biennial. It provides studio space for artists and craftspeople, international residencies, and creative industry tenants, including the Bluecoat Display Centre for contemporary crafts.

Now, an ambitious programme of repair and refurbishment is nearing completion. Its main feature is a new extension designed by the Dutch practice *Biq Architecten* (p54), on the site of a rear wing destroyed in the War. Externally, its gabled form and brick facing aim to harmonise with central Liverpool's oldest building; inside, it will provide a performance space and gallery, new artists' studios, a bar and restaurant, participation spaces and public areas. An exciting new chapter in the Bluecoat's eventful history is about to open. JOSEPH SHARPLES

THE BLUECOAT
ARCHITECT
BIQ ARCHITECTEN

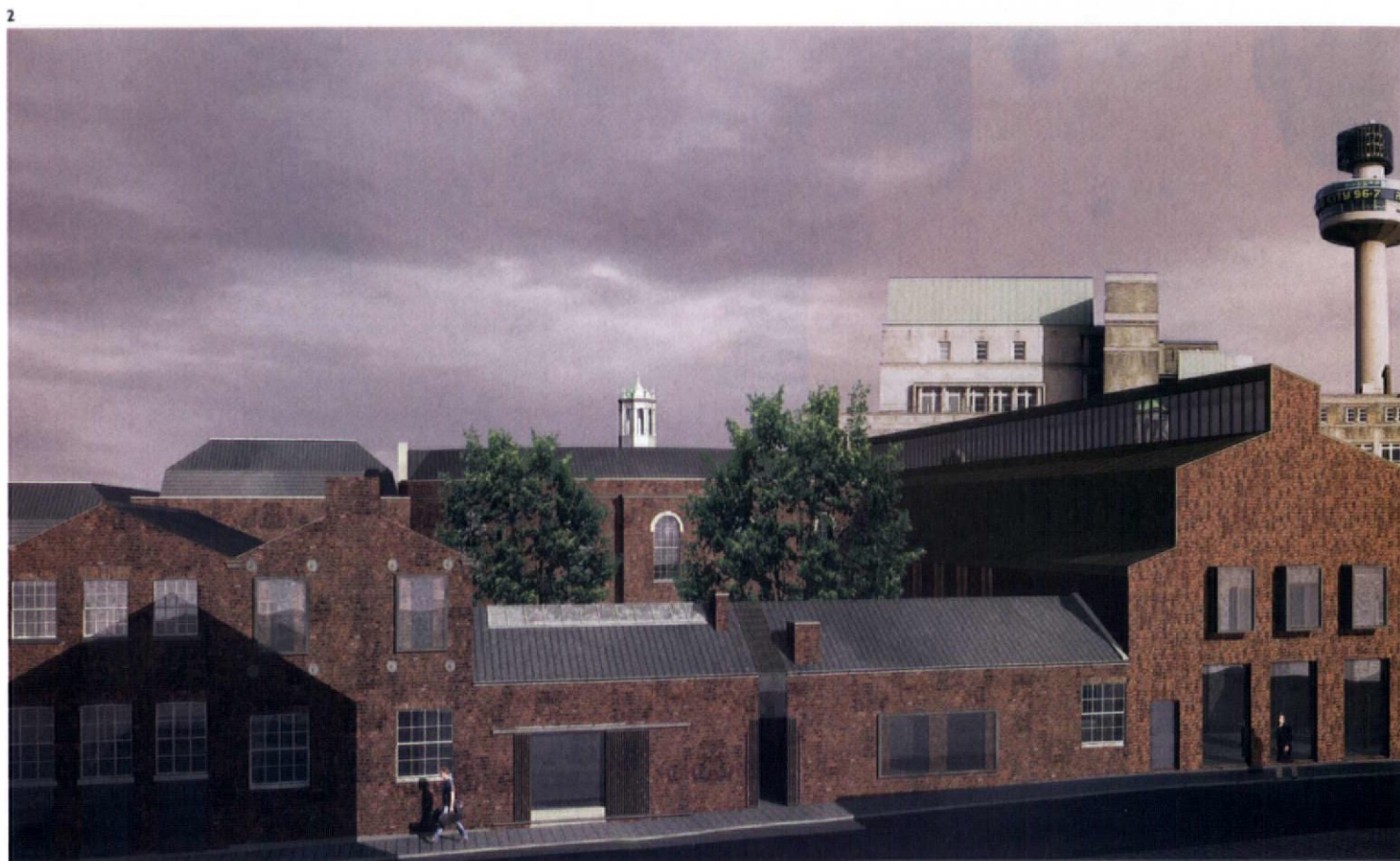
Though you have to admire the grit and guts of Liverpool's current transformation, it's fair to say that there are few notable set piece buildings, so in this respect, Biq's remodelling of the Bluecoat stands out. In a series of carefully calculated moves, the young Rotterdam-based practice distils the formal and experiential qualities of the historic structure and re-presents them in a sober yet resonant modern guise. These days brick tends to be seen as a stolid, unfashionable material, but here it assumes a sharp contemporary edge, that also harks back to the original building. Biq's bricks are a rough reddish brown, assembled in a basic stack bond, so that all the short facades only show headers and the long facades stretchers. This generates a subtle visual texture, with all vertical joints in alignment. The handsome sobriety of the brick is



DUTCH COURAGE

The Bluecoat's reinvention extols principles of formal restraint and poetic austerity.

1
Bluecoat under construction ...
2
... and a visualisation showing
Biq's new wing.





3
Bluecoat lies on the edge of the Paradise Street redevelopment, with the Liver Building beyond.



4



- 1 entrance courtyard
- 2 courtyard garden
- 3 new wing – gallery spaces
- 4 ambulatory
- 5 retail spaces
- 6 café
- 7 ticket office
- 8 office
- 9 creative industries
- 10 meeting/function rooms
- 11 Bluecoat resource room
- 12 wcs

site plan



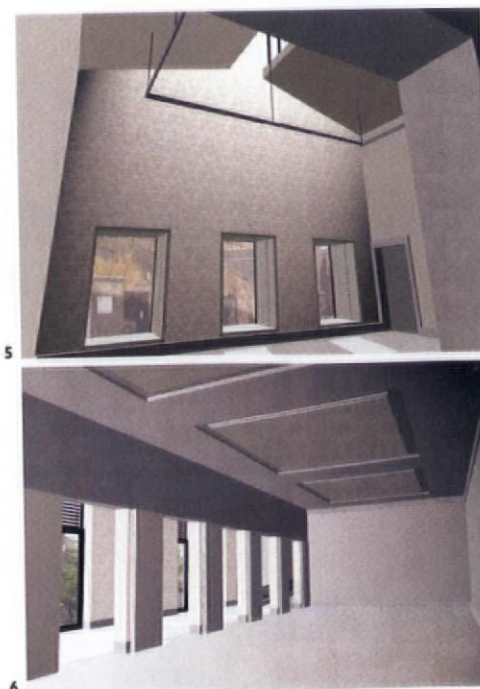
56 | | ground floor plan (scale approx 1:100)

reinforced by a roof of mercifully unpatinated copper; cast concrete floors, oak panelled doors and bronze fittings.

Throughout, old and new are distinguishable, but not in a racily explicit way; rather they are respectful partners in a stately gavotte around the secret garden cloisters at the heart of the building. The original Queen Anne structure was organised around an H-shaped plan and the new wing replaces the south-east leg which was lost during the war. Biq's elegant prostheses houses an array of adaptable galley spaces and is flanked by an ambulatory overlooking the garden. A three-storey void marks the point where the eighteenth century meets the twenty-first, vertically finessing reconfigured studio spaces with the new wing. Beyond its extensive cultural remit, Bluecoat also has a wider urban function, being a pivot between Church Street (the city's main shopping drag) and the mammoth Paradise Street development (p64).

As well as admiring the utilitarian precision of mass-produced Bic ballpoints (which

THE BLUECOAT
ARCHITECT
BIQ ARCHITECTEN

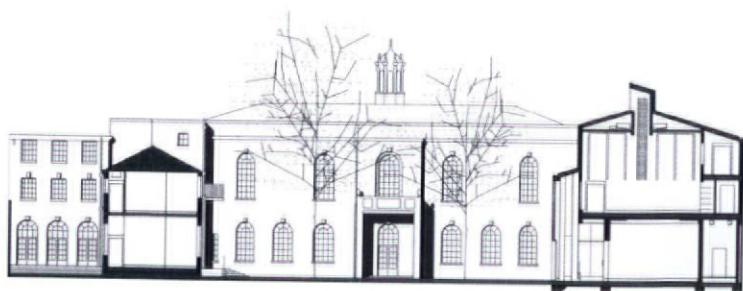


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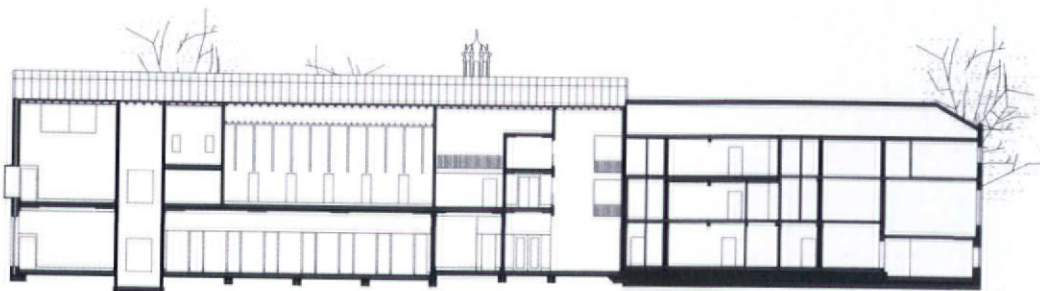
6



7



cross section through courtyard



long section through new wing

- 4 How courtyard will look, flanked by new wing.
- 5 Typical gallery space.
- 6 Interiors have a spare, pared down elegance.
- 7 Biq's new wing is an intelligent modern riff on historical precedent.

punningly give the practice its name), Biq are also fans of Dom Hans van der Laan, the Dutch architect and Benedictine monk whose austere yet poetic buildings tapped deeply into the elemental relationships of architecture. Proving that you don't have to shout to be heard, the new Bluecoat's modest tectonics demonstrate that quiet, monastic power of understatement. C. S.

Architect
Biq Architecten, Rotterdam
Executive architect
Austin Smith: Lord
Conservation architect
Donald Insall Associates
Structural engineer
Techniker
Photographs
Paul McMullin



Poised imposingly on the King's Waterfront next to Albert Dock, Wilkinson Eyre's new Arena and Convention Centre (ACC) is a major element, in both the physical warp and economic weft of Liverpool's ongoing regeneration. The city desperately needed a properly tooled-up forum to service the lucrative events and conference market that is seen as vital in the drive to stimulate revenue and jobs, and statistically at least, this Brobdingnagian creation does the business.

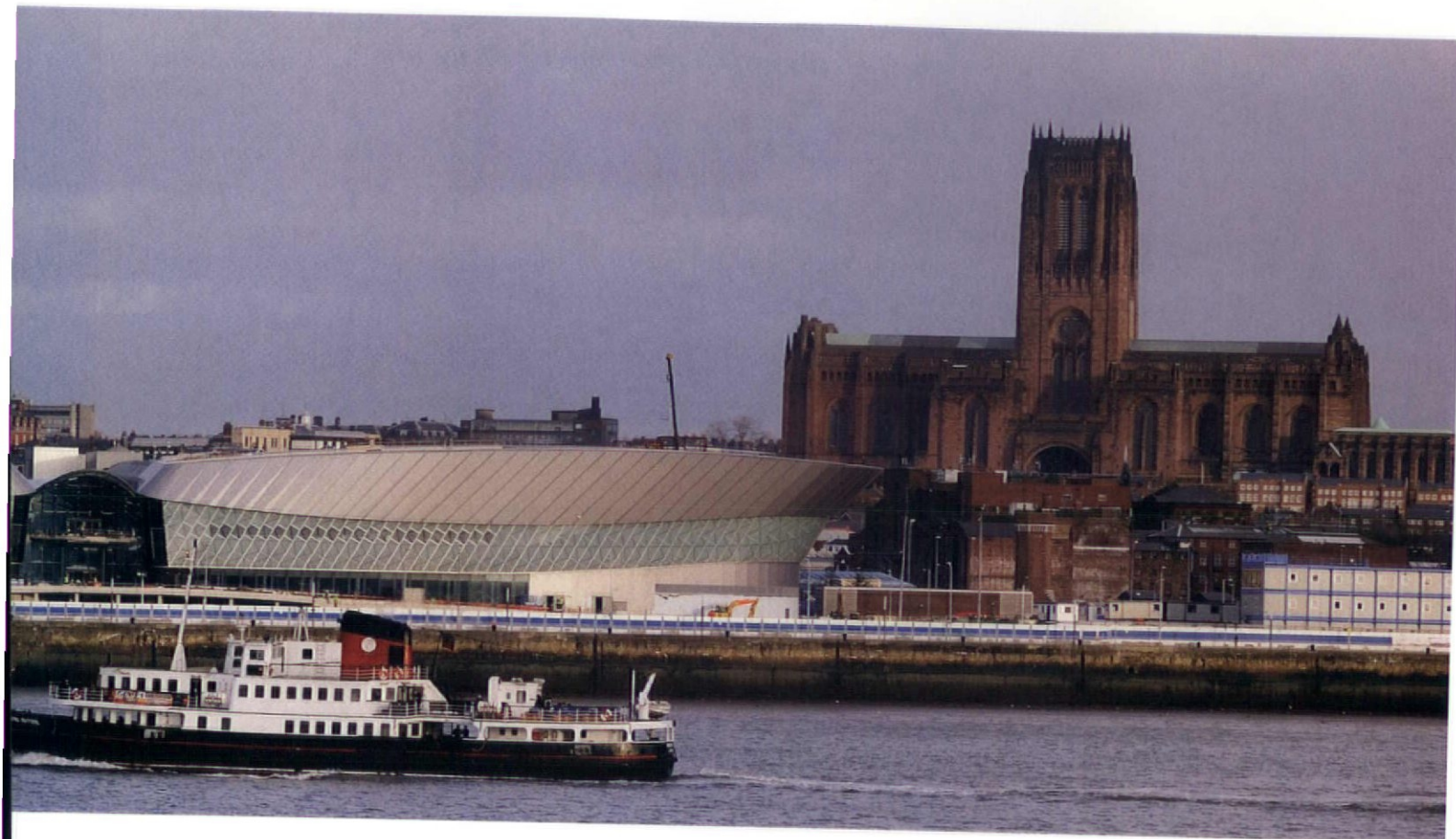
Weighing in at a budget of £146m, with a multipurpose auditorium seating 10 000, an auditorium for 1350 and exhibition hall, its vital statistics are undoubtedly impressive, but it also squares up to the perennial problem of how to make such an unmanageably large structure part of a coherent urban ensemble. Like sports stadiums and car parks, their unapologetic and unrelieved scale makes convention centres an

**ARENA AND CONVENTION
CENTRE, KING'S WATERFRONT**
ARCHITECT
WILKINSON EYRE

ON THE WATERFRONT

Wilkinson Eyre's convention centre adds modern muscle to a historic waterfront.





1
Liverpool's famous
waterfront panorama
has a suitably heroic
new addition.
2
Location and site plan
3
Aerial view of the King's
Waterfront. The ACC
site occupies what
was once the King's
Dock, now filled in. The
muscular warehouses
of Albert Dock are
neighbours, with the Pier
Head beyond.

unforgiving building type. Usually the solution is suburban exile, to tactfully nudge them out to the edge, where space is cheap and plentiful and they can be suitably self-regarding. But this fatally disconnects them from the life of the city – Milan's new Fiera site, for instance, is now a dislocated, peripheral campus that could be anywhere. Within sight of the emblematic Pier Head, the city's duelling cathedrals and with Albert Dock as a muscular maritime neighbour and the Mersey heaving sluggishly along its western edge, Wilkinson Eyre's ACC could only be in delirious Liverpool.

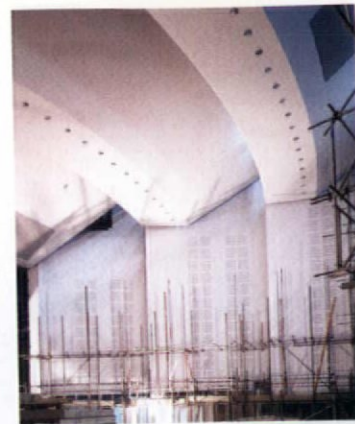
Like a giant clam shell flipped open on the waterfront, the building is divided into two roughly horseshoe-shaped parts, connected by the hinge of a long, glazed galleria. The great arena is contained in the larger shell, with

the auditorium stacked above the exhibition hall in the opposing volume. In a dramatic move, the base of the arena is wrapped in a band of glazing to reveal a public concourse with the huge tiered structure of the arena hovering above. During events the concourse will be transformed into a giant animated goldfish bowl bustling with people.

