



Stirling in Wonderland

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The frustration of architectural exhibitions, it is often said, is that they constantly defer any satisfaction. The object at stake is always absent, always withheld beyond the drawings and photographs and models, always to be desired. The exhibition 'James Frazer Stirling: Notes from the Archive' makes little or no pretence to be about buildings. Rather it is about the mind of an architect – what is accumulated and sifted, what is worked on through the drawing hand, the recurring motifs and changing themes, how the architect's eye records in photographs, what he writes and teaches. Both the exhibition and the accompanying book give generous space to this proposition, displaying multiple drawings for often unbuilt projects and page upon page of notes and sketches. This is the way, the exhibition proposes, to stimulate excitement in Stirling's work, a sense that it can be discovered anew.

There is something equally demanding and rewarding about this approach. Some will carp that it isn't easy for a non-architectural specialist. For example, it doesn't use film of extant buildings, or send us scuttling through digital reconstructions of unexecuted projects: it is staunchly unconcerned with these fripperies. It might also have mapped Stirling's work more consistently against his times (though the early years are superbly considered in these terms), and attempted to head off the old criticisms of his architecture. Instead, it foregrounds the act of discovery, the 'mining of the archive', and specifically the huge body of material in the Stirling/Wilford archive at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal. The curator, Anthony Vidler, tells us again and again how his ventures are only contingent, only 'notes from the archive' which might be corrected or extended by later intrepid adventurers. As a result, as much as its subject's protean output, the exhibition perhaps also reflects Vidler's own search (from *The Writing on the Walls*, to *The Architectural Uncanny*, to *Histories of the Immediate Present*) for ways to augment high modernism with the resources of *architecture parlante*, the unconscious, and the re-treading of modernist history itself. Vidler suggests that the Stirling he presents is one whose career is marked by a constant search to balance the apparently incompatible – context and association, programmatic analysis and creative re-composition, an architecture brimful of disciplinary in-knowledge as well as of popular appeal and resonance. Out of this comes a 'volumetric virtuosity that transcends all implications and effects of eclecticism' – Stirling always remained 'modernist in spirit'.

In many respects the resulting exhibition wants to be ethical. It doesn't pretend to be neutral, outside history or to have the final word on its subject. It wants to make us look slowly, to make us think with the architect. It's ethical,

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too, because it matches the archive's materials with the gallery's viewing conditions. It accepts the nature of the exhibition as a medium, much as it accepts that the material stuff of architecture cannot be displayed. There are no buildings here, no pretence that we can even experience them vicariously. Equally, the gallery's objects are not just the archive's traces but things in themselves, not mere signposts or stand-ins for architecture's actuality. They are lessons in making a world not in parallel but in possibility.



But at the same time aren't these ethics, this calm consistency of tone, something highly defensive? By rights, surely, this architect should be one of the most popular and beloved of the twentieth century. His forms are bold and witty, his repertoire spilling over with invention, his buildings by turn big in their gestures and cannily nuanced. At the start of the exhibition there's a face-off between a Le Corbusier *grand confort* and a broad side chair by Thomas Hope, both placed on industrial rubber flooring. Together with three of Eduardo Paolozzi's

Indian Airlines embarkation card for a flight to Chandigarh

Overleaf: The reverse side features a sketch by James Stirling of the Nordrhein-Westfalen Museum, 1975 Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal

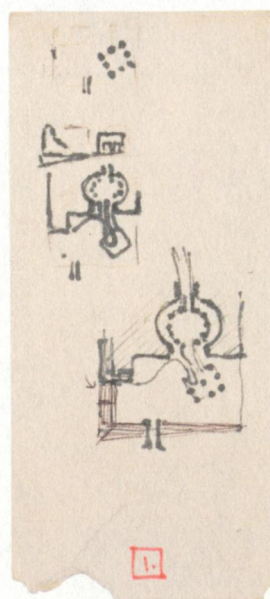
'As Is When' prints, they stand compactly for Stirling's predilections of the late 1960s, undercutting at the same time the tasteful complacencies of high modernism and fogey historicism. But this is a false start, its logic of juxtaposition never really picked up again. In general, the bigger energies of Stirling's buildings are curiously suppressed by this showing. The chunks of building that shocked visitors to the Royal Academy's 1986 'Foster, Rogers, Stirling' exhibition are nowhere to be seen. And the most we get here of Stirling's signature colouring is an electric green decorating the entrance screens and some cases: perhaps it was thought any more of this would be offensive to the beautifully modulated axes of the Yale Center for British Art's Louis Kahn-designed galleries. So, instead, one of the most distinctive colourists of modern architecture – by turns sensuous, strident and sentimental – is presented almost entirely as a master of *disegno*. Yet this defensiveness doesn't surprise. We're still in retreat, the exhibition seems to say: retreat from modernist failures and postmodernist embarrassments, from controversy and sniping and mere anecdote. Perhaps for now we can only advance tentatively from the fastness of the archive and the drawing.

Architectural production as we see it here, then, is almost entirely autographic. The whole allographic side to the making of buildings, in the sense that they are made by others from the architect's script, is left outside the exhibition's scope. But this is not beyond the archive's purview. Yards and yards of shelves groaning with rolls of blueprints and files of correspondence to builders and subcontractors concerning such controversial projects as the Cambridge History Faculty would attest to this. The exhibition also has little time for the inconvenient details of architectural collaboration, whether with clients, consultants (like the engineer Frank Newby) or other architects. The career arc must be clear, genius must out. But of course several have contested Stirling's sole authorship, most notably Léon Krier and James Gowan. It should be said that this exhibition, unlike much that has been written about Stirling, is punctilious in attributing works to the different titles of the practices Stirling was involved in. But it still assumes Stirling was always the prime mover. This may make for a better story, a more familiar artistic type, but it is not good history. Take the so-called 'House Studies' of 1956. They are a goldmine of ideas, looking forward to the agglomerative aesthetic of Leicester and even Stuttgart. There is nothing in Stirling's work before this date that is anything like this: up to then his approach to design had tended to be based on elaborating or dematerialising the cube. Tellingly, the sheets shown in the exhibition are actually reproductions of the original drawings done by Gowan.

In recent years a number of architectural historians have adopted other means to project the pleasures they've always felt for the archive. Instead of tidying away their finds in files and footnotes, they give themselves licence to express the archive as a dense complexity of possibilities. Some have seen architecture as inhabiting a veritable hall of mirrors, of representations representing other representations, whose natural habitat is not the building site but the magazine, the cinema or the archive itself. Others have turned the exhibition into a display of learning sifted from the minutiae of the archive (the recent Palladio show at the Royal Academy being a case in point). Vidler opts to treat the archive as wonderland, a place of play and discovery. And his palpable enthusiasm for botanising in the archive is carried over into the exhibition, with a fetishist's delight in showing us these scraps as flattened out specimens. He especially relishes drawings done on whatever came to hand: on the backs of airline tickets, boarding cards and telegrams, on currency exchange receipts, on exhibition announcements, on hotel notepaper, on music pads and inevitably, Paxton-like, even on a paper serviette. These scraps (some not by Stirling) might seem to manifest a life lived in constant contact with architecture's creative pleasures rather than the presumed drudgery of negotiating with builders and clients, of actually getting the things built. They also suggest vivid moments of thinking, the sparks of creation stolen from or at least parallel to a busy, globe-trotting life.