Though necessarily huge, the spaces also need to be nimbly versatile. The auditorium, for instance, is capable of subdivision into three smaller theatres through banks of seats contained in revolving drums, and the events arena can be integrated with the exhibition hall to create a single 7000sqm space. Crowned by a roof of ETFE pillows supported on a cross-vaulted steel structure, the galleria sets up an axial route through the building, perforating

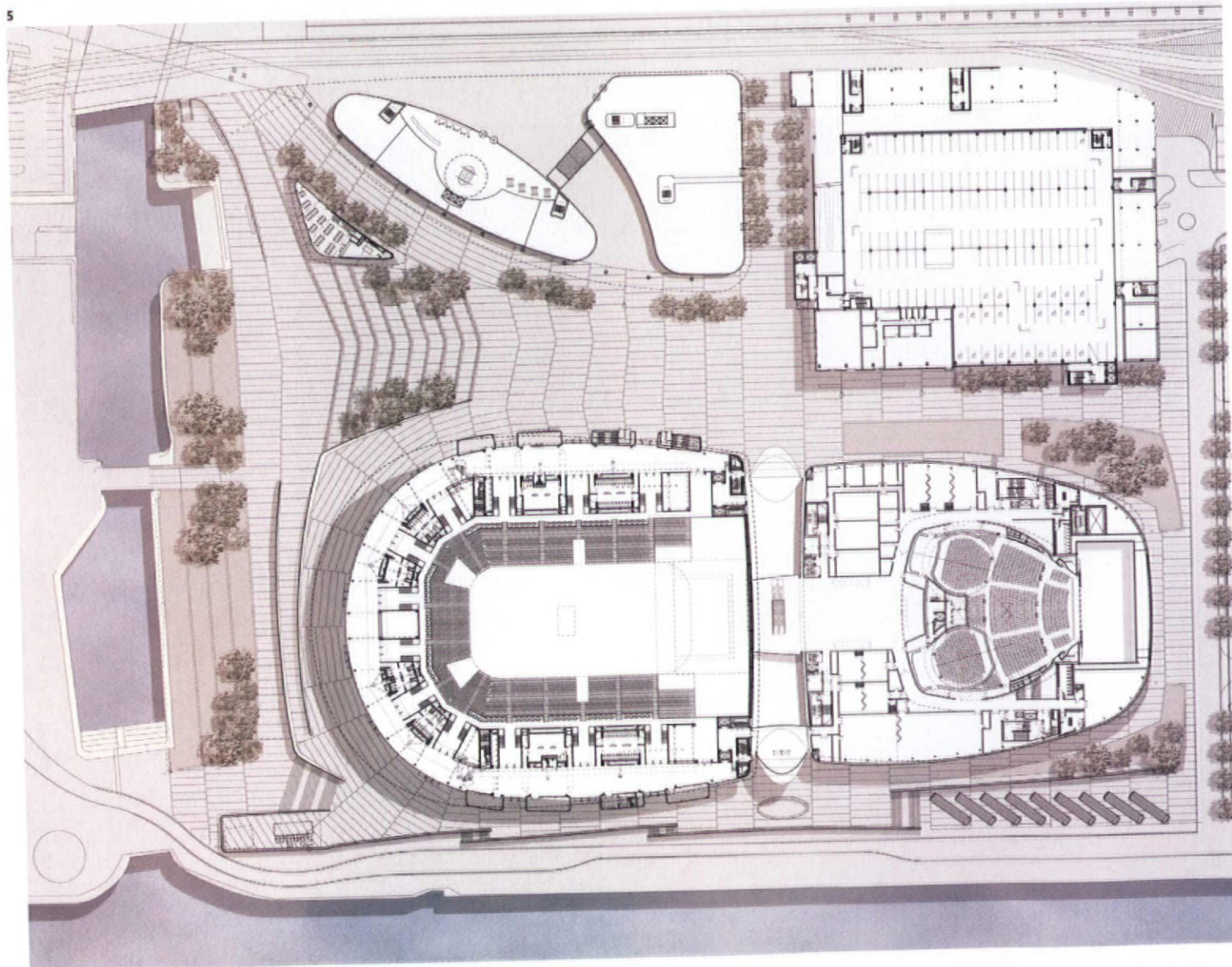
its bulk and connecting the waterfront with adjacent new hotels and beyond that the city centre, at present being energetically transformed by the Paradise Street project (p64).

From the river, the building appears as a long, horizontal volume wrapped in bands of metal and glass, its complex, double-curved roof forming a crisp silhouette that respectfully defers to Scott's Anglican cathedral in the middle distance. As the latest addition to Liverpool's historic but still evolving waterfront panorama, Wilkinson Eyre's ACC is a suitably bold stroke that extends the continuum of heroic dockside structures. The great and the good of British architecture can judge for themselves when the building hosts the Stirling Prize later in the year. C.S.



Architect
Wilkinson Eyre, London
Structural engineer
Buro Happold
Photographs
1. Paul McMullin 4. Tim Soar

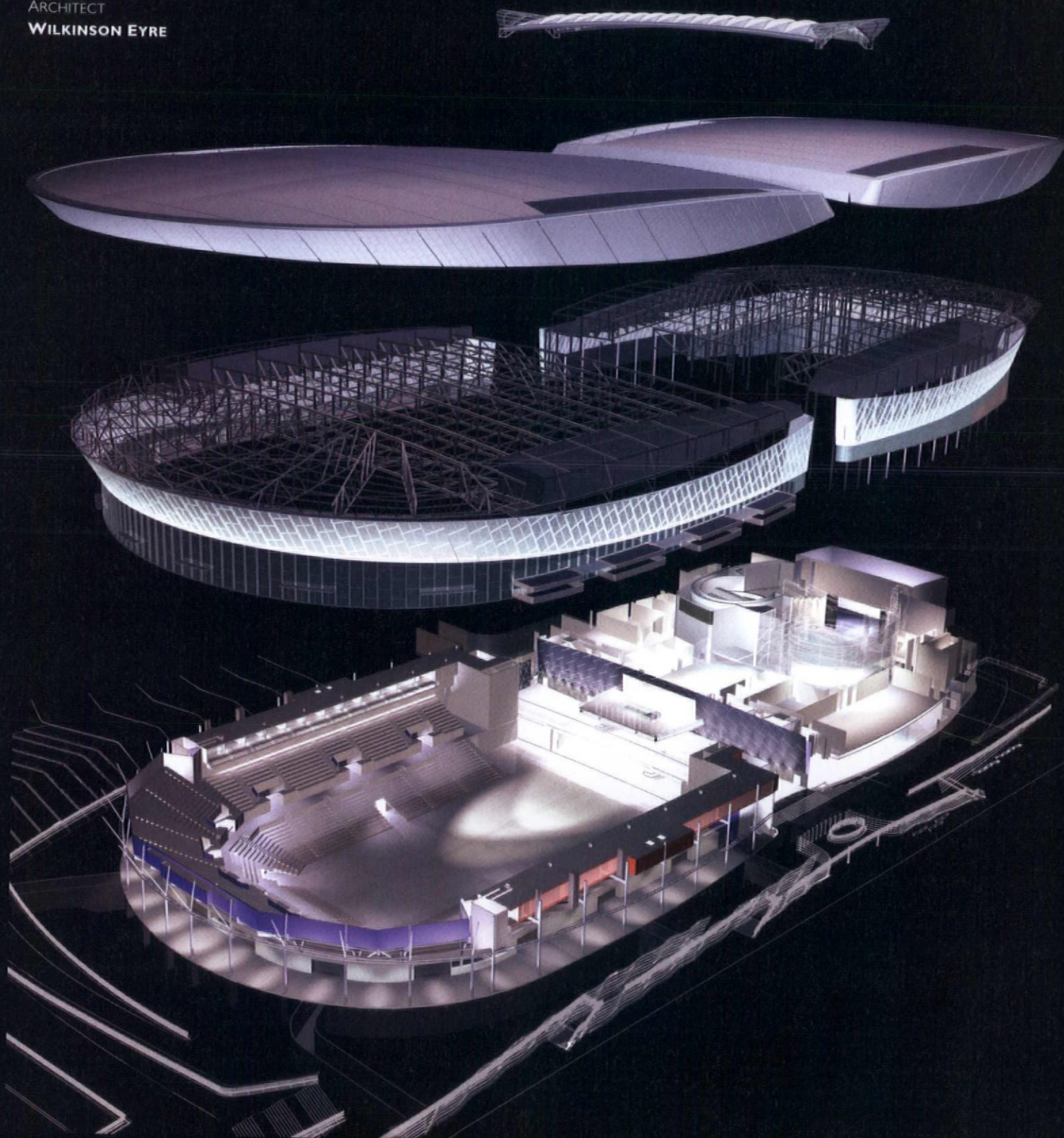
4
Auditorium interior.
5
upper level plan showing events hall and auditorium (scale approx 1:2500)

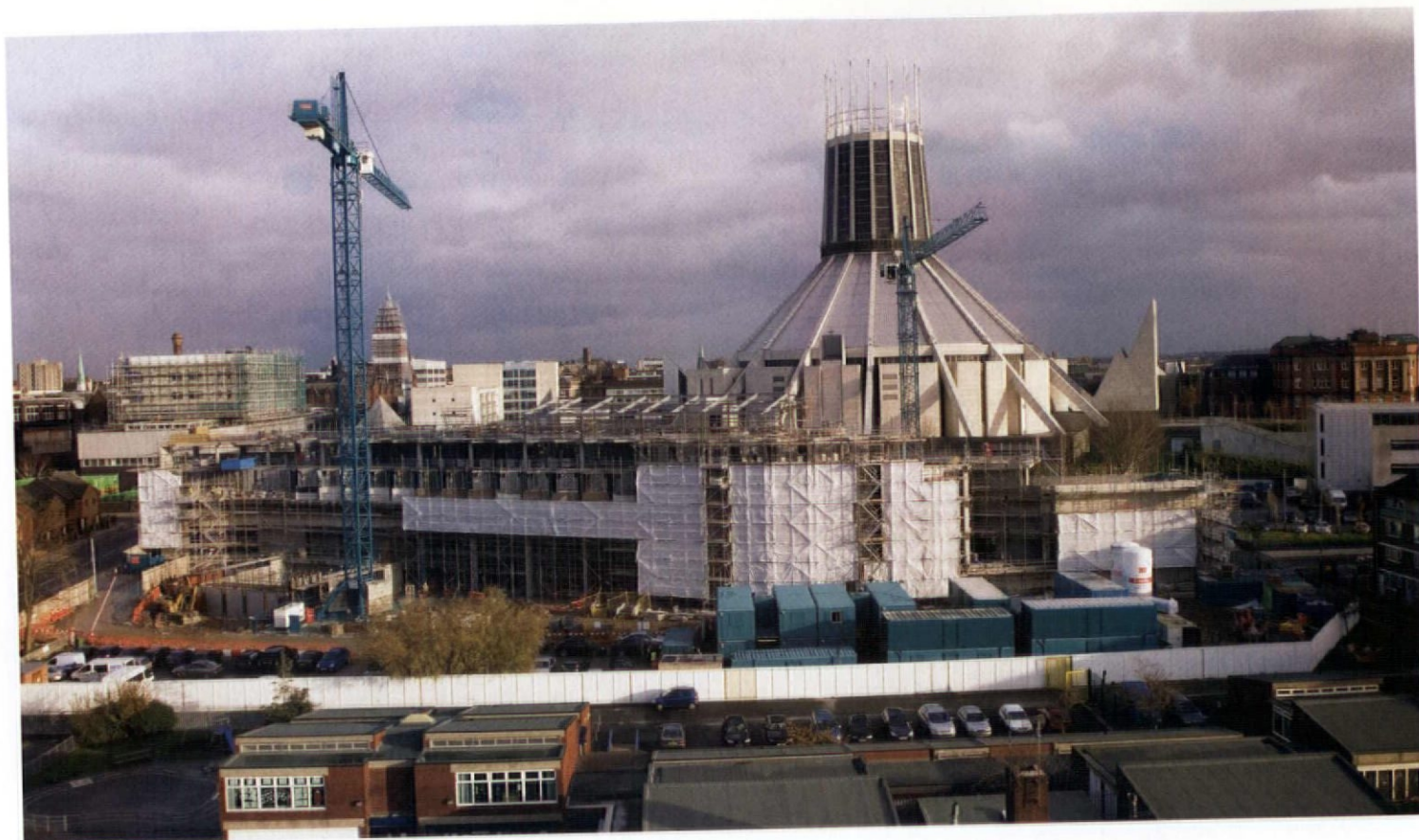




long section

**ARENA AND CONVENTION
CENTRE, KING'S WATERFRONT**
ARCHITECT
WILKINSON EYRE





site plan

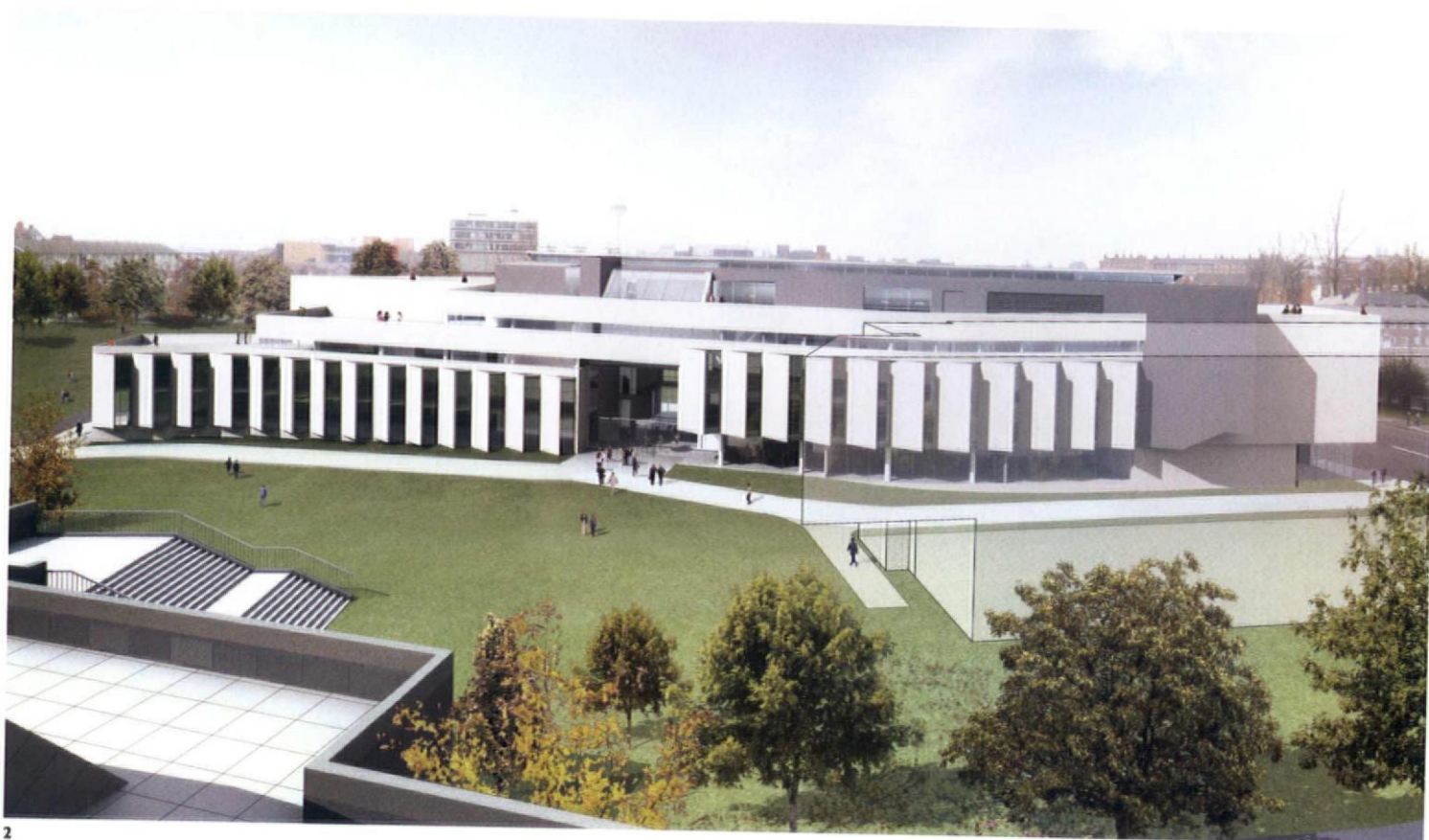
**ART AND DESIGN ACADEMY,
JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY**
ARCHITECT
RICK MATHER ARCHITECTS

As the new Art & Design Academy for Liverpool John Moores University nears completion in anticipation of the next academic year, Rick Mather Architects are adding another significant project to an impressive portfolio of academic buildings. As the first phase of the University's campus masterplan, the £24 million building also sets the tone and expresses the institution's ambitions for what will follow, enabling its existing School of Art and Design disciplines to occupy a new space that will also offer facilities and services to the region's creative industries.

Described by the architect as a serpentine form, it bends and curves in response to its context, forming a new public space adjacent to the distinctive profile of Gibberd's Roman Catholic Cathedral. Opening onto these spaces, which will include a large sculpture court, the lower ground and ground floor facilities comprise a café/bar and public

SERPENTINE ACADEMY

Rick Mather Architects' new building for John Moores University nears completion.



2

1
Set against the Catholic Cathedral,
Mather's building brings definition to a
previously loose-fit area.

2
New building expresses Mather's
trademark white sculpted form.

3
Entrance is on cathedral's west axis.

exhibition space, open and
spilling out to the outside. Above
this, upper storeys step back
to create tiered roof terraces
affording excellent views over
the city.

Entering on the Cathedral's
west axis, students, staff and
visitors orient themselves in a
central atrium that connects
upper and lower ground floors,
forming what is hoped will
become the social heart of the
building, promoting interaction
between previously remote
departments and a broader
public community. This foyer will
present the Academy's creative
talent, through its public galleries,
exhibition, multi-purpose spaces,
seminar rooms, project rooms
and studios. It is anticipated the
building will be completed this
summer. R. G.

Architect
Rick Mather Architects, London
Photographs
No 1, Paul McMullin



3





Main image: the east end of the Paradise Project, with Page & Park's headquarters for BBC Radio Merseyside (right) and the Bluecoat in the middle distance. Right: time lapse shots of the Paradise Project site.

MIXED DEVELOPMENT MASTERPLANNERS BUILDING DESIGN PARTNERSHIP

It is a telling indicator of Liverpool's sense of economic and civic worth that when the city dropped to 15th in the UK retail ranking league, the frisson among local worthies was palpable. However, the problems of Liverpool's city centre were more complex and deeply rooted than a dearth of decent shops. Since the 1970s, a systemic lack of inward investment had left it declining, decaying and disconnected from its famous waterfront. With little to entice them, shoppers, retailers and developers duly migrated to more savoury out-of-town attractions. In 1998, the council invited proposals for rejuvenation and developer Grosvenor got the job of wrestling with and recasting a huge 42 acre chunk of the city. Known as Liverpool One, it also goes under the optimistic rubric of the Paradise Project, named after the existing spine of Paradise Street that bisects the development area north to south.