But perhaps we also need reminding of the archive's demarcations, its exclusions and curtailments. Rather than a place of free play it might be better described as a regulated game, such are its powerful protocols of accessioning, storage and taxonomy. While Vidler rightly wants to see the archive as a check, even a force of resistance to commonplace views of his subject, he also suggests that 'the archive, taken as a whole, resists any easy narrative of cause and effect, origin and development'. But the claim is disingenuous, as signalled by the increasingly abstract references to 'the archive' in the exhibition and the book. Any archive is a product of editing and filtering by the person or persons who brought it together. It is an instrument devised to preserve ephemera and to enable the recovery of certain kinds of documents and not others. As objects and documents are accumulated, certain decisions are made justifying inclusion and exclusion, and over the years further stripping out and additions enhance or revise what in time gets to be called an archive. The archive-maker is only interested in certain aspects of the past. Despite claims to discovery and play, this archive is not open to any and all interpretation, and indeed if it has 'multiplicity and heterogeneity' then this is not the effect created even at the end of this exhibition.

As with all archives, then, power and ownership are involved – property and propriety, we might say. In the case of the now French-Canadianised 'Stirling/Wilford *fonds*', the 40,000 documents that arrived in Montreal in 2000 constitute what was briefly known as the 'James Stirling Foundation' – project files and drawings left in the office of Stirling and Wilford when Stirling died in 1992, as well as his private papers concerning architecture. The acquisition represented a great gain for Phyllis Lambert's Canadian Centre for Architecture, one of the milestones that put her institution on the global architecture map. And yet there is some ambivalence in the CCA's attitude to the *fonds*, detectable in both the lateness of this exhibition – on show first at the Yale Center for British Art – and the form it has finally taken. There seem, therefore, entirely pragmatic, contingent, opportunistic and interested reasons why the CCA

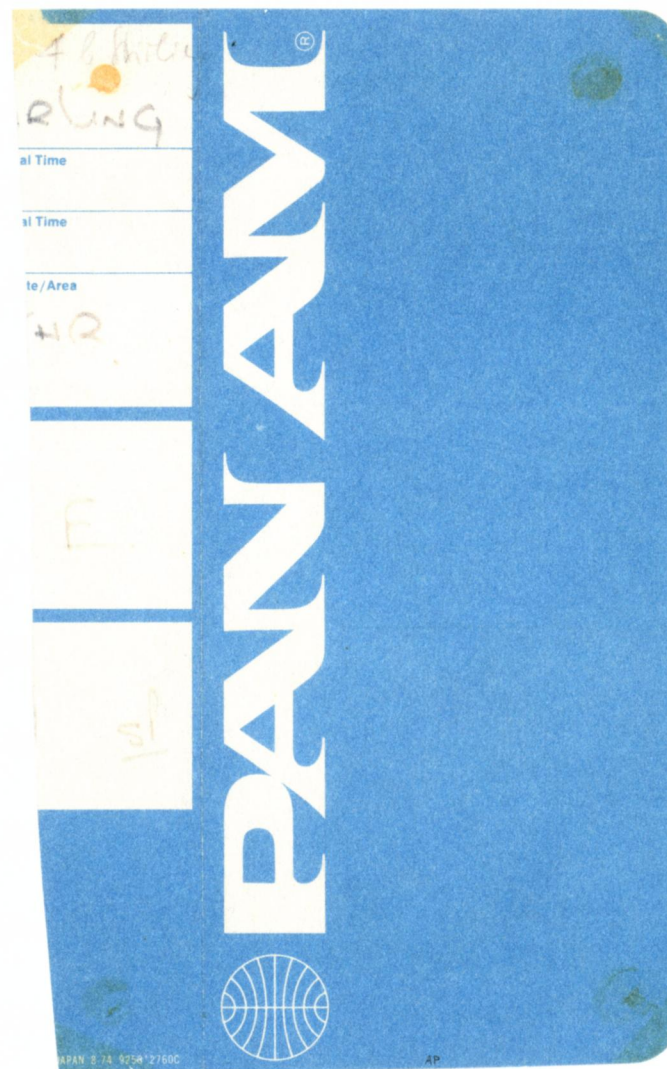


archive – like any archive – is as it is. It is not some natural multiplicity, some oceanic wilderness, barely tracked by man. To pretend otherwise is, as we used to say, mystification. And there are other archives not nearly so vast as the CCA that also hold the paper remnants of all those buildings and projects: planning authorities, the collections of consultants and builders, the papers of clients – particularly those of the several museums, companies and universities for which Stirling worked – to say nothing of the papers of important collaborators like Gowan, Krier and Newby. An exhibition based solely on these archives would not merely be a negative of the one shown here. The Deutsches Architektur Museum in Frankfurt, for instance, has over 300 drawings from Gowan's own collection, which include some of the key drawings of the Stirling and Gowan partnership. Among them are not only the originals of some of the copies displayed here (such as the 'House Studies'),

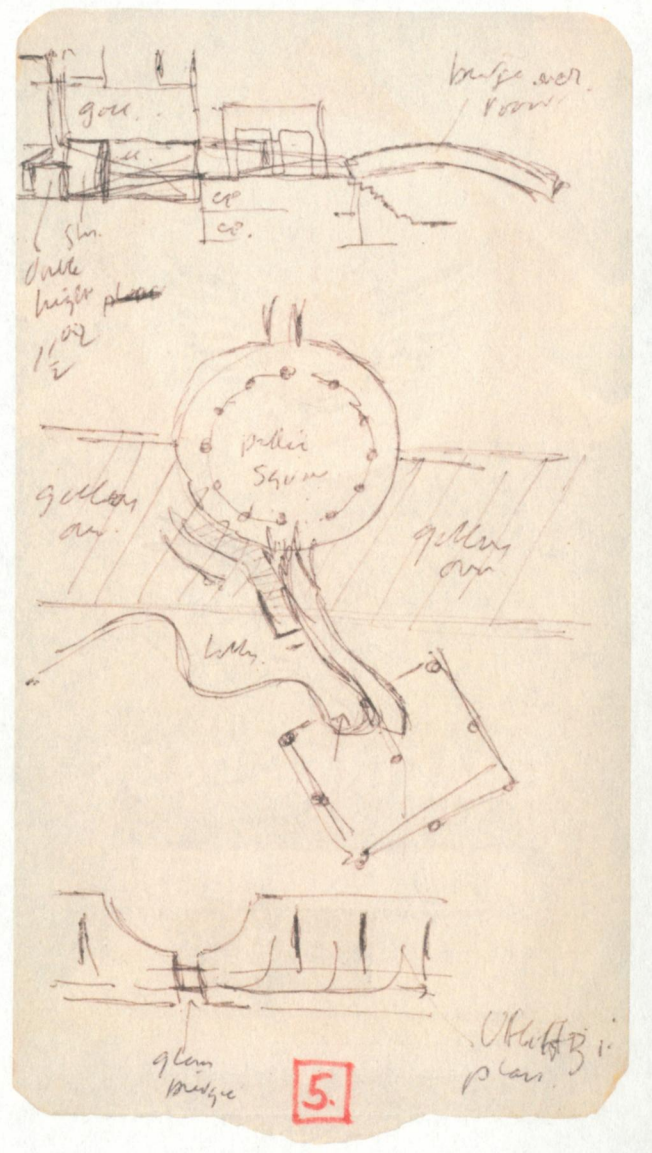
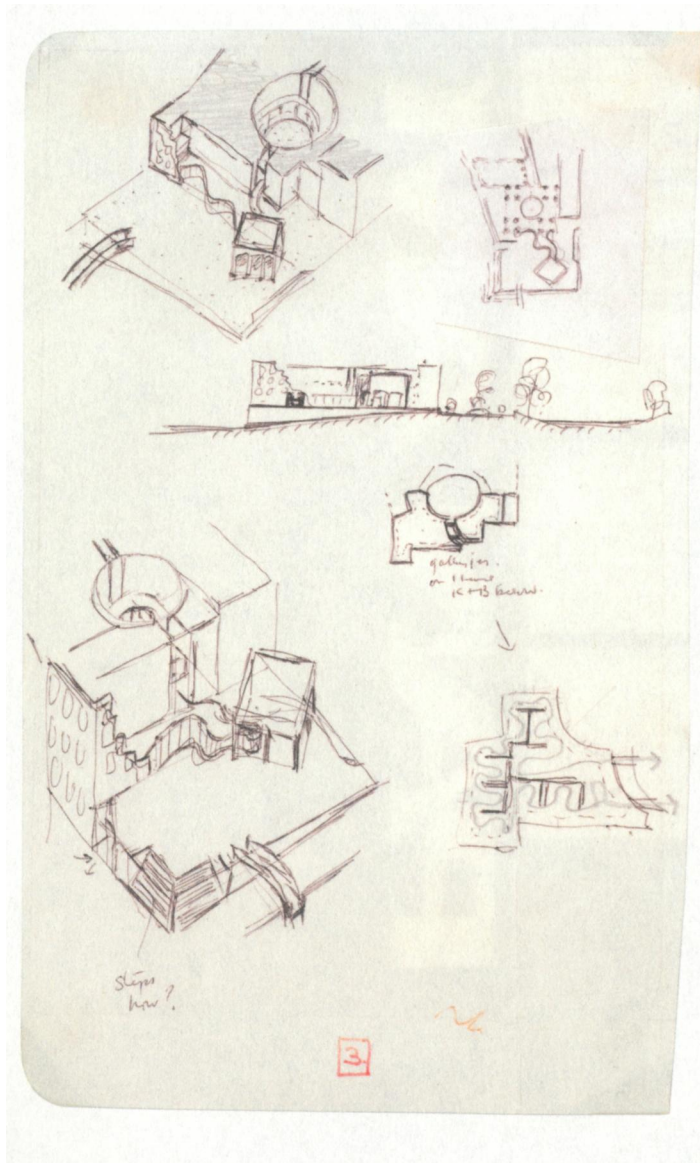
but also a number of the development drawings for Leicester, which in this exhibition is represented by just three images.