It is a colossal undertaking, encompassing 2.5 million sq ft. Spread over six 'districts', Paradise comes with over 30 new buildings, including two major department stores, a park, two hotels, a bus station, cinema, over 600 housing units and 3000 parking spaces.

PARADISE FOUND

Liverpool's declining city centre is being ambitiously recast as a retail paradise.





2

3

Retail, however, is the relentless focus and commercial impetus, with 1.6 million sq ft of shops. Grosvenor's massive injection of capital (£920 million) coupled with the city's proactive securing of sites through compulsory purchase orders has helped to expedite proceedings. Now a fretwork of cranes cram the skyline as a spanking new piece of city rises from a former wasteland to be inaugurated during Liverpool's *annus mirabilis* of 2008.

Once certain basic design guidelines had been established, BDP were tasked with

implementing an ambitious urban masterplan. Patterned on the existing grain of the city, a complex matrix of differently-sized sites locks into the main northern boundary of Lord Street and Church Street, fanning south and west down to the waterfront and Albert Dock. Citing its own historical precedent, Grosvenor compare this piecemeal approach to how London's Mayfair was developed over time. So though Paradise is invariably a kind of forcing ground for architecture, the aim is to conjure some sense of variety by

1 The new Chavasse Park takes shape, with Cesar Pelli's curved housing block rising behind.

2 Multi level shopping street will link up with existing city centre.

3 A baroque assemblage of cranes presages this newest piece of city.

4 Urban masterplan.

5 How it will look.

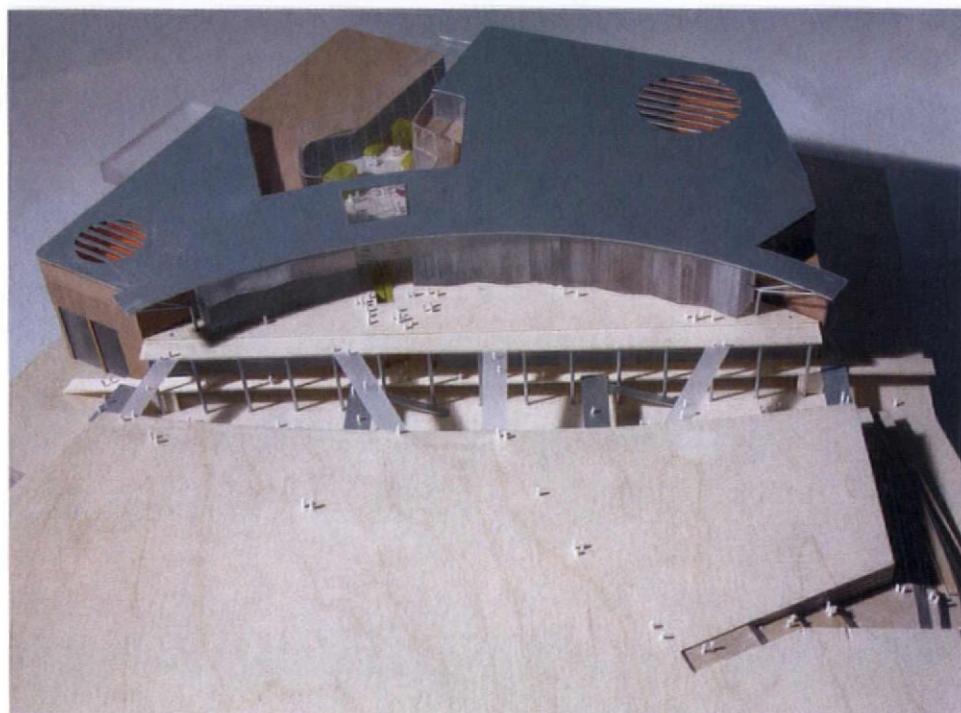
MIXED DEVELOPMENT
MASTERPLANNERS
BUILDING DESIGN
PARTNERSHIP

- 1 shopping arcade (Dixon Jones)
- 2 BBC/Quaker Meeting House (Page & Park)
- 3 shops (Haworth Tompkins)
- 4 shops and flats (Brock Carmichael)
- 5 shops and flats (Stephenson Bell)
- 6 shops and flats (Glenn Howells)
- 7 shops and flats (Haworth Tompkins)
- 8 shopping arcade (Grieg & Stephenson)
- 9 Herbert's Hairdressers (CZWG)
- 10 John Lewis store (John McAslan)
- 11 bus station (Wilkinson Eyre)
- 12 hotel and leisure (Michael Squire)
- 13 flats (Pelli Clark Pelli)
- 14 cinema (BDP)
- 15 shops and leisure (Allies & Morrison)
- 16 park with parking below (BDP)
- 17 shops (BDP)
- 18 Debenhams store (Groupe 6)
- 19 car park (Wilkinson Eyre)
- 20 hotel (Leach Rhodes Walker)
- 21 shops and car park (Austin-Smith: Lord)
- 22 The Bluecoat (Biq)





6

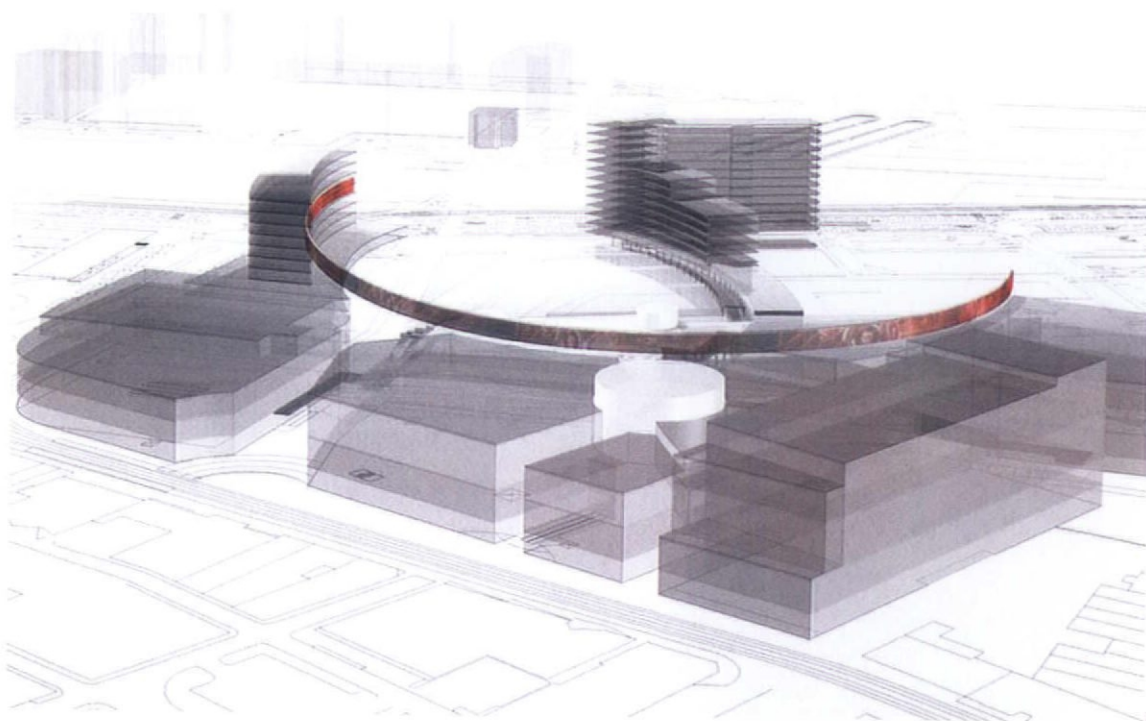


7

involving a roster of designers, among them John McAslan (for John Lewis), Cesar Pelli (housing and a hotel) and Wilkinson Eyre (bus station and car park).

As a considered antidote to the out-of-town shopping centre, Paradise promises a more 'urban' experience, rooted in real streets rather than artificial malls. Yet until it becomes an organic and properly functioning part of the city, the question still must be whether such a consciously retail-heavy development can provide the necessary critical mass to have the kind of lightning-in-a-bottle revitalisation effect its backers are counting on. C.S.

Masterplanners
Building Design Partnership, Liverpool
Photographs
Paul McMullin



- 6
The park takes shape.
- 7
Model of multi-level shopping street and bridge links to park.
- 8
The park will step down to the waterfront.
- 9
Multi-level shopping street. The scheme is firmly underpinned by retail activity.
- 10
Looking south-west across the park towards the Mersey and the existing warehouses of Albert Dock.

MIXED DEVELOPMENT
MASTERPLANNERS
BUILDING DESIGN
PARTNERSHIP



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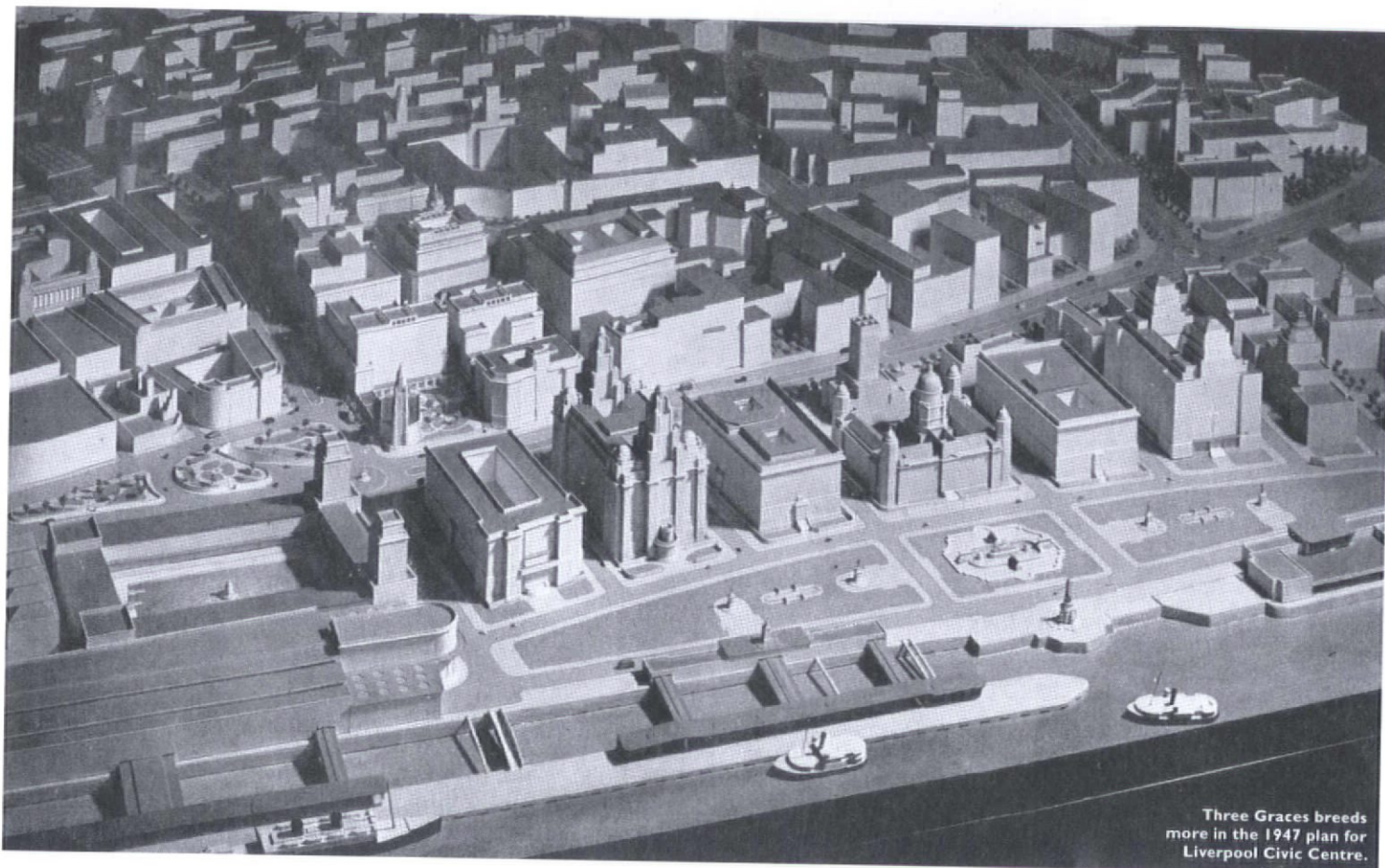
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Three Graces breeds more in the 1947 plan for Liverpool Civic Centre.

URBAN MYTH

David Dunster examines Liverpool's powerful urban mythography and civic pride.

Liverpool may well be the most regenerated city in Europe. Some hold that it was already in decline before the end of the nineteenth century; yet in the past 60 years grand plans have been proposed with great confidence, flamboyance, and dreams of past wealth. Recent urban regeneration, by contrast, has opted for the surveyor's piecemeal physical engineering. With some cases of plans that did not happen, I will consider them as evidence for the notion of civic pride, embodied in the ubiquitous symbol of the mythical Liver Birds, whose first representation appears to be in the courtyard of Bluecoat Chambers, 1716, predating the sculptures on the Royal Liver Friendly Society (aka Liver Building) of 1911. They stood and still stand for a serious fantasy, mythic in proportion, and a mysterious force which even now resists the onslaught of urban regeneration.

The driver behind urban regeneration programmes presupposes that eradication of unemployment (providing that there is always a pool left to remind people how awful that state is) will inevitably cause the improvement of the electorate. Manufacturing industry proved a weak means to achieving this, as manufacturers sought out cheaper labour elsewhere; the West realised that service industry offered the only solution. The international market has in consequence brought centre-stage the term globalisation, as if global factors had played no part since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This historical legerdemain spins that term as cause not characterisation. Regeneration of failing cities passes to surveyors and engineers, then to architects and planners, with a career structure of enablers, managers and risk assessors. Protocols are

established, procedures undertaken, and guarantees sought – the current profusion of design review panels appears to ensure that even those most difficult to measure factors/arguments/aspects have been covered. Which in turn presupposes that we can actively 'know', ie measure, the qualitative or the philosophical.

The most disturbing issue is that these agencies (local, national and international) enjoy no consensus about cities: what they are, how they operate, why people still live in them and so on. Urban regeneration thus tries to change what it does not understand – a recipe for risk and potential disaster. In particular, the relationship between physical forms, human behaviour, even (perish the thought) happiness eludes the English, whose building tradition relishes the rural village close to some awful wen. Unlike continental Europe, England has no tradition of apartment dwelling, little experience of urban blocks, and even less of magisterial Enlightenment vista-conscious planning. More than urban theory, land ownership dictates urban form. Nevertheless urban pride outside London vitiates urban futures: it relies upon physical symbols, buildings, views, and topographies which comprise an urban mythography whose logic may be the subject of anthropology as much as architecture.

In classic studies of myth, such as those of Levi-Strauss, tribes like the Bororo are treated as fixed in structures that can encourage reproduction but not change. The widest agreement about modern cities is that they exhibit change in population growth, industrial capacity, functions, and hence urban fabric. The societies that Levi-Strauss analysed did not face change; their myths addressed simple questions, religious in ambit: birth,

'Yet Liverpool did not die. It survived because certain myths sustained whatever life the city had ...'



In the 1947 model, the gardens below St George's Hall were to be addressed by a new set of civic building surrounding the Mersey Tunnel entrance. Right: overall view of the 1947 model, Lime Street at the top, the Pier Head at the foot.

life, death. Such myths were passed on verbally, but also through ritual, personal decoration, eating habits, enmities, and territorial definition. Even constructional forms ensured and underlined everyday life. By analogy, urban myths cover how people read and behave in cities, but also how, in times of uncertainty and change, civic pride is maintained. Liverpool, from a position of apparent strength, second only to London in the nineteenth century, failed to face change and then tried, with a final arrogance, to become a city free from central government but dependent upon its handouts. Yet Liverpool did not die. It survived because certain myths sustained whatever life the city had in the dark decades between 1970 and the millennium. These myths were already evident earlier in the twentieth century, never more so than in the making and promoting of plans.

Over-ambition and self-delusion

Urban planning in Liverpool concentrated first upon constructing to satisfy the demands of trade: the docks, warehouses and walls, which gave striking (and in decay poignant) evidence of the power of the city. The vast Custom House, now demolished, spurred greater enterprises such as St George's Hall, a Neo-Classical monster with no evident purpose but self-aggrandisement. When town planning became a civic term under Parliamentary Acts of 1907, and then 1937, Liverpool effectively ignored their demands. Only the Blitz of May 1941 excited a serious vision, delivered by an architect councillor, Alfred Shennan, to the Civic Society so soon after the bombing that its strategy must have been in discussion before. A four-lane ring road was proposed to connect the three rail stations – Lime Street, Central and Exchange – with the Pier Head, wide enough to encourage traffic to circumvent the narrow streets of the city centre. Diluted Parisian and Viennese junctions, *pattes d'oie*, and massive roundabouts created junctions broad enough for motor traffic but were hopeless for pedestrians, who were not part of the thinking. This public necklace was to be embellished with monumental buildings. Liverpool was to be Europeanised. The architect councillor went on to become leader of the ruling Conservative party, and received a knighthood. Now remembered, if at all, for Art Deco cinemas, his practice had a varied workload; while housing was the fiefdom of Lancelot Keay, Shennan's greatest success may have been industrial estates at Speke and Kirby. A reactionary visionary, then, when Liverpool architecture was in the doldrums. His plan repeated the driving force which animated the Chicago Plan: transport. It found favour, however; so when the 1947 Town Planning Act demanded metropolitan boroughs

to plan their future, his scheme was brought out, polished up, extended, and a vast model was exhibited to the public. Their thoughts were not sought. The Liver, Cunard and Port buildings at the Pier Head were to be surrounded by five more 'graces'; St George's Hall would become the apex of a composition around the tunnel entrance of civic buildings, and between Lime Street, Central Station and the Mersey, wholesale demolition was to rip the existing fabric apart, in one version cutting off the Bluecoat Chambers.

As part of postwar reconstruction, other cities received building licences and cash for compulsory purchase which enabled Coventry and Plymouth, for example, to reconstruct with Modernist plans (AR March 2007). Liverpool Corporation, though it owned large areas of the city centre, missed out on this largesse which instead went to the Docks for more urgent (from a national interest point of view) reconstruction. The city could have raised this money had it so wished, as a result of its land and property holdings, but already the hand of poverty extended its begging bowl. Nothing happened.

In 1952 Derek Rigby Childs, town planner and editor of *Abercrombie's* work, and Colin Boyne, future editor of *The Architects' Journal*, reviewed post-war reconstruction in six cities. About Liverpool, they were scathing. They found the city incoherent, messy, and lacklustre, were astonished that no serious planning existed beyond that for roads, and appalled at local architects who found Peter Ellis' Oriol Chambers 'a joke'.¹ The city and its corporation, short of funds and with little attraction to encourage developers, began a half century of decline. In 1960 the new planning officer, Walter Bor, developed a city centre plan still largely for roads but now subject to the edict of traffic and pedestrian separation, the gospel according to Buchanan.² Bor engaged Graeme Shankland, whose dramatic plan for a new motorway network to encircle the city centre aroused enough enthusiasm to begin, but never to complete, the elevated urban highways that Buchanan's thinking implied. The dramatic flyover that was built behind St George's plateau never connected to the M56 motorway, and remains a pointless piece of traffic megalomania that braver cities would have removed.

Following the Shankland Bor report, Colin St John Wilson (Sir Leslie Martin's assistant) was given the brief to design a new civic centre precisely where the Shennan report had suggested such a building 25 years earlier. By 1971 this project was abandoned; partly, it is said, because the existing St John's market was sold to Land Securities on the basis that they would rebuild it, and partly also because that year saw a change in political control of the council from Labour to Conservative.





Plan of the 1947 proposal for the City Centre.



New street pattern proposed in the 1941 plan.

Their building curiously poorly apes the plan form of Wilson's project. It remains one of their most profitable investments in the entire country.

It has been argued that such plans were undemocratic.³ Yet just what would democratic planning look like? When the 1941 and 1947 proposals (which were meant for the next 40 years) were published, they did not merit even a leader in local papers, which ran little more than one report and three letters per event. Certainly the '30s and '40s were known as eras when the expert was revered; yet for a loquacious city such meagre discussion suggests apathy more than respect. (David Kynaston, in his recent book *Austerity Britain*, presents a striking account of the public's trust in experts and equally the politicians' disdain for the public and what they thought.)

From this we might easily conclude that Liverpool in the postwar period was incapable of completing anything and simply would not learn from its mistakes nor from those of others, resulting in the 1981 Toxteth riots and the rise of Militant Tendency. Some might attribute this to the flight of the middle classes, others to protestant provincialism, and yet others to a condition which was to make the city a byword for projects that could go wrong. Liverpool earned the dubious honour of being granted Objective One status from the European Union because of its economic plight. In the '80s and early '90s there seemed little reason for the city to continue to exist. It suffered low investment, high unemployment, and a bad reputation in the country. At this time the urban myth of Liverpool grew to its height; it was the 'scouseness' of the city, its ability to laugh even when dying, its 'spirit' which sympathisers invoked to convince the rest of the country that Liverpool was still a city to be reckoned with. What did this resilience rely upon? As the reality of the city was so grim, there

can be few explanations other than its own myth, a potency which the film director Almodóvar has expressed in a nutshell: 'You are more authentic the more you resemble the dream you have of yourself'.⁴ Is this specific to Liverpool or general to all cities? Is it that, like most provincial cities, Liverpool cannot accept with any realism that it is a B-list city? That it lacks any seriously great architecture, and has commissioned no work from acknowledged and canonical masters – no Corbusier, Mies or Aalto; no Rossi, Ungers, Siza or Venturi; no Peter Wilson, Steven Holl, Zaha Hadid – to set alongside those works it deems great: the parodic Schinkesque St George's Hall, the pseudo-American Liver Building? These are embarrassing questions for a city known for its wit, but also (in the words of Phil Redmond, chair of the 2008 Culture Company) for snatching defeat from the jaws of victory through 'good old Scouse chaos'.⁵

Or could it be that this blindness to international quality architecture is itself a feature of Liverpool's isolation, which in turn is the motor behind its civic pride? DAVID DUNSTER

1. A similar view of James Stirling was voiced to me by the otherwise distinguished Liverpool historian Quentin Hughes about Stirling and Gowan's housing at Preston (though he later exempted Stirling's Tate).

2. The Buchanan Report was published by the Ministry of Transport in 1963. Commonly known as *Traffic in Towns* and much debated at the time, its aims, as stated in paragraph 97, were 'to contrive the efficient distribution, or accessibility, of large numbers of vehicles to large numbers of buildings, and to do it in such a way that a satisfactory standard of environment is pursued'. The latter could not be economically measured and was therefore sidelined in developments and road building which took the report as authority. It was jointly written with Sir Geoffrey Crowther, sometime editor of *The Economist* and the client for the Smithsons-designed Economist Building in St James.

From a conversation with M. J. Long September 2007.

3. Most recently by the Prince of Wales adherent Jules Lubbock in his essay that opens the strange collection 'ManMade Futures'.

4. From the play based upon Almodóvar's film *All About My Mother*.

When Peel Holdings recently bought the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company, it not only took over the Port of Liverpool but acquired hundreds of acres of estate, just as property values in Liverpool, especially near the river, were suddenly seriously rising. In fact, Peel was started by John Whittaker as a property company before evolving into a utilities and logistics operation that is now the biggest private interest in the economics and planning of Liverpool city-region. First step in this change was the acquisition of the Manchester Ship Canal, whose docks had closed, but which offered lots of land. Among Peel's developments there is the profitable but architecturally egregious Trafford Mall, but also the Salford wharves which will house the new northern HQ of BBC. However, the canal, originally built to bypass Liverpool, retained several working quays along the 35 miles from its Bromborough entrance, and Peel saw Mersey Docks not only as a property opportunity but a way to integrate marine and regional waterborne cargo. Another logistical element was Peel's acquisition of Liverpool airport; but its biggest initiative is the new post-Panamax facility at Seaforth, where, for the first time in Liverpool's history, the biggest ships afloat will be able to arrive, load, and depart around the clock without entering the enclosed docks.

With an annual freight of about 40 million tonnes, Liverpool is now handling more cargo than ever (though with only a few hundred stevedores), and its Seaforth estate was recently extended to receive more goods trains. Elsewhere, however, as in other port cities, the older docks are less apt to logistics than to urban living; and recently Peel announced two long-term projects for their transformation. On 500 acres beside the long 'Float' of Birkenhead docks, Wirral Waters anticipates a scheme of 5 million sq ft of offices, 11 million sq ft of apartments, and 575 000 sq ft of shops that will cost £4.5 billion over the next 30 years. Across the river, along two miles from Canada to Princes Docks, Liverpool Waters is even bigger: 21 million sq ft of offices, with apartments for 50 000 people in a score of skyscrapers, with a monorail 'overhead', estimated over 30 years at £5.5 billion. There is, not surprisingly, considerable scepticism about these plans. Liverpool has seen such ideas before. Yet megalomania is a local tradition, and Peel have, as developers, a record. As architectural patrons, however, they have none; and their limited choice of tenders for a £300 million 60-storey tower at Princes Dock – AFL, Broadway Malyan (who masterplanned the Waters), Chapman Taylor, and Benoy – does not inspire hopes as high as their projects. Watch these Waters. BRIAN HATTON

WATERS WORLD

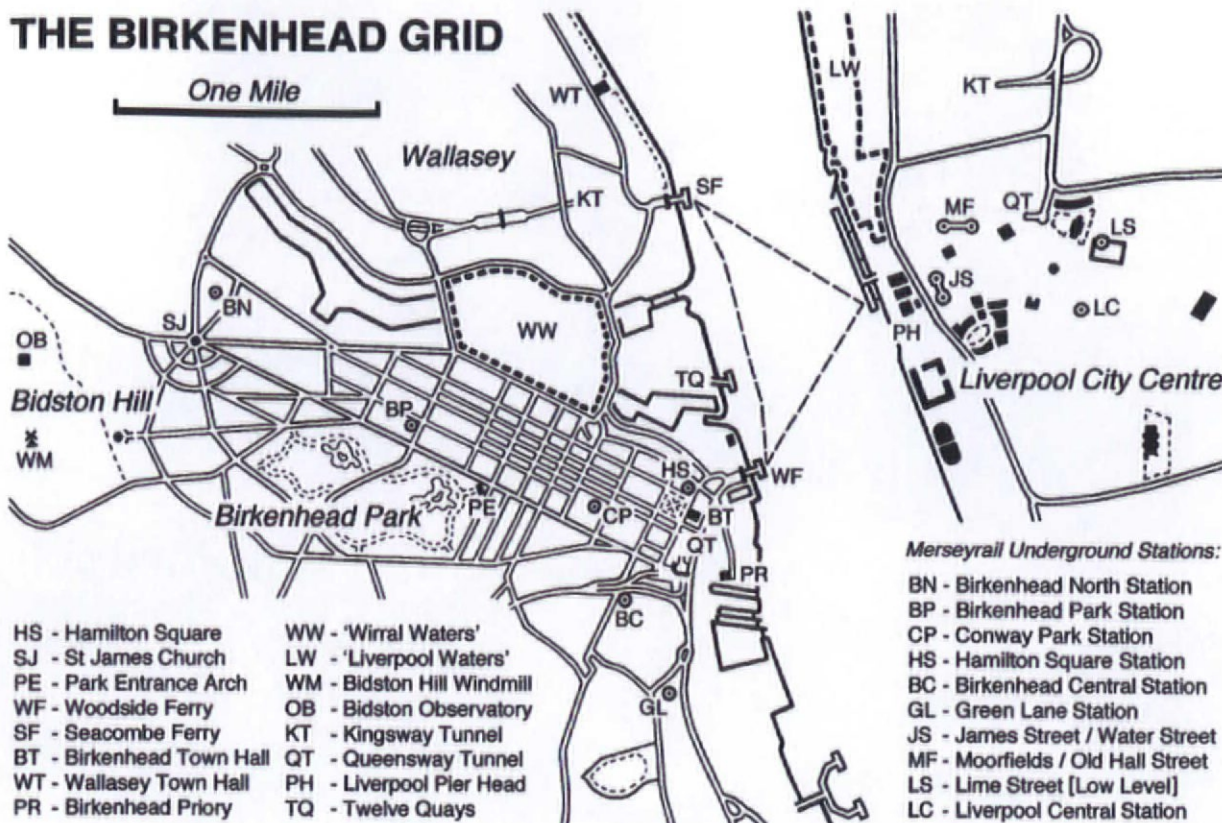
Logistics and economics fuse in Peel Holdings' ambitious plans for Liverpool's redundant docks and waterfronts.



Above and right: Liverpool Waters, a £5.5 billion regeneration of the docks to the north of the Pier Head. High-rise heaven ... or hell? left: Wirral Waters aims to transform the defunct Wallasey and Birkenhead docklands into Dubai-on-the-Wirral.



THE BIRKENHEAD GRID



BIRKENHEAD: FAITH

Across the Mersey lies Birkenhead, a Victorian 'city of the future', with the potential for an urban renaissance.

I failed my driving test in Birkenhead 40 years ago. Its gridiron of broad granite streets stretched into the distance, thinly populated with buildings that didn't match the grandeur of the plan. At each wide-open unmarked crossroad, I offered the gesture of changing down to third, instead of stopping before looking both ways. Nowadays the gridiron has road markings, but little else has changed.

Back in 1845, Birkenhead was planned as a 'city of the future' with 'no lanes, no cul-de-sacs, no courts, none of the architectural curses of Liverpool'. The *Edinburgh Journal* reported 'the sudden rise of a new city in England', describing it as 'one of the greatest wonders of the age'.¹ Two years later, Disraeli wrote, in *Tancred*: 'Men moralize among ruins or, in the throng and tumult of successful cities, recall past visions of urban desolation for prophetic warning. London is a modern Babylon; Paris has aped imperial Rome and may share its catastrophe. But what do the sages say to Damascus? It had municipal rights in the days when God conversed with Abraham. Since then, the kings of the great monarchies have swept over it; and the Greek and the Roman, the Tartar, the Arab, and the Turk have passed through its walls; yet it still exists and still flourishes; is full of life, wealth and enjoyment. Here is a city that has quaffed the magical elixir and secured the philosopher's stone, that is always young and always rich. As yet, the disciples of progress have not been able to match this instance, but it is said that they have great faith in the future of Birkenhead.'²

Yet, by the end of the twentieth century, central Birkenhead typified the stagnation associated with the country's north-south divide. In 2003, in a parliamentary debate on regional policy, Adam Price, Plaid Cymru MP for Carmarthen East & Dinefwr, argued that the English

keep their own parliament in London, but the UK Government move to Liverpool, 'an Anglo-Celtic city that is ethnically diverse and infectiously inclusive'.³ At the heart of the Liverpool City Region,⁴ the under-utilised street plan, west of Hamilton Square, could be the perfect location.

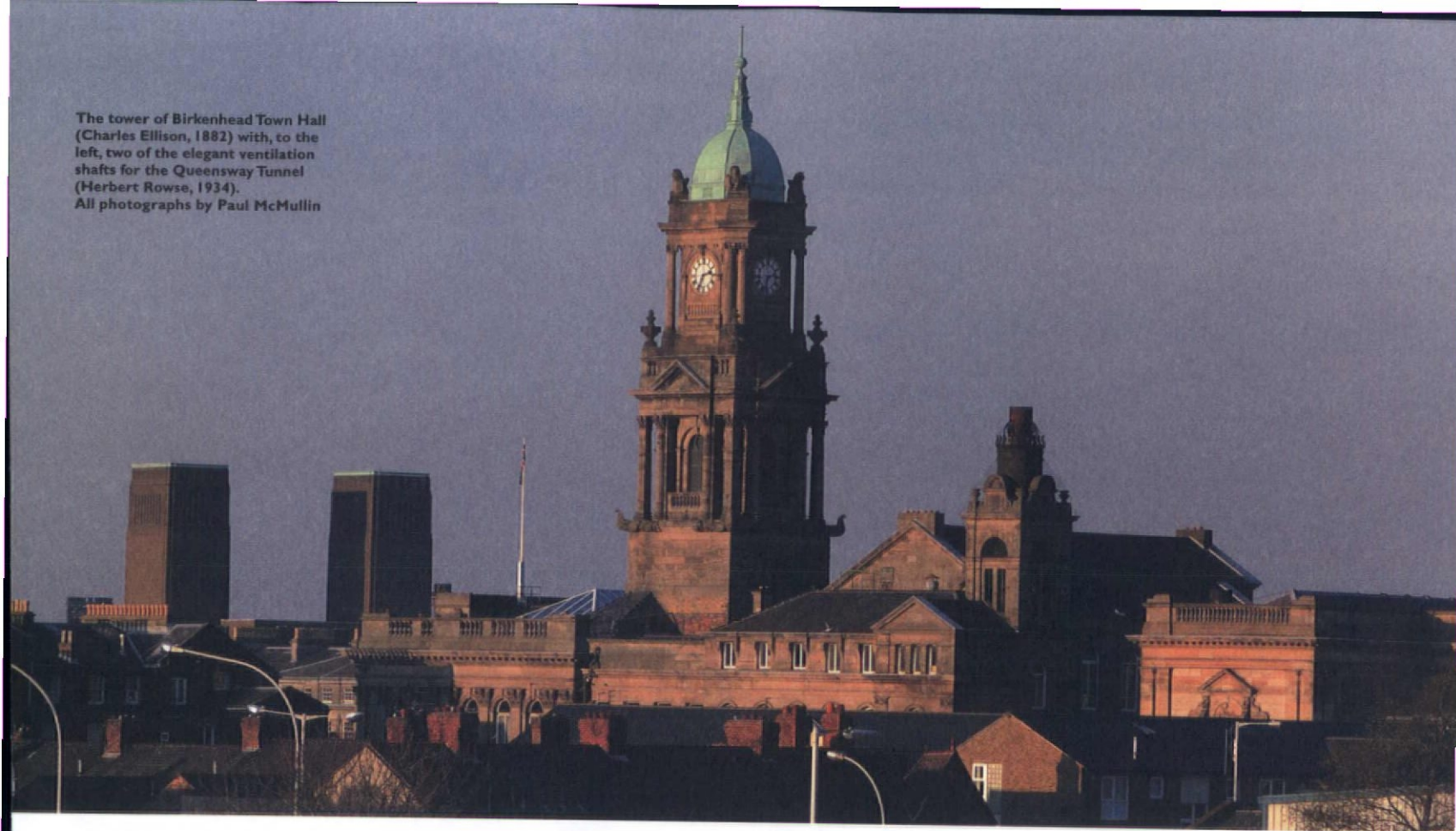
So here, in three parts, is the story of the gridiron plan of Birkenhead: extraordinary vision, curious survival, and potential renaissance.

Extraordinary vision

Gillespie Graham, who laid out the Birkenhead street plan and designed Hamilton Square, was born at Dunblane in 1776. Possibly trained as a mason, he worked in Skye as superintendent of Lord Macdonald's improvement works. By 1810 he was receiving architectural commissions and in 1815 married an heiress, Margaret, daughter of William Graham, and assumed her name. Gillespie Graham's practice was mainly country houses and Gothic churches, benefiting from a friendship with Pugin; but he was also involved in important examples of urban planning, on the Moray Estate in Edinburgh as well as in Birkenhead.⁵

William Laird came to Birkenhead from Scotland in 1824. Steam had been introduced to the ancient ferry service, and the rural shore was beginning its transformation. Laird bought land to begin his shipbuilding business, and brought Graham from Scotland. Hamilton Square (named after Laird's wife's family) was laid out as the start of his plan for a new city. His son John (later the town's first MP) took a leading role in the development. In 1843, he bought land for a public park, and Joseph Paxton (already working on the private Princes Park in Liverpool) was commissioned as designer. Frederick Law Olmsted visited Birkenhead, admired Paxton's work, and acknowledged its inspiration in his own design for New York's Central Park.