Like any archivist or archive deliver Vidler is haunted by what no longer survives, regretting the loss of conceptual sketches from the earlier period of Stirling's career. 'They were marvellous little drawings, tiny little things, and they were very unusual and very characteristic ... he just threw them away'; Krier's recollection from the early 1970s, when he first worked for Stirling, stands as an epigraph – or perhaps epitaph – to the catalogue's preface. As if to compensate, the exhibition gives us more and more conceptual sketches as the career progresses. To treat everything as paper is also, of course, to desensitise us to the difference between the built and the unbuilt: little known late projects like that for the British Telecom Headquarters at Milton Keynes achieve the same billing, for instance, as the bulky monument for Braun's industrial relations that stands picturesquely in the fields outside Melsungen. When we reach the Berlin Wissenschaftszentrum, used here as part of a trilogy with the unbuilt designs for the municipal library in Latina and the Bibliothèque de France, the climax for Vidler of Stirling's 'cities in microcosm', we realise how little the fascination of drawings, the 'panorama of iterations', may relate to what is actually delivered in the flesh of building. Anyone who sees the Wissenschaftszentrum after the excitements of these drawings can only be disappointed. Perhaps, then, the emphasis on drawing is a way of bypassing the conflicted, ambiguous inheritance of the buildings themselves. This is wished away, like much theorising about the late avant-garde. Drawing, as Michael Hays has written recently, is 'the necessary vehicle of imagination, symbolisation and self-reflection in architecture ... the necessary medium of *critical* architecture'. Seen in this way drawing is a substitute as much as a promise. Yet, with Stirling it is quite an achievement to make his drawings have these resonances, as they never really engage with the kind of meditating on big themes – the nature of architecture among them – that is central to the work of contemporaries like Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk. Instead, his drawings remain stubbornly instrumental, tools for thinking through the project, building it, presenting it.