The tower of Birkenhead Town Hall (Charles Ellison, 1882) with, to the left, two of the elegant ventilation shafts for the Queensway Tunnel (Herbert Rowse, 1934). All photographs by Paul McMullin



IN THE FUTURE

The grid is set out from Conway Street, and its extension Laird Street, running two miles to the terminal spire of St James Church, the central section forming the boundary of the park. Parallel streets include Beckwith, Price and Cleveland. Cross streets include Duke, Vittoria and Argyle. Diagonals include Park Road North and Brassey Street.

Evidently, there was a failure of nerve and ambition. This can be traced to a sharp depression in the town after the collapse of the first dock enterprise. According to local historian Edward Hubbard '... the population, estimated at about 40,000 in the mid-1840s, had by 1851 dropped to 24,000 ... grass grew in the uncompleted streets ... [the docks] encountered structural as well as financial troubles, and in 1855 the new town suffered the humiliation of seeing them taken over by Liverpool, unfinished and in hopeless financial straits ... With the eventual return of prosperity, architectural aspirations were abandoned, and the streets of the rectangular layout, the widest as well as the narrowest, were for the most part slowly built up in mean and crowded fashion ...'⁷⁶

Curious survival

An 'Outline Plan for the County Borough of Birkenhead' by Professor Sir Charles Reilly and N. J. Aslan, Chartered Architects and Planning Consultants, was put forward in 1947.

Reilly believed the original layout had been flawed, and wrote: '... if all this showed immense optimism as regards the future of the town and can be admired from that point of view, it was, except for Hamilton Square and a few adjacent buildings, little less than a disaster. Never has Birkenhead been able to live up to such paper grandeur, nor indeed could any other provincial city have done so saddled with such a plan. Instead of buildings on the scale of a Parisian boulevard lining these long wide streets, small two-storey cottages appear almost at once, and

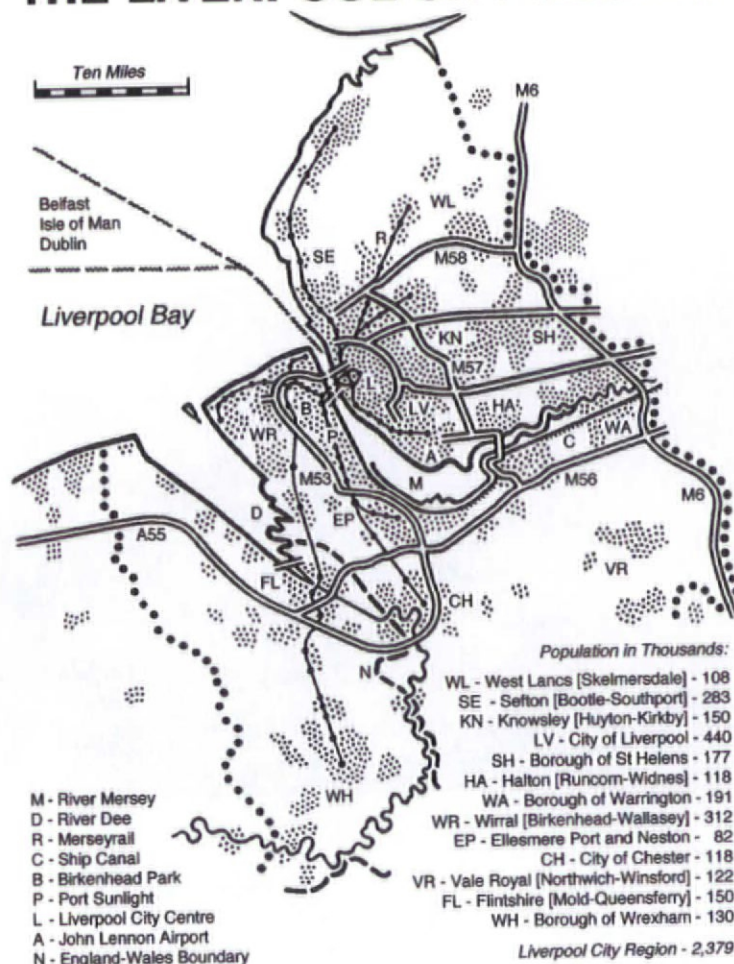
the area they cover, except in the immediate neighbourhood of the Square, is the chief slum neighbourhood ...'⁷⁷

Thus, he prepared the ground for comprehensive clearance. As in Liverpool, a sustained assault on working-class communities was waged during the '50s and '60s, with part of the population (generally the younger and more economically active) being moved to far-flung estates, prompting Archbishop Derek Warlock, at the 1978 RIBA Conference, to speak of a 'diaspora' camped outside the city.⁸

Alongside these stock English prescriptions for suburban postwar planning, Reilly demonstrated characteristic architectural imagination, including proposals for an 'Oval Place' containing the tunnel entrance, and permeable hexagonal sub-grids within the gridiron. He proposed a 'Crystal Palace' at Woodside, and rebuilding of the bus, ferry and railway approach, 'which could well become, with the construction of a Channel Tunnel, the western end of the European railway system'.⁹ Beeching destroyed such dreams in 1967, closing Woodside Station and with it the former Great Western main line between Birkenhead and London Paddington.

One proposal seems particularly poignant, given current debates about design review, 'that the Corporation should appoint a first-class architect independent of the Engineer and Surveyor and reporting direct to the Council ... we strongly feel that Birkenhead, with its architectural background and history, a background which unfortunately has been allowed to decay without anything comparable taking its place, should appoint such an architect before it is too late ... the plans and elevations of all new buildings would then receive for the first time an architectural criticism'.¹⁰ Sixty years on, as Liverpool celebrates, what are the prospects for a renaissance across the river? Liverpool is twinned with Shanghai, and Peel Holdings' ambitious plans for the Birkenhead docks have been

THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION



The Antiques Triangle in Chester Street, part of Gillespie Graham's original plan. Unfortunately, only a small part of the grid was built to this standard.



A view along Cleveland Street, from the north side of Hamilton Square.

compared to Pudong. Birkenhead Park is undergoing overdue restoration and a new pavilion, by architects Ainsley Gomme, sits comfortably in a peripheral site originally reserved for villas. But these are isolated initiatives.

TEN STEPS TO A RENAISSANCE

1. Promote the potential value of the grid

Modern urban design orthodoxy values mixed uses, and coherent, distinctive, accessible, pedestrian-friendly places. Following Jane Jacobs and Kevin Lynch, it encourages complex informal social interaction, informed by public participation. It opposes the previous orthodoxy of rigid zoning, low density and promotion of private transport.¹¹

Gridiron plans can accommodate the new imperatives, permeability and legibility, allied to high density and high design quality, Barcelona and Manhattan being excellent examples. The importance of permeability can be expressed in the following equation, in which E is urban energy and excellence, D is density, P is permeability and Q is quality (including design, materials and legibility): $E = D \times P \times Q$. The trialectical relationship 'D-P-Q' is comparable to 'time-cost-quality' in the construction industry.¹² The Birkenhead grid is permeable and legible, with potential for raising density and quality.

2. Robust framework and enforcement regime

In the re-unification of Berlin, since the 1987 IBA (International Building Exhibition), Hans Stimmann (sometimes referred to as 'City Architect' but as much politician as practitioner) controversially enforced an interpretation of the IBA policy of 'critical reconstruction'. Developments were expected to conform to rules related to the (real or

imagined) regularity of the older city.¹³ Even outspoken opponents such as Libeskind probably benefited from this discipline.

A similar approach could be successful in Birkenhead. Proposals would be expected to conform to rules in terms of height, building line, scale and proportion, with materials and architectural style negotiable to allow for modern interpretation and experiment.

3. Competition for exemplary design of corner sites

An open international architectural competition, with related exhibitions, conference, publications and public involvement, could explore the implications of 'critical (re)construction' in Birkenhead by focusing on 20 key corner sites, starting with the unresolved corners of Hamilton Square. This could be part of the legacy of Liverpool's year as Capital of Culture (see Step 8, below).

4. Energise the grid as a setting for Birkenhead Park

After years of neglect, Birkenhead Park was recently refurbished. Its historic importance and quality is evident, but it still acts as a buffer between the leafy Victorian suburbs to the south-west, and the relatively deprived areas to the north-east. The park should bring together those around it, with Conway Street re-born as a magnificent boulevard.

5. Develop links onto Bidston Hill

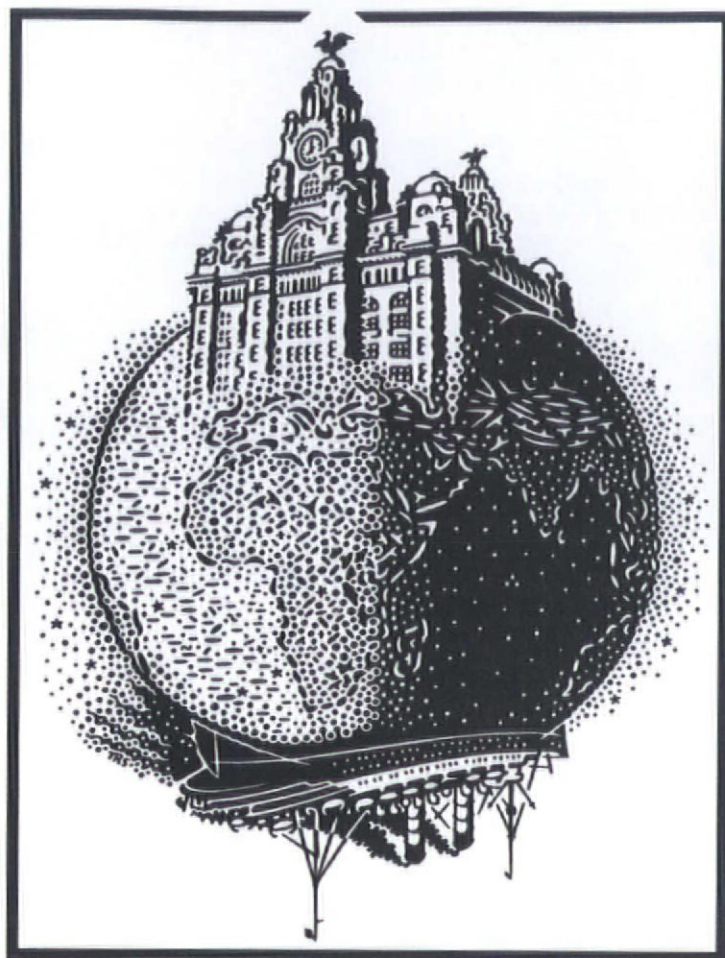
Bidston Hill is not as dramatic as Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh, but its attractive sandstone ridge offers wonderful views in an arc from Snowdonia, around Liverpool Bay and into the heart of Liverpool, just three miles away. However, it is disconnected from the lower parts of the town, despite diagonal offshoots from the gridiron leading towards it.



Three sketches by Trevor Skempton. Above, the daily anti-clockwise promenade by commuters on the Woodside Ferry in the 1960s.



Submerged city as book cover for *Merseyside in Crisis* edited by Martyn Nightingale, 1980.



Liver Building on globe as cover for *Liverpool – Gateway of Empire* by Tony Lane, 1987.

6. Develop a relationship with the Wirral Waters scheme

'Wirral Waters' is an ambitious proposal by Peel Holdings for a mixed-use development within Birkenhead docks, a counterpart to their parallel proposal for an even larger intervention in Liverpool's central docks (p75).¹⁴ Integration with the neighbouring gridiron would create attractive links to Birkenhead Park and Bidston Hill, and longitudinal routes to the Priory and river. High towers could complement axial views from the grid.

7. Promote the gridiron for relocated Government

The north-south divide might be addressed by moving the seat of Government, as proposed by Adam Price. However, serious efforts should be made to devolve more departments out of London, with Birkenhead offering areas with ready-made civic potential.

8. Integrate development with Liverpool City Centre

Local Government reorganisation, in 1974, absorbed Birkenhead Corporation into the new Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, based in Wallasey and incorporating affluent dormitory suburbs on Deeside. The neglect of downtown Birkenhead continued. Yet, as Newcastle and Gateshead are working in partnership, development of central Birkenhead could be integrated with that of Liverpool City Centre. A joint body would influence the management and development of cross-river services, specifically Woodside Ferry, Queensway Tunnel and Merseyrail Underground.

9. Create public 'place' around Queensway Tunnel entrance

Insensitive engineering has isolated Rowse's elegant tunnel entrance. As Birmingham removes its inner ring road, allowing the city to

breathe again, a similar case for radical demolition can be made here. Tunnel traffic could filter through streets, rather than swooping across swathes of tarmac. The large 'Oval Place', proposed by Reilly, seems compelling 60 years later. This area may lack the splendour of St George's Plateau, at the other end of the tunnel, but politeness and urbanity are the least that should be expected.

10. Create river frontage incorporating Birkenhead Priory

The finest views of Liverpool's waterfront are from Birkenhead, but public access remains patchy and of low quality. Birkenhead Priory is at the end of a cul-de-sac in an industrial enclave. A new masterplan is needed, focusing on high design quality and, at long last, opening the town to its riverside. TREVOR SKEMPTON

Notes

1. *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*, 17 May 1845, 'A Visit to Birkenhead', includes a comprehensive description of the growing town.
2. *Tancred* by Disraeli. London: Colburn, 1847, Vol III, p77.
3. Adam Price, debate on regional policy, *Hansard*, 7 January 2003.
4. 'Liverpool City Region' is now preferred as the official name of the conurbation, recognising that 'Liverpool' is a stronger business and cultural brand than 'Merseyside'.
5. *A Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain and Ireland*, ed Professor Sir Alec Skempton.
6. Edward Hubbard, 'lecture notes', p25 (Wirral Archives).
7. 'Outline Plan for the County Borough of Birkenhead', 1947 by Professor Sir Charles Reilly and N.J. Aslan, Chartered Architects and Planning Consultants, London, p9.
8. Personal recollection by the author, who had criticised the 'overspill' and 'slum clearance' policies during the '60s and into the '70s.
9. Reilly and Aslan, p119.
10. Reilly and Aslan, p117.
11. The author is retained as consultant urban design advisor to Liverpool City Council, focusing on city centre development, notably Grosvenor's Paradise Project, now called 'Liverpool One'.
12. The term 'trialectic' has been used by several writers, as a useful extension of the familiar concept of 'dialectic'. One such exploration appears in *The Person in the Sight of Sociology* by Colin Fletcher, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.
13. A good summary, by Peter Davey, appeared in *The Architectural Review*, January 1999.
14. See: www.wirralwaters.co.uk/ and www.liverpoolwaters.co.uk/

When, with either my students or with clients, we realise the absence of significant buildings and urban design place-making in Liverpool during the past half century or more, with the sole exception, perhaps, of the Catholic Cathedral, there follows the need to know why this is so. It really appears that there have been no notable achievements since Rowse, Keay and Hughes in the 1930s; albeit that the Rowe-Stirling group graced the city with important theoretical discourse in the 1950s. Such a question is compounded, given the rich architectural tradition in the city up to then, as well as a range of clearly articulated places within the now generally shattered city fabric, from the complex of cultural buildings on the 'acropolis' of St George's Plateau, to the intimate reserve of the Bluecoat Chambers' rear garden, an authentic urban retreat, hopefully intact after the building's current expansion (p54). Were this historical palimpsest erased, Liverpool's spatial character would be devoid, down there with the very worst urban wastes of Soviet Eastern Europe, or the East End of Glasgow. If I were to pick out one of the many causes for this malaise during the period in question, it would be the absence of 'True Grit' in the thin gruel of the city's recent evolutionary 'soup' – the abject mediocrity of city governance.

A setting for excellence

Standing back from this reflection, let us consider two topics, one contextual, the other the stuff of myth, which appear to underline this initial perception that something quite special may have been squandered, perhaps irrevocably. In Joseph Sharples' 2004 *Pevsner Guide to Liverpool*, he launches his enterprise as follows,

'Liverpool has the most splendid setting of any English city. It lies on the east bank of the broad River Mersey, which rises gently to a ridge crowned by two cathedrals. Its shape is roughly a semicircle, the straight side formed by the waterfront, with the Pier Head at its centre. The combination of hills and water shows many buildings to advantage, and the higher ground to the east gives spectacular views across the city to the river, the open sea, and the distant mountains of North Wales.'

This 'most splendid' context provides ideal conditions for the pursuit of excellence, in terms of leadership, government, and the best in city building. On the cover of Sharples' book, we find an image that embodies the stuff of myth. Within the colonnade of St Georges Hall: a splendid full-bearded Atlas bearing fruit, with proportionally-consummate portals on our left, handsome Corinthian columns on our right, and a cassette ceiling high overhead, the whole limestone entity sheathed in golden light, framing the radiant portico of the Walker Art Gallery some 100 metres ahead. This image, people all but absent, suggests a mythical Liverpool, a city that is ambitious, in touch with a deep cultural past, and decidedly Romantic. The watercolours from Schinkel's *Italien Reisen* come to mind, but here we have a photograph of a truly golden past, far closer to Schinkel's vision of an ideal than what he managed to create in his own *Steinerne Berlin*.

Thus, taken together, 'the most splendid setting of any English City' and the myth of Periclean roots, suggest as genius loci for Liverpool, a picturesque and romantic ideal.