Inevitably an account based only on the archive, such as this one, is in danger of creating its own myths as well as recreating old ones. Take the Woolton House, a little unbuilt project of 1955. Residents of the Liverpool suburb of Woolton will be very surprised to hear that Stirling's design for a house there 'evoked the houses and barns of the region', but this is what a view of the project derived only from what remains in the archive would suggest. This mythology was later heightened by a little sketch by Krier (not attributed to him here),



Boarding passes for
Royal Nepal Airlines and Pan Am
Overleaf: Their reverse sides show additional
sketches by James Stirling of the
Nordrhein-Westfalen Museum, 1975
Canadian Centre for Architecture,
Montreal



a masterly evocation of the house's pentroofs echoing a sharp hillside. Similarly, there is only one of the painstakingly coloured-in drawings that preoccupied Stirling late in his career (Mark Girouard's biography tells us that Stirling would take these on holiday with him so that he could colour them in at his leisure), a beautiful section for the Performing Arts building at Cornell University. Presumably this is because rather than being kept in the office these drawings were often sold to prestigious collections like the Museum of Modern Art. One new myth is of an architect who emerges fully formed in his student years. Indeed Stirling's final-year thesis project is regarded as a *chef d'oeuvre*, a veritable Rosetta Stone: not only does it have 27 pages devoted to it in the accompanying catalogue, more than any other project built or unbuilt, it is also seen to hold many of the codes that would be encrypted in later works.

Some of the exhibition's ideas seem more whimsical than suggestive – like the notion that Stirling's boyhood passion for birdwatching recurs as a leitmotif in later works (in ornitho-anthropologies of circulation, for instance). But the exhibition also surprises us by foregrounding many usually ignored projects and sidelining others typically more prominent. Bravely, and largely because Vidler wants to argue for the continuity of Stirling's interest in urban and public housing issues, the Preston and Runcorn estates take on a new prominence, as does the *barriada*-type housing in Lima. On the other hand, there is little mention of Stirling's years in the early and mid-1950s working for other practices, and fewer still on Ham Common and Leicester, the defining works of the partnership with Gowan (indeed the products of that partnership are remarkably underplayed in the exhibition). Why? The complex answer is to do with the desire to fit all of Stirling's work into a modernist frame. The simple answer is that the CCA archive has very little on these projects apart from copied drawings. Furthermore – although this is less apparent in the exhibition than in the catalogue – the more the survey moves forward the less is said about the projects and the evolution of ideas across them – the Neue Staatsgalerie at Stuttgart, that great postmodernist summation, is only really dealt with through drawings. Either Vidler thinks we don't need the same history and analysis he lavishes on early works, or there is a sense that postmodernism cannot be spoken about.

This is not the case with photography, which is given special importance, particularly over the first 20 years of Stirling's career. There are photos of Black Country kilns, Kentish oast houses, Cotswold farms and of course Liverpool warehouses. Several of these images appear as grist for the modernist regionalism many were looking for after the war, while others have a more oblique relation to *The Architectural*

Review's 'functional tradition', and some – like those of Soane's Dulwich Picture Gallery – have a stark simplicity about them evocative of Le Corbusier's edited images. But there are plenty of indications, too, that photography had more than merely a recording function. First, there are those photographs prized for their mnemonic qualities – a rich image of a clustered pier in the Duomo di San Martino, Lucca, was re-used many years later because a labyrinth carved into the marble turned out to offer clues to working out an idea for a gallery layout in the unbuilt Nordrhein-Westfalen Museum. Then there are photographs used polemically – such as those of the Preston housing scheme, which show Stirling's feeling for photography's collusive powers. They might be second-hand Roger Mayne or Nigel Henderson in their basic strategy of posing playing kids against brick masses, but they have a suggestive argument, too, about history as a layering of experiences (one that Mayne, for instance, seems to have abandoned when he shifted from Notting Hill's familiar bye-law terraces and asphalt corridors to Park Hill's concrete).