A summer of truth and denial

The Sustainable Cities Index published by the Forum for the Future, rated Liverpool the least sustainable city in the UK, by three indicators 'The Environmental Impact of the City' (in terms of resource use and pollution), 'Quality of Life for Residents', and 'Future Proofing' (how well the city is preparing itself for a sustainable future). Another report 'Two-track Cities', considering UK 'cities that succeed and those that do not', based on key economic and social indicators, found that Liverpool lay at the bottom of the 15-city table, the worst performer. To this the Council Leader responded, 'Today, Liverpool's outlook has never been brighter'. During the summer of 2007, he returned from holiday to find the annual Mathew Street Music Festival in crisis, likely not to take place; yet two weeks earlier, 'all was well'. Only months before the assumption of the Capital of Culture role, the Board of the Culture Company was streamlined, and heads rolled.

These examples, from a mountain of failures down the recent past, suggest that Liverpool is not only in terminal decline, despite protestations to the contrary, but is being managed myopically, without a strategy for the competition that faces the city or a sustainable future in 'the most splendid setting of any English City'. At a place-making and architectural level, AR's 'Outrage' page could have been expanded into a veritable encyclopaedia, filled with the detritus that developers and their architects, both from the public and private sector, have spewed onto the landscape of the city.

What is being built

Above the city centre are now swinging tower-cranes, those cliché-heralds of apparent progress. As far as place-making is concerned, this renewal, mostly of the retail core, will be judged against the likes of Potsdamer Platz in Berlin – result of a similar surge of energy following a slumber since 1945 – while the architectural pieces of this *Verbraucherparadies* will need to stand against the 'consumer cathedral' that is Nouvel's Galeries Lafayette on Friedrichstrasse, and the poetic grandeur of Kleihues' re-working of the 1920s *Kaufhof* on Alexanderplatz. As the veil is gradually unwrapped on the Paradise Project (p64), the King's Dock Arena (p58) and elsewhere, the portents for such urban excellence are manifestly shrivelling. The Arena is a metaphorical ship, albeit smaller than *QE2* and *Deutschland* which recently graced the river. It is hardly credible that the same architects have designed the Arena's multi-storey car park, a poor design given available precedents elsewhere, but especially so next to Hartley's achievement at Albert Dock as an urban ensemble of diverse elements.

North of Princes Dock (Liverpool Waters) and across the river in Birkenhead (Wirral Waters), we are being offered huge developments up to 50 storeys (p76), cobbled together by way of a frenzied collaging of contenders for the 'most banal skyscraper of the decade' award; utterly without urban rigour, wanting in architectural merit, and bringing yet again to Liverpool the failures of elsewhere, such as the 15th arrondissement in Paris. What is being built in Liverpool today and planned for its future, neither lives up to the past achievements of the city nor to international comparison.

TOO GRIM OR TRUE GRIT?

To achieve its potential as an evolved modern city, Liverpool needs to raise its game in architecture and urban design.



Despite its heroic physical situation and legacy of historic buildings, Liverpool's modern townscape has been shattered by war, decline and mediocre urban ambitions.

Urbanisation and competitive cities

When its quality of governance was high, Liverpool found ways to welcome and engage with the global situation, creating a pattern of places and buildings of unquestioned note. This has not been the case during the past 50 years when a succession of regimes – local, Whitehall, and quango, from right to left – have failed to address Liverpool's fundamental situation and grasp whatever new opportunities have arisen. That situation is one of relentless global urbanisation, with concomitant needs to evolve resource-frugal yet liveable cities that could reverse the environmental and climatic freefall into which we are currently heading at speed. Essential to that evolution will be competing cities, a stage in human affairs where cities, by governance, can not only be attractive places to live, but be drivers in changing a 'cradle to grave' waste culture to a 'cradle to cradle' sustainable culture.

And where, we are entitled to ask, is Liverpool in this coming-to-sense of cities; what innovation is being supported here? Liverpool has no equivalent of the 'Hanover Principles' in its civic armoury; nor has it examples of paradigm-changing developments – key tools among cities' competition in awakenings – no equivalents, therefore, of Kronsberg, no Dongtan, no Bo01, no Vauban, no Ørsund, no Kattenbroek, Nieuwland or Vathorst, no Amsterdam West, no Nieuw Terbregge, no Björnsby, no Hammarby Sjöstad, no Understenshöjden, no Ashton Green, no Barking Riverside, no Cranbrook, no Northstowe, no Stratford – I could go on. Rather we have a melange of 'play it again Sam', an absence in this music city, this talking city, of any place-making or architectural innovation. Liverpool has intellectually slumbered and therefore has fallen.

What is not being built

Yet Liverpool has not lacked opportunities to innovate during the past years of 'regeneration'. Take as example the Boot Estate in Norris Green, a now-soiled 1920s visionary transformation of farmland into a landscape of roundabouts and boulevards almost absent of cars, serving 1500 houses and gardens, and comparable to innovative housing areas of pre-1945 Germany, and more recent Danish, German and Netherlandish models. It needs now to be demolished

due to technical obsolescence. This 'windfall' site provided a copper-bottomed opportunity for the City Council to take up an offered partnership with public agencies to deliver a visionary sustainable community – an 'Ecotown' before its time, no less – addressing the agendas being thrown up by Climate Change and other priorities. This was refused; the initiative was destroyed by the leaders of the city, and now, as the replacement of old by new goes forward, a typically mediocre development on the Boot Estate flounders into reality.

What kind of governance and leadership is it, one must ask, that was so clearly blind to such an opportunity to address the future, the type that was being grasped elsewhere in such 'windfall' situations, and instead chose to wantonly batter the opportunity into mediocrity?

Liverpool as a setting for place-making and architecture

In the UK index of competitive cities, Liverpool lies at the absolute bottom, unable or unwilling to match achievements in Bradford, Brighton, Bristol or Leeds in terms of sustainability, and the likes of Reading, York, Southampton and Cambridge in economic and social performance; not to speak of paradigm-changing developments further afield in Europe and China.

In the conclusion of 'Two-track Cities', under the heading, 'What is the future for the cities that are not succeeding?', the authors write, 'Is there hope and inspiration to be gained from elsewhere? It is not unprecedented for cities to create success from very little – Helsinki, Dublin, Singapore and Dubai, for example, have all managed to do this'. In these examples and others elsewhere, it is the imaginative commitment of leaders to well-researched, innovative and risk-taking governance that is characteristic – where political leaders and chief executives write, perfect, and sing from the same hymn book.

Has Liverpool the intelligence and 'True Grit' among its political classes to set about becoming competitive, exploiting 'the most splendid setting of any English city', or has it become a place 'Too Grim' to reverse its regress? In my view, the jury has determined its judgement for now. The return of 'True Grit' can only emerge once the Capital of Culture is behind us; perhaps seeing the constitution of a City Commission and appointment of a City Architect, both of international status and with real power. DOUG CLELLAND



Images from the 2006 Liverpool Biennial. Far left: Priscilla Monge's surreal landscape at Mann Island. Middle: boat installation in St Luke's Church by Matej Andraz Vogrincic. Left: caged lion at St George's Plateau by Portuguese artist Rigo 23.

ART CITY

Among the myriad delights of Liverpool's Year of Culture, the city's Biennial, now in its fifth cycle, still stands out.

'Liverpool has an artistic streak', observed Alan Bowness, Tate Gallery director, at the 1985 press launch of the renewed Albert Dock. Around us, work had begun on Stirling's conversion of the west warehouse to a branch of the national museum of modern art. Seventy years after its founding by a Liverpool sugar magnate, Bowness declared, the Tate was coming home.

Yet though Bowness' Tate was to be praised for its initiative (would that the BM, V&A, and National Gallery follow northward!), for this reporter in the crowd, a question arose as to what, exactly, should be the role of such a museum? For, of the new and its accumulation, there are no limits; it keeps coming, and piling up; and none who enter London's Tate Bankside should suppose even that vast powerhouse (by Giles Gilbert Scott, architect of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral) to be the ultimate word in cultural repository. That, indeed, was part of Tate Liverpool's logic – to get stuff out of storage and up on show. Yet, even as we were crediting the Tate for conceding the rational – and regionally just – principle that a national art collection is not to be confined to a single (London) museum, the very idea of the big museum (the bigger the better) was being undone within the practices of art itself – or rather, as Modernism splintered, itself.¹

Two kinds of practice have evolved since the 1960s to elude and exceed the museum. One needs no fixed place of exhibition; the other is so specific to a site, and often to a timing, that it defies museological confinement. Indeed, many works have been generated within a reciprocal field between these poles, as conceived by the 'earthworks' artist Robert Smithson in his 'dialectic of site and nonsite'. Here, the 'site' is a real but marginal place – be it a desert or a parking lot – while the nonsite is any or every place where images or metonyms from the site-specific work are relayed – a gallery, a magazine page, webcast, videoscreen, mobile phone, or i-pod. Moreover, many such works are performative stratagems across sites and terrains over specific durations, bringing Situationist tactics of intervention to social space and experience. Characteristic, however, of all these kinds of art 'in the extended realm'² is that, while they may be experienced on site, in your head, or in media, one place to which they are all indifferent or resistant is the museum.

The curatoriat of the contemporary art world has responded to these challenges. More innovative than museums have been what Germans call *Kunsthalle* for temporary exhibitions which often commission site-specific installations and events. London has the Whitechapel, Hayward, and Serpentine galleries; while Liverpool Tate combines selections from the permanent collection with

commissioned shows, and the Bluecoat Arts Centre has always operated as a *Kunsthalle*. Other curatorial 'brokerages' work on site-specific projects, or with artists' co-ops in providing studio and exhibition spaces. Among the former is London's Artangel Trust, and the latter, Liverpool's A Foundation. Such 'guerrilla' operations often work with situations quite different from museums. They tend to pioneer margins, in a spirit often of Situationist *détournement*, responding to uncanny or estranged aspects beyond or beneath the scope of usual architectural discourse, and often on several sites, leading curious visitors on odysseys resembling those erratic urban rambles which the Situationists named *dérives*, or 'drifts'.

Main sponsors of such diverse activities have been not museums but festivals. Anyone who has visited the Venice Biennale, Kassel's Documenta, or Münster's sculpture expos will know their typical mix of institutions, special pavilions, and a scattering of unusual sites across the city. At Liverpool, the Biennial's enlistment of the city, now in its fifth run, has been notably significant, architecturally as well as artistically, because, when started by John Moores, it was able both to work with a net of old and new cultural institutions, and a city that presented, like '70s Berlin, a tattered map of *terrains vagues* for intervention and colonisation. The Walker Art Gallery was already host to the John Moores biennial painting competition, while Tate North had opened in 1987. There was also Video Positive, a yearly media festival, which evolved into an entirely new venue, FACT (Foundation for Art & Creative Technology) showing film and *ars electronica* in a purpose-built complex (by Austin Smith: Lord) amid the creative industries of the emergent Ropewalks district.

Lewis Biggs, a former director of Tate North and curator of a Mersey-Humber art forerunner of the 'Northern Way', now leads a Biennial that combines the Walker, Tate, FACT, Open Eye photographic gallery, Bluecoat, and other agencies. It spans the city, leading such projects as Antony Gormley's *Another Place* on Crosby beach, and Richard Wilson's *Turning The Place Over* in Moorfields, an astonishing display of architectural tiddlywinks cut into the wall of a '50s block. The Biennial comprises the International Biennial at the Tate, the John Moores exhibition, Bloomberg New Contemporaries, and the Independents Biennial, a 'fringe' which in 2006 took in 150 artists across 62 venues around the city. The 5th Liverpool Biennial will run from 20 September to 30 November 2008. BRIAN HATTON

1. Brian Hatton, 'The Biggest Way To Do Art' in *Lotus* 106.

2. cf Rosalind Krauss' essay, 'Sculpture In the Expanded Field', *October*, spring 1979. www.biennial.com

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Häfele

Häfele have published a 224 page Electronic Security and Access Control catalogue. This covers security systems for furniture applications; stand alone access controls; on-line access systems; keys and tags; locking hardware; door closers; card printers and accessories; security fittings to aid the disabled; CCTV security and gira audio/video entry systems, and biometrics: technology for fingerprint recognition which promises to revolutionise entry systems in a wide range of applications with finger- and hand-print readers, iris scanners and smart cards.

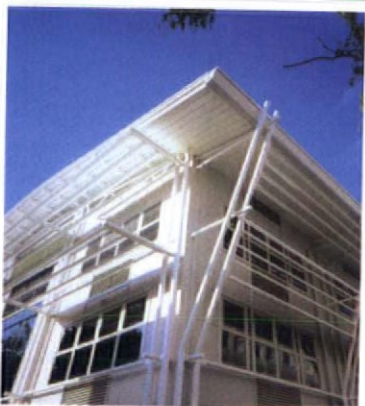
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Aircrete

The Aircrete Products Association (APA) has wasted no time in boasting about Aircrete's sustainability credentials in light of the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes. At a special event in London the APA showcased the major advantages of using Aircrete Building Blocks as an integral part of house building. Aircrete blocks are made using environmentally friendly materials which present no risk of pollution to water or air. They are made mainly from pulverised fuel ash or recycled sand. Aircrete is robust, durable, requires little maintenance and is 100% recyclable.

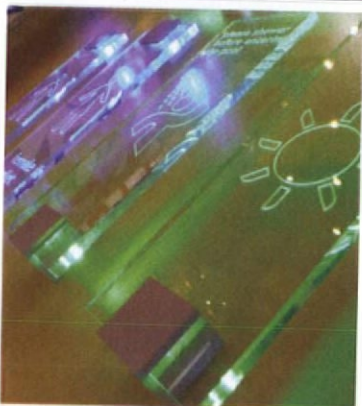
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Ward Insulated Panels

Ward DW insulated wall panels have been used to complete the exterior of a research building for Oxford Brookes University. On the main Headington Campus, the £5 million Buckley Building provides facilities for the Humanities, Social Sciences and a School of the Built Environment. Designed by GSS Architecture, the three-storey, 2500m² building has a gently curved roof and an external steel framework. It required 1000m² of Ward DW 600 and 1000 wall panels finished in metallic silver, which were 'textured' to provide a light-diffusing surface. www.wards.co.uk

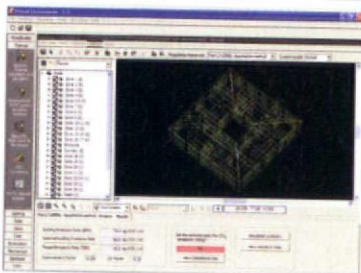
902 www.arplus.com/enq.html



Signbox

Award-winning sign designers Signbox launched their latest LED sign fixing, Lumos2 at 100% Design, Earls Court. This precision engineered signage solution follows the successful installation of Project Lumos in landmark buildings. Lumos2 is the latest LED 'fit and forget' sign fixing to be designed by Signbox, to support and edge illuminate 8mm thick glass or acrylic panels. This ultra bright 2W sign solution, precision engineered from satin anodised aluminium, is 40mm square x 35mm deep. In a range of vivid LED colours, the sign complements corporate and leisure environments.

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IES

IES is the only commercial software provider to offer compliance solutions for all of the United Kingdom. Addressing reductions in energy and carbon emissions, the accredited 'VE Compliance' module now offers routes for compliance with Building Regulations Part L (England and Wales), Part F (Northern Ireland) and Section 6 (Scotland). It includes interfaces to SBEM and SAP2005, alongside its Dynamic Simulation Model.

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Corus

Big Storage at the Printworks in Chester uses Corus Colorcoat® pre-finished steel. Colorcoat Prisma® pre-finished steel in Silver Metallic was specified for the walls as part of a Trimoset® composite panel system from Corus Panels and Profiles. The standing seam section of the roof and vault are in Colorcoat HPS200® Goosewing Grey. According to Paul Day of Muir Associates, the Corus crimped steel cladding was ideal for matching into the tightly curved vault. It creates a cathedral-like feeling in the interior.

905 www.arplus.com/enq.html



Brightwater

Following the success of ZeroFlush waterless urinals introduced to the UK by BrightWater Environmental 12 months ago, the company has launched a larger, more comprehensive range of designs: new ZeroFlush waterless urinal troughs constructed in high quality polished stainless steel are flagship products in the extended portfolio. Using ZeroFlush's patented trap technology, the trough design ensures high performance levels. The extended ZeroFlush range from BrightWater includes two new porcelain urinals.

906 www.arplus.com/enq.html



James & Taylor

A British company has set the New York art scene alight with a shimmering silver veil that puts the finishing touches to the New Museum of Contemporary Art exterior. Japanese architects SANAA chose London-based facade specialists James & Taylor to design the unique silvery facade for the world-class building. It's the first time the material has been used in the US, but in the UK, James & Taylor used it on the Young Vic theatre, awarded London's Building of the Year by RIBA, and on the capital's Stephen Lawrence Centre. The facade uses 3270m² of expanded aluminium veil.

907 www.arplus.com/enq.html

Stuart Haygarth
Drop chandelier

DESIGN

MIAMI

Marcus Fairs reports from the trenches of design experimentation at Design Miami.