One of the great gains of the exhibition is to present Stirling not as some virtually mute genius, unforthcoming about his motivations and awkward in his writing (today he would probably be diagnosed as dyslexic), but as equally theoretically engaged as any of that generation of architect-critics who accompanied him to success in the US. Vidler makes the point powerfully and convincingly. The theory here is predominantly worked through and expostulated via drawing, which for Vidler is 'thinking theory from the inside out', but there is plenty of verbalising too in lecture notes, in Stirling's early journal, and his published articles.

This recognition may be part of the distinctly north American tinge to the exhibition, signalled by the use of Stirling's middle name – James Frazer Stirling – in the title (how different from the British over-familiarity of 'Big Jim'). For Vidler, Stirling's early sources are more likely to be Breuer, the Eameses and Rudolph, for instance, rather than Lubetkin or even Le Corbusier. Stirling was a fully paid up member of what is often called the 'Yale family', a teaching visitor at the university from 1959, then Davenport Professor of Architecture from 1966 to 1984. Although he never settled in the US, unlike contemporaries and friends such as Colin Rowe, Kenneth Frampton and Reyner Banham, Stirling certainly enjoyed the glamour and conviviality of American academic life, was stimulated by its students' talent (most notably by Craig Hodgetts' fascination with plastics and gadgetry) and exploited its opportunities to join a rapidly developing international architecture culture. He also certainly brought an important element into the high-flavoured Yale mix. Accompanying 'Notes from the Archive', and across the road from the Yale Center for British Art at the school

of architecture, was an exhibition of work by Stirling's Yale students that made it very clear what an impact he had there.

There is no doubt that drawing is the main medium here, the means by which we come closest to the creative investigations that give Stirling his enduring fascination. Here, abundantly and to great variety, we have the intricacies of the architect's mind. He draws therefore he thinks. And as we track over these drawings so we gather some of their virtual pleasures: of stepwise elaboration, of doubling back, erasing, correcting, making alternatives, hesitating and plunging ahead. There are the delights of miniaturising a big projected world: a few lines can stand for tonnes of concrete, a flick of the pencil carves open yards of space, abbreviations and graphic obscurities are allowed to become workplaces or homes.

Take one small sheet of sketches for the Florey building in Oxford. One wonders where Stirling would have started. Most of the plans cluster towards the bottom of the page, but perhaps he began with the diagonal layout of student rooms, corridor and services behind, devoting more space than anything else on this sheet in establishing the prosaic business of toilets and broom cupboards. This might then have become the smaller, fainter plan of the same, to the left, where he adds what could be little bays in the corridor. Or perhaps he began with the shadowy suggestions of concentric units at the top of the sheet. Wherever he started, it's clear that the thought becomes most intense as the sketches get smaller, and the pencil is gripped more tightly when working through the five thumbnail plans towards the bottom of the sheet. Each plays with different ways of breaking and re-setting that 'first' diagonal plan: canting it to different versions of half an octagon in two of them, or making it rear and cutting it short at one end in two others, or turning the whole plan round 180 degrees in another so that the river, now at the top, provides an upper datum for the most rectilinear of the schemes (and suddenly, too, we see a parallel between river and corridor). Finally, at the bottom of the sheet, and perhaps tiring of the effort of fixing his scheme, he makes a more lightly drawn plan that falls off the bottom edge, with just space enough to suggest that he's homed in on the service towers and tried to imagine a way of approaching them. But if all this suggests a progression down the sheet, two of the thumbnails are circled: first in pencil then, emphatically, in red biro, as if to mark them out for more attention later, in some new sheet of thoughts. Less than an inch wide, these ringed plans are the most dynamic of the lot, little cubist wonders, all offsetting asymmetries and overlapping units. They seem animated: the dormitory appearing like some lean abstracted big cat, arching its back at a stretch in one plan, flattening and sipping at the river

in another. The idea of the irregular half octagon of the final building has been reached; the final configuration seems to be crystallising before our eyes.