Tom Dixon CU29 chair for Moss



Diller Scofidio + Renfro
Light Sock for Swarovski



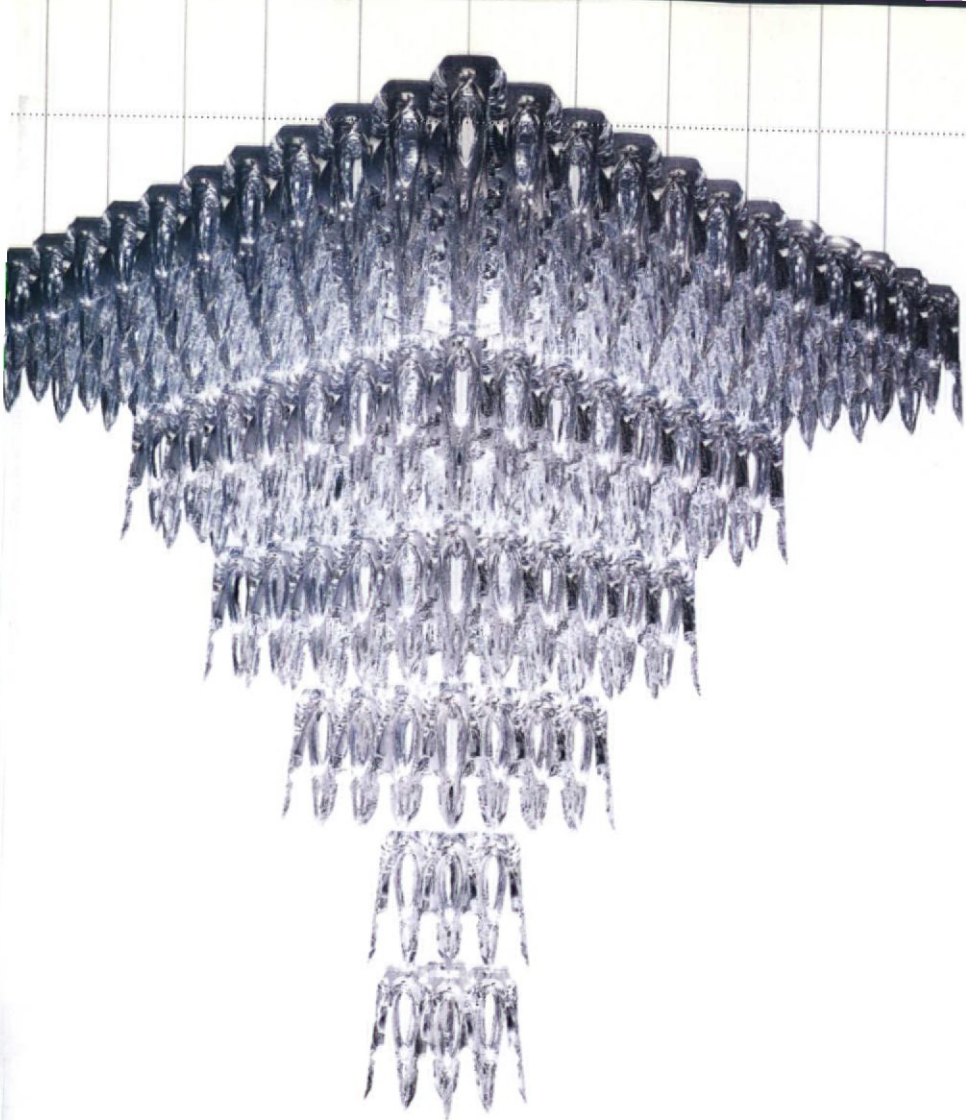
Studio Job
Robber Baron series at Moss

When and why did architecture and design head off down different paths? During much of the last century, the two disciplines were united under a common purpose and a shared aesthetic, but in recent years these former partners in crime have been pursuing very different agendas. At the elite end of the scale, architects still seem obsessed with the Modernist notion of progress, expressed in ever more extreme, digitally assisted manifestations of material, form and programme. Judging by this year's Design Miami fair, however, avant-garde designers are journeying in precisely the opposite direction.

Design Miami, the upstart fair held in Florida each December, has in just three years established itself as perhaps the most influential global marketplace for design speculation and experimentation. The former is being driven by the recent explosion of interest in contemporary furniture from art gallerists and collectors and the corresponding surge in prices (Design Miami runs in tandem with the more established, and hugely important, Art Basel Miami Beach art fair, piggybacking on its wealthy clientele), while the latter comes via Design Miami's agenda-setting cultural programme, which this year saw around a dozen of the world's most promising young designers engaging in 'design performances' – ie, making things live in front of an audience.

For three days last month, the galleries in the Miami Design District – which hosts the fair – were transformed into primitive workshops: Peter Marigold slicing up mango branches to make shelving; Stuart Haygarth arranging discarded plastic water bottles into a chandelier; Wieki Somers showcasing traditional Dutch boat-builders; a string of celebrity designers working with glassblowers at the open-air GlassLab. It was a bit like wandering around the artisan quarters of Cairo or Marrakech.

Design's return to the hand-made, the expressive and the imprecise is seen by many as a reaction against the banality of the production line and the soullessness of globalisation – phenomena in which globe-trotting starchitects are seemingly complicit – but it is

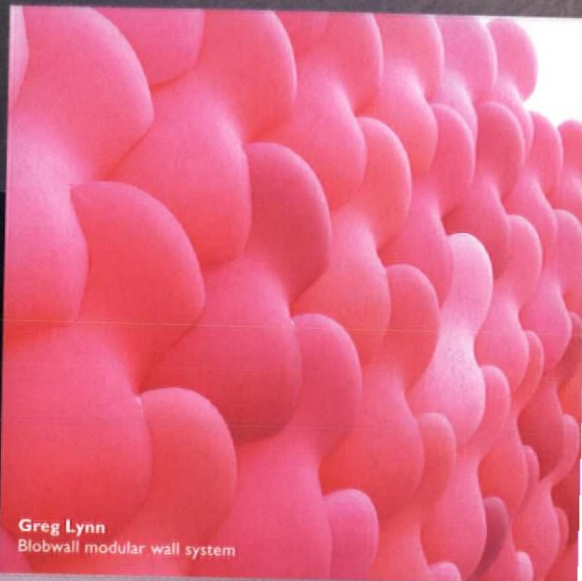


Hani Rashid
LQ chandelier for Zumtobel

design fair



Tokujin Yoshioka
Installation at Design Miami



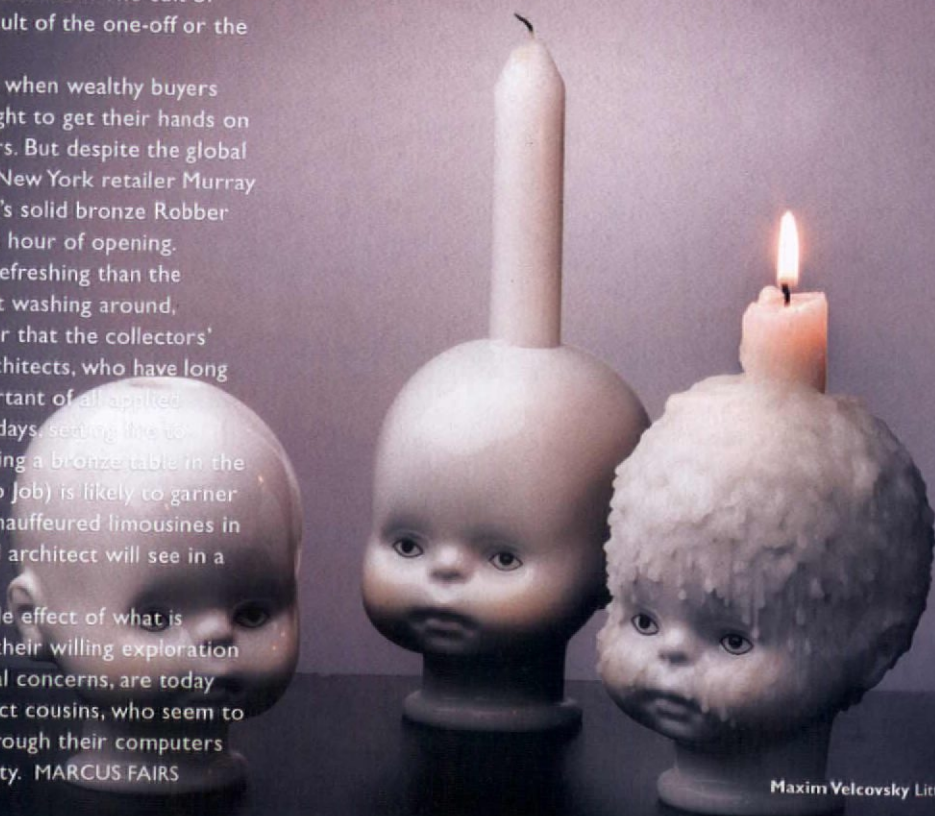
Greg Lynn
Blobwall modular wall system

also a product of the art world's influence: why sell a million chairs for a dollar each, when you can sell one for a million? The cult of mass production has been replaced by the cult of the one-off or the limited edition.

This year's fair was less frenzied than last, when wealthy buyers literally beat down the doors on opening night to get their hands on Marc Newson tables and Maarten Baas chairs. But despite the global credit crunch, collectors were out in force: New York retailer Murray Moss reportedly sold two sets of Studio Job's solid bronze Robber Baron furniture for \$700 000 each within an hour of opening.

The design circuit has always been more refreshing than the architecture world, with less ego and bullshit washing around, but that is changing fast as designers discover that the collectors' market is a fast track to fame and riches. Architects, who have long considered themselves to be the most important of all applied artists, must surely be getting jealous: these days, selling the antique furniture (à la Maarten Baas) or casting a bronze table in the shape of Battersea Power Station (à la Studio Job) is likely to garner more column inches, celebrity dinners and chauffeured limousines in a hot Miami week than even the most lauded architect will see in a year. And a fatter paycheck too, no doubt.

But the glamorisation of design is just a side effect of what is emerging as cultural fact: designers, through their willing exploration of pre-industrial processes and post-industrial concerns, are today becoming more interesting than their architect cousins, who seem to have stopped looking at the world except through their computers and who no longer like to get their hands dirty. **MARCUS FAIRS**



Maxim Velcovsky Little Joseph

reviews

DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

DETAILS IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

By Christine Killory and René Davids. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press. 2007. \$55

Three decades ago, *Learning from Las Vegas* espoused the virtues of the decorated shed over the dead ducks of Modernism. Viewed in this context, this latest book on construction detailing is interesting, providing an overview of recent architecture in the United States and Canada. Essentially, there are two types of project presented: large buildings by well-known international architects and smaller buildings by lesser-known North American architects. One of the book's main intentions is to 'revive the concept of building as the principal intellectual activity of architecture, to collapse the divide between theory and practice', and yet we are not really told how (or why) the chosen buildings achieve this. The large buildings feature large spaces enclosed within fairly standard cladding systems, with the 'architecture' provided by bespoke decorative external dressings, the results akin to wrapping a brown cardboard box in shiny gift-wrap. The cladding systems are probably recognisable to architects around the world, and one suspects much of the construction detailing was carried out by specialist manufacturers rather than the architects themselves. They are mostly decorated shed with a hint of duck, but with the integrity of neither. On the other hand, there are quite delightful smaller projects such as the camera obscura by SHoP Architects, where evident care and attention has been given to every element.

By entering into an area of architectural publication so brilliantly established by the *Detail* series of periodicals and books, and the Ed Ford volumes on the details of modern and contemporary architecture, Princeton Architectural Press has set itself a big task. Unfortunately, *Details in Contemporary Architecture* falls short in a number of respects: the projects are presented in an inconsistent manner with some given scant attention while others receive the full works; the scale of the drawings is not given; and the descriptions are wholly uncritical in their stance. That said, in publishing these projects side by side, the book raises pertinent questions about construction detailing in relation to place and scale, and presents an undercurrent of interesting buildings and architects operating below the tide of global icons. Peter Zumthor once spoke about how, beyond the concept, a building takes on a physical presence defined in part by its materiality and making; one wonders if a less regional bias in future *AsBuilt* publications might provide more illumination. BOBBY OPEN

MYOPIC DOYEN

THE EVOLUTION OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE, A SYNOPTIC ACCOUNT

By Kenneth Frampton. Vienna: Springer. 2007. €29.95

Kenneth Frampton wrote the long-awaited *Modern Architecture – A Critical History* in 1980, an overview of Modernism at the end of its tether, in many ways the best summation of the several movements taking in the important research of the previous decade. The present 'synoptic account' of the last century does not add much to this revisionist view, apparently written for the Chinese market. With a high ratio of plans and line drawings to photos of completed buildings (roughly four to one), it is an ideal Little Blue Book for students to put in their pockets or wave reprovingly at deviants from the party-line, for again it is Comrade (or is it Constable?) Frampton laying down the law.

Forbidden, as usual, are the 'romantic fantasies of the Art Nouveau' and great architects such as Gaudi who he, like Pevsner, considers degenerate. Excluded also, in the name of brevity, are movements that don't fit variants of the main line – Post-Modernists, of course, such as Venturi and Gehry (given only a dismissive reference), Deconstructionists and Eisenman (surprisingly), the emergence of the iconic building as an important genre, the variety of green architectures and the whole complexity paradigm of design. Frampton apologises for these inevitable lacunae, a result of 'the limited space at my disposal', as he concentrates on four 'trajectories'. These do have some breadth of view varying from the Avant-Garde to Organic architects, from National Cultures that resist the universalising tendencies of Modernism to place-making and his notion of 'Reality'. At least we can be thankful for this little pluralism, limited though it is to roughly the Team Ten line. Frampton is a historian whose taste and outlook were frozen at the moment of his first important contribution in much the way that big name architects Rudolph, Graves and Libeskind made their significant breakthroughs and then repeated them. Typically, the last three are not even mentioned. In effect, Frampton's view is not only severely reduced but skewed towards the early part of the last century.

By conducting the argument through the reproduction of line drawings, Frampton does give the impression that some coherence underlies the discontinuities and discord of the twentieth century. Auguste Choisy used to imply the same overall unity, as Banham wrote, by applying the axonometric drawing to historical variety, as if the Great Architect Anon were the main protagonist.

Again to his credit and rather like Vincent Scully, Frampton has a well-stocked visual memory and can call up a thousand visual associations. But here also lies the main conceptual problem. Promising 'the evolution' of architecture in his title, he has no theoretical equipment to deal with this fascinating, and under-thought concept, except the single notion of 'influence'. And this leads to strange lines of development and over-emphasis on early rather than later architects. Thus Gehry and Coop Himmelblau are reduced to footnotes of Scharoun's influence; and in the most reductive trimming I know, the whole subcontinent of South Asia, and the post-1970s work in Germany, Switzerland and Canada is squeezed as a footnote to Louis Kahn. Too bad for Kleihues, Ungers, Botta and Aldo van Eyck, no doubt all stemming from the Kahnian source, but now complete victims of associational sourcery. This is an old type of historian's myopia, the treatment of movements and individuals as instances of previous trends rather than semi-autonomous creative actors in their own right.

Frampton is a 'doyen of architecture history', as the back-cover blurb says, a first class thinker when he takes the time and space to develop an argument. More the pity that he hasn't used this synoptic platform to lay out a sketch of what the evolution of architecture might be. Of course 'influence' plays a role, but more than that it is the interplay of many architectural species waxing and waning with some individuals jumping across bloodlines (unlike biological species cultural ones can learn tricks from anywhere). Of course all history writing is the history of the present looking backwards, a highly edited mythic affair either aware of its bias or one pretending to objectivity. Frampton admits the 'subjectivity' but does nothing to guard against it and cavalierly dismissing most of the late twentieth century – not even mentioning Koolhaas, Hadid, Zumthor, Herzog & de Meuron, et al – ends, not surprisingly, on a note of gloom. Self-imposed myopia is bound to make you depressed. CHARLES JENCKS

SIENESE CHRONICLES

SIENA: CONSTRUCTING THE RENAISSANCE CITY

By Fabrizio Nevola. London: Yale University Press. 2007. £40

The concept of a city as a work of art, as a stage-set for civic display and public show, has died in the British Isles, for there are very few architects around these days (thanks to so-called education) who understand context, harmony, and composition: flashy intrusions, disruptions, and arrogant disregard of existing fabric are the norm.

St Bernardino, in 1425, wrote evocatively of the frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena: he mentioned the images of dances and processions, houses being restored, land and vines being cultivated, people going to the baths on horseback, maidens getting married, a man hanging from a noose in order that justice be preserved, and, 'because of all these things, everyone lives in holy peace and concord'. Nowadays nobody hangs from nooses, for nobody is to blame: everything goes, and nobody must carry the can. Holy peace and concord are rare commodities these days, for life is cheap and beauty is a word never used in architectural circles.

I can think of no city as perfect as Siena, and I wonder at its homogeneity every time I go there. It is a marvellous survival of a great Italian mediaeval and Renaissance city: Nevola concentrates his efforts on the period 1400 to 1520, exploring the impact of patronage, political power, and economics, yet the final result of his work is curiously unsatisfactory, not least because much of the fabric is Gothic, including the celebrated Palazzo Pubblico and the glorious cathedral. There are indeed fine Renaissance elements within Siena's walls, and these are given due consideration in the book under review, but I wonder if the tome really works as a whole: for one thing, it stops suddenly and oddly, with no suitable ending, giving the impression of a rushed job, just chopped, as though final copy had got lost.

Siena, of all cities, should have had a chronicler worthy of it: Nevola has come up trumps in some respects, but the city deserved better. This is a curate's egg of a book: the good bits are the wonderful illustrations (many in colour), parts of the text, and the fact that we desperately need to look at a model such as Siena, where civilisation flourished, to teach us what a city should be about. JAMES STEVENS CURL

SOCIAL LIFE

PETER HÜBNER – BUILDINGS AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

By Peter Blundell Jones. Stuttgart-Fellbach: Edition Axel Menges. 2007. £49

Peter Hübner is not a name that leaps immediately to mind when thinking of contemporary German architects, but it should, and perhaps it will after this new extensive monograph by Peter Blundell Jones. The career started unusually: Hübner was an orthopaedic footwear maker (splendid training for constructive empathy) before becoming a joiner, then he specialised in prefabricated buildings in cardboard and plastics while teaching construction at Stuttgart university. In the '80s, he began to work directly



Sculpture by Antony Gormley on Crosby beach, from *Mersey – The River That Changed The World*, edited by Ian Wray with photographs by Colin McPherson, Liverpool, Bluecoat Press, 2007, £17.99. The industrial civilisation that took root on the banks of the River Mersey during the eighteenth century was the catalyst for cathartic social and economic change, forging the British Empire and driving the nascent forces of globalisation. This touching homage to the river tracks its physical and historical progress, taking in people, politics and buildings.

with students, designing and building first-year accommodation in collaboration with future occupants.

Unlike many architects who have experimented with participation, Hübner has retained his commitment to involving users, and has produced a stream of inventive work without forcing his personality on the results. There may be some repeated elements, for instance Hübner has a liking for the embrace of curving or circular communal spaces, but he has no strident individual style. Each project emerges from examining the programme with future users. Forms tend to be modified on site as work proceeds and often consist of agglomerations of carefully studied individual places and spaces. Since the early '80s, Hübner has been committed to exploring environmental architecture, and devices for encouraging convection ventilation, thermal flywheels and the like have been stirred into an already rich mix.

Blundell Jones sees Hübner's work as part of the German organic tradition, in which the designer attempts to find out 'what the building wants to be'. So the architect becomes 'a kind of midwife at the building's birth guiding the forces that demand its existence and giving them

physical shape. It is almost as though the building is already implied by the place and people'. This is the anti-classical approach of Häring and Scharoun that attempts to celebrate life rather than formality. Because life changes, Hübner refuses to admit that his buildings are ever completed for 'the world has suffered enough from finished architecture'.

The lavish book (Axel Menges has pulled out all the stops) uses the well-tried model of introducing the architect's work in a preliminary essay, followed by studies of key individual buildings. Parallel texts are in English and German. Work is profusely illustrated with photographs (often by the author) and with drawings, though sometimes it must have been difficult to get definitive plans and sections of buildings that are (at least in theory) never finished. Whatever the problems of the process, Blundell Jones has collaged a portrait to show that Hübner deserves a place up there with the inter-war masters of the organic.

PETER DAVEY

Book reviews from *The Architectural Review* can now be seen on our website at www.arplus.com and the books can be ordered online, many at a special discount.



Above, Casa Büchel in Vaduz, Liechtenstein; below, apartment block in Nüziders. Photographs by Edward Hueber.

RIGOUR MEISTERS

Baumschlager-Eberle prove masters of alpine rigour at Munich's Pinakothek.

Vorarlberg is an Austrian alpine province bordering onto Switzerland and it was here during the late '80s that Baumschlager-Eberle first came to prominence through a series of house projects. In 2000, *Wallpaper* magazine unanimously declared Vorarlberg 'the most progressive part of the planet when it comes to new architecture'. High praise indeed.

But Carlo Baumschlager and Dietmar Eberle are a world away from *Wallpaper's* flashy fashionability. From the beginning of their careers they unerringly concentrated on achieving an architectural veracity that relied on formal and structural simplicity, the use of indigenous and regional materials and an ecologically refined building performance. Their interpretation of 'critical regionalism' avoids the predictable hallmarks of stardom and instead fosters a rare, radical clarity of shape and form that can also be read in the works of neighbouring Swiss-German architects Peter Zumthor and Roger Diener. As with the Swiss, location and place quietly stamp their identity on Baumschlager-Eberle's work. Fundamentally, it

is a precise, recognisable architectural language based on the volumetric shape of the built object. Its strength lies in material solidity and sheer sculptural mass, yet through the considered use of proportion and subtle play with light and shadow it is also light as well as substantial.

This balance comes under scrutiny in a current exhibition at the Munich Architectural Museum.

Under the directorship of Winfried Nerdinger, the museum has already staged a number of thoughtfully curated shows (for example, Diener & Diener, Heinz Tesar) dedicated to the lucid architectural expression represented by the Alpine School. *Architecture, People and Resources* explores a similar vein, meticulously examining the oeuvre of Baumschlager-Eberle over the last five years in three almost identically designed spaces. Any distracting elements that might deflect from the architecture itself are categorically banned. Walls, plinths and tables display the distilled high end of artistic output, be it a plan, a photograph or beautifully crafted wooden model. Content and attitude fill the space rather than image and vision. The architectural purist is immediately at home in this documentation of rationality, regionalism and rigorous reinterpretation of Modernism.

Offices in St Gallen, the Munich Re Insurance Headquarters or the Hilti Training Centre in Liechtenstein all are represented by dominant, monolithic blocks in a strong urban or natural context. However, once the alpine context evaporates and the buildings assume a larger scale, such as the Beijing high-rise housing projects, Baumschlager-Eberle struggle with detailing that becomes threatened by decorative elements. Back in more usual terrain, their Eichgut housing in Winterthur shuffles overlapping facade panels in a virtuoso manner yet also conforms to the guidelines of the Swiss Minergie-P standard, one of the strictest benchmarks of environmental performance. Beautiful and beguiling, Baumschlager-Eberle's work has a quiet intensity that plumbs the functional and human depths of architecture.

CHRISTIAN BRENSING

Until 13 January at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.
www.pinakothek.de



browser

After New Year excess, Sutherland Lyall stares out blearily from his cyber duvet.

Krug's first law of usability

A mate who makes his money from interactive stuff said I should read Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think!* So I did. And you should too. And then you should make your website designers read it too. Give them a couple of weeks. Refuse to listen to any sneering bollocks from them. And then check your website. If there aren't major changes this is when you probably decide to sack them. Krug's First Law of Usability, the man himself explains, 'means that as far as is humanly possible, when I look at a Web page it should be self-evident. Obvious. Self-explanatory. I should be able to "get it" – what it is and how to use it – without expending any effort thinking about it'. The rest of this entertaining book elaborates on the Law. It's your New Year's resolution to read it on your next plane, sorry, train trip. Isn't it?

Rockfall

Just to show we're not as doctrinal as all that, here's a site which breaks all of the rules. It's that of Antón García-Abril & Ensemble Studio at www.ensemble.info. You click on 'ENTER' and up comes a rock flying around beneath what looks like a parachute. And then another. Finally you are left with a pile of rocks. Gingerly you move them around in the hope that the ensemble will eventually collapse. But no. So you click on 'enter ensemble studio' and up comes a slightly mangled message such as 'Your final composition is COME ON, YOU CAN DO BETTER' and 'I GUESS YOU PASS Try again!' or 'WOWSERS! YOU ROCK!'. Where I come from a wowsers used to be a person addicted to not consuming alcohol. Never mind, what follows is one of those really irritating wait-while-I-load-up-the-pix travelling lines. Happily, when it has finished a forest of thumbnails appears. If you move around you eventually discover that each column of thumbnails is of some project or other, but since the title text is not only tiny, but on its side and also above the screen edge, you don't bother to look at it. More interestingly when you click on a thumb you get a wodge of explanatory text. More accurately, only sometimes. So a lot of thinking to do. But that rockfall game. It's potentially a great idea but the rules are unclear and you get fed up and click to enter the site proper. Maybe, of course, that's exactly what they want you to do.

Class system act

Over the break I've been having a reasonably pleasant scamper through the blogosphere. I had reckoned on there being maybe a couple of dozen or so architectural and sort-of design blogs of interest. But, and this may be merely a sign of a lot of people not having enough work, there is not just the top 25 Architecture Blogs at www.eikongraphia.com/?p=1397 (which we looked at in August), but a Top 100 architecture blogs at www.intlistings.com/articles/2007/top-100-architecture-blogs. 'Lordy, Lordy, you say to yourself, Just what we needed'. I'm sorry to say that a regular in this column, Norman Blogster at www.partiv.com, is running a similar poll. I'm happier to say that only 200 or so people had bothered to vote at the time of writing. Maybe he'll give it up. The up side, I suppose, is that he got some people to vote. The basis for the other polls is not at all clear. Oh, and the 100 top turn out to be maybe 40 architectural sites and a lot of landscape, sustainability, design and sites like that to make up that magic number. An example is *The Whispering Crane Institute* at <http://whisperingcraneinstitute.wordpress.com>. Another is *The Dirt*, the American Landscape Institute's site so named, presumably, because *Terrain* at <http://terrain.org.blogspot.com> had already been taken ...

Blogs are for beginners

One of the blogs in Norman B's list is at <http://allicethearchitect.blogspot.com> aka RIBA, aka Remember I'm the Bloody Architect. A mix of student and rural practice notes, one topical report runs: 'Tutors and students gathered. I started my presentation. "Hold on," said one tutor: "Why are you using stone? Did you consider larch cladding?". "Stone" I explained "is a very long lived material ..." "Well, you should explore the possibilities of larch cladding", he snapped.' One thing I've noticed in these blogs, mostly by newly qualified architects, is a detestation of the crit as a method of teaching. I used to think of it as a kind of adapted viva voce such as has been hallowed for millennia in the academic world. But on reflection the crits I've attended since student days have been more to do with sour tutors scoring points off each other while simultaneously humiliating the student of the hour. Or, when it is an overseas student paying enormous fees, it's just scoring points off each other.

Writing on the wall

And if you were wondering how to cheer up those tired old elevations here's a nice one from the brilliant Eric Moorhouse at <http://tinyurl.com/2nfhos>. Enjoy this and the rest of the year.

Sutherland Lyall is at sutherland.lyall@btinternet.com

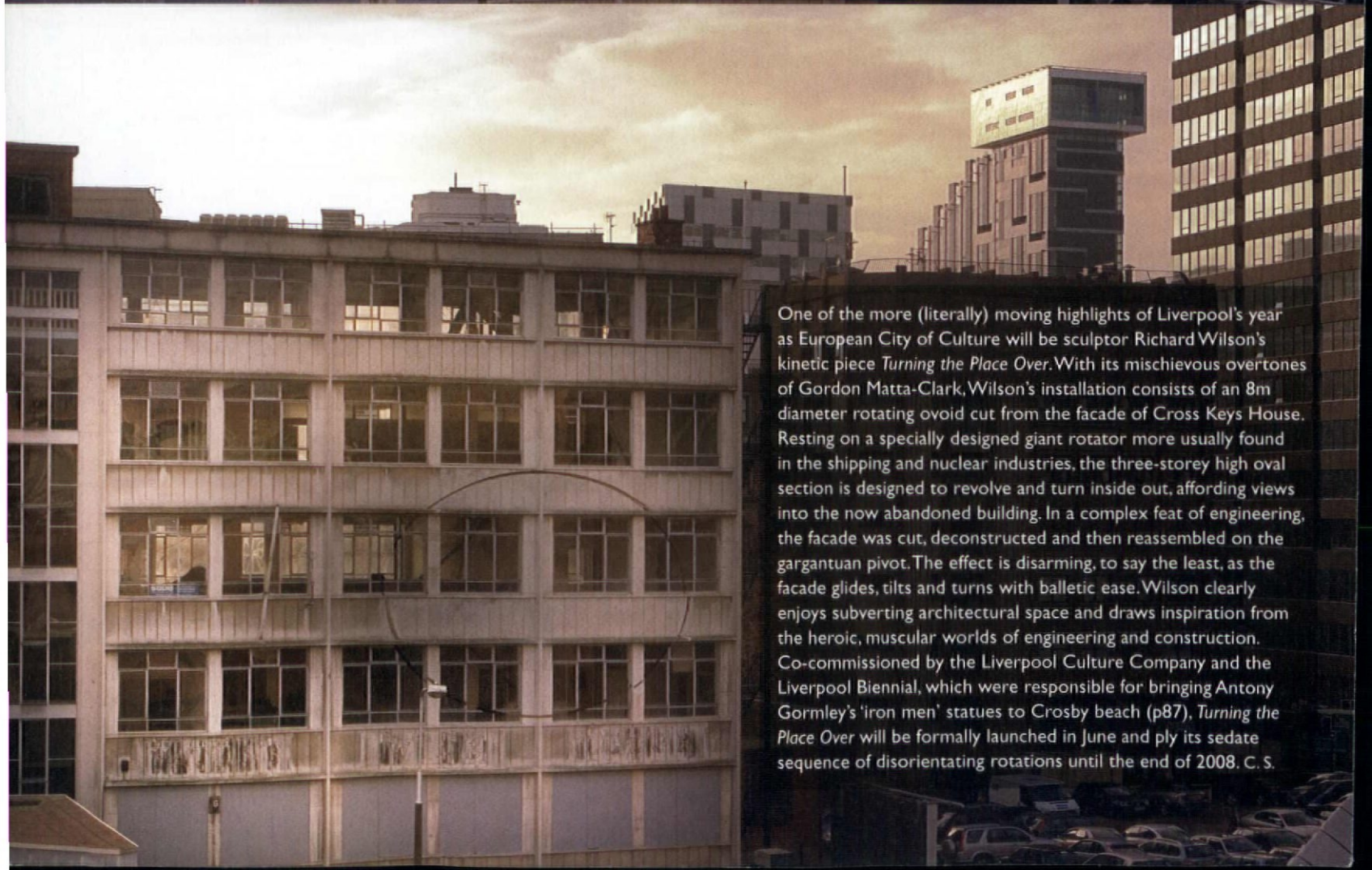
Liverpool 2008

11-13 Jan Opening Weekend Liverpool Echo Arena & St George's Plateau
25 Jan - 16 Feb 3 Sisters On Hope Street Liverpool Everyman
1 Feb - 5 May Niki de Saint Phalle Tate Liverpool
10 Feb Chinese New Year Chinese Arch
28 Feb John Tavener Requiem Metropolitan Cathedral
7-8 Mar Bahok - Akram Khan Liverpool Playhouse
8-9 Mar Ken Dodd & Liverpool Laughter Makers St George's Hall
15 Mar Karl Jenkins - Stabat Mater Liverpool Cathedral
30 Mar Vladimir Ashkenazy & the EU Youth Orchestra Philharmonic Hall
Mar Metal Pavilion Kensington
Mar Leap 08 Various Venues
3-5 Apr The Grand National Aintree Racecourse
7 Apr - 10 May Dreamthinkspeak Anglican Cathedral
12-13 Apr Viennese Balls St George's Hall
1-29 Apr Variable Capital Bluecoat
18 Apr - 10 Aug Art in the Age of Steam Walker Art Gallery
24 Apr An Audience with Shankly Liverpool Olympia
April Wet & Sea Liverpool Docks
Apr - Sept Out of the Shadows St George's Hall
3-4 May 20th Birthday Celebrations Tate Liverpool
24-26 May Liverpool Streets Ahead Weekend St George's Plateau & City Centre
24 May - 2 Nov Ben Johnson's Liverpool Cityscape 2008 Walker Art Gallery
29 May First phase of Paradise Project opens South John Street and department stores
30 May - 31 Aug Gustav Klimt: Painting, Design & Modern Life in Vienna Tate Liverpool
May - Jul Arab Cities Open Eye Gallery
19-22 Jun Design Show Liverpool The Crypt Metropolitan Cathedral
28 Jun Benjamin Britten's War Requiem Liverpool Cathedral
5 Jul Clipper 07-08 Race Finish Waterfront
12 Jul - 1 Nov The Beat Goes On World Museum
18 Jul John Lennon Songbook with the RLPO Philharmonic Hall
18-21 Jul Start of Tall Ships' Races Liverpool Docks
Jul Arabic Arts Festival Various Venues
Jul Liverpool Summer Pops Liverpool Echo Arena
17-20 Jul Open Golf Championship Royal Birkdale
1-10 Aug Imagine St George's Hall & William Brown Street
2 Aug City Brouhaha Carnival Procession Centre and Princes Park
6-10 Aug Senzazione St George's Plateau
August Bank Holiday Weekend Mathew Street Music Festival City Centre
4 Sept Berliner Philharmoniker Philharmonic Hall
12 Sept Kenneth Heskestad commission for the RLPO Philharmonic Hall
15-19 Sept (projections) 20 Sept (live event) Audiovision St George's Dock Building
20 Sept - 30 Nov Liverpool Biennial Tate, Walker, Bluecoat, A Foundation and other venues
26-28 Sept Outdoor Spectacular All over Liverpool
27 Sept Verdi Requiem Metropolitan Cathedral
Sept Hope Street Festival Hope Street
Sept Heritage Open Days Merseyside wide
30 Sept Second phase of Paradise Project opens Chavasse Park and east of Paradise Street
2 Oct - 18 Jan 2009 Le Corbusier The Crypt Metropolitan Cathedral
2 Oct Simon Rattle conducts RLPO Philharmonic Hall
11 Oct RIBA Stirling Prize Award Ceremony Liverpool Arena
12 Oct Burial at Thebes Philharmonic Hall
31 Oct Halloween Lantern Carnival Sefton Park
Oct Eric's - The Musical Liverpool Everyman
Oct Mark Simpson commission for the RLPO Philharmonic Hall
Oct Stephen Pratt commission for the RLPO Philharmonic Hall
Oct Powerplant Calderstones Park
Oct Bluecoat Literature Festival The Bluecoat
6 Nov MTV Europe Music Awards Liverpool Arena
25-27 Nov Le Corbusier Symposium The Crypt Metropolitan Cathedral
Nov Made in Liverpool Screenings in various venues
Nov - Feb Winter Lights Liverpool neighbourhoods
4 Dec Kathryn Stott & Friends Philharmonic Hall

For further information:
www.liverpool08.com www.artinliverpool.com

delight

Photographs: Paul McMullin



One of the more (literally) moving highlights of Liverpool's year as European City of Culture will be sculptor Richard Wilson's kinetic piece *Turning the Place Over*. With its mischievous overtones of Gordon Matta-Clark, Wilson's installation consists of an 8m diameter rotating ovoid cut from the facade of Cross Keys House. Resting on a specially designed giant rotator more usually found in the shipping and nuclear industries, the three-storey high oval section is designed to revolve and turn inside out, affording views into the now abandoned building. In a complex feat of engineering, the facade was cut, deconstructed and then reassembled on the gargantuan pivot. The effect is disarming, to say the least, as the facade glides, tilts and turns with balletic ease. Wilson clearly enjoys subverting architectural space and draws inspiration from the heroic, muscular worlds of engineering and construction. Co-commissioned by the Liverpool Culture Company and the Liverpool Biennial, which were responsible for bringing Antony Gormley's 'iron men' statues to Crosby beach (p87), *Turning the Place Over* will be formally launched in June and ply its sedate sequence of disorientating rotations until the end of 2008. C. S.



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