Most of the graphic moves in these and other sketches seem tightly sprung yet exploratory. Lines are not light or casual but are often redrawn several times or strongly inscribed; usually one senses that these are not drawings for anyone's eyes but his own and maybe a partner or assistant. Every touch, every shifted form or skewed angle, is a new possibility. The sketches share something interesting with doodling: they may not be absent-minded but they have an intimacy, a private and compulsive repetitiveness, a disdain for their place on the paper, for looks. Unlike doodling, of course, every sketch is replete with possibilities. Sometimes we feel physically close to this big man, privileged to imagine we follow his brain-to-hand impulses. In one or two sketches for the Nordrhein-Westfalen Museum in Düsseldorf (1975) we're even teased with this illusion. The curved link between the public space in the heart of the museum and an entry pavilion is suddenly joined by a shapely lobby and before we know it this has acquired finger-nails and a thick, thumb-like silhouette, as if the architect has simply used his hand as a template on the sheet. 'Thumbnail' has rich resonance here – in the exhibition's sequence the museum project had actually started with an embarkation ticket on whose recto, held presumably between big thumb and index finger, Stirling had first assayed his scheme in little plans barely 4cm long.

Or take another set of drawings, this time for the unbuilt Italian public library at Latina (1979–85). The most dashing of these are the broad jottings that gather various buildings around the rectangular library on its triangular site, all sketched on municipal-headed paper. Stirling seems to be reaching for some sequence of eloquent shapes – 'basilica, campanile, gate' he scrawls beside one. Then in a group of four figure-ground block plans he plays around with a circular inner courtyard, clearly responding to the courtyard blocks of Marcello Piacentini's surrounding neo-classicist new town. A third sheet shows an entirely different mode of drawing-thinking. Stuffed with studies of roof forms in black and red ink this sheet displays an almost frenzied production of ideas. Stirling seems to be trying to keep the idea of a campanile but asking how it can relate to the main hall of the library, what kinds of canopy roofs could be used on an ambulatory and how the low drums over the library can correspond to the rest of its expanse. Much of this is then resolved in the next drawing, a plan in which the campanile is forgotten and the library is located at the broad base of the site and in the middle – in a wonderfully suggestive conception – the librarian's house is surrounded by a circular grove of trees.

The exhibited sequence is completed with a coloured elevation of the library. It is a factory of learning, a great long barn whose roof is punctured by two circular skylights like shallow silos, the whole thing fronted by a stoa that manages to be both rustic and hi-tech. The drawing is delicately tinted in coloured pencil, the range of orange, light green and lime, with shadows in purple, lifting the scheme into a dream of golden Mediterranean dusk, surely incapable of causing even the faux offence usually provoked by Stirling's chromatic schemes.

Above all, the exhibition reminds us of Stirling's extraordinary daring in conflating landscape and industry in his middle period. The schemes for headquarters buildings for Olivetti in Milton Keynes (1970–74) and Siemens AG in Munich (1969–70) seem to suspend all of Stirling's obsessions and give free rein to the idea of buildings, either in great successions of drum-containers or in vast roof-top grids, as landscape-like (Vidler calls this '*techné* in *aradia*'). Krier's perspective of the Siemens scheme offers us one of the most memorable images of this time, his graphic elisions and flat aquamarine sky perfectly matched with Stirling's industrial romanticism so that work and leisure, production and the good life, seem in alluring if uneasy balance. Relaxed industrialists, clad in 1930s suits, spill out onto the esplanade. Harboured under a pink arcade they seem unaware of the huge towers above them, blankly panelled housing for offices and laboratories, fitted with revolving screens and equally oblivious to those below. These towers make for brilliant images: part gargantuan classical fragment, part repeated washing-machine drums. If this is a workplace as plugged-in main-frame it is also an attempt to give familiar forms of civilised urbanity to the industrial complex, the vista petering out in a double line of poplars but capable of endless extensions to a capitalist infinity – part-Poussin, part-Ballard.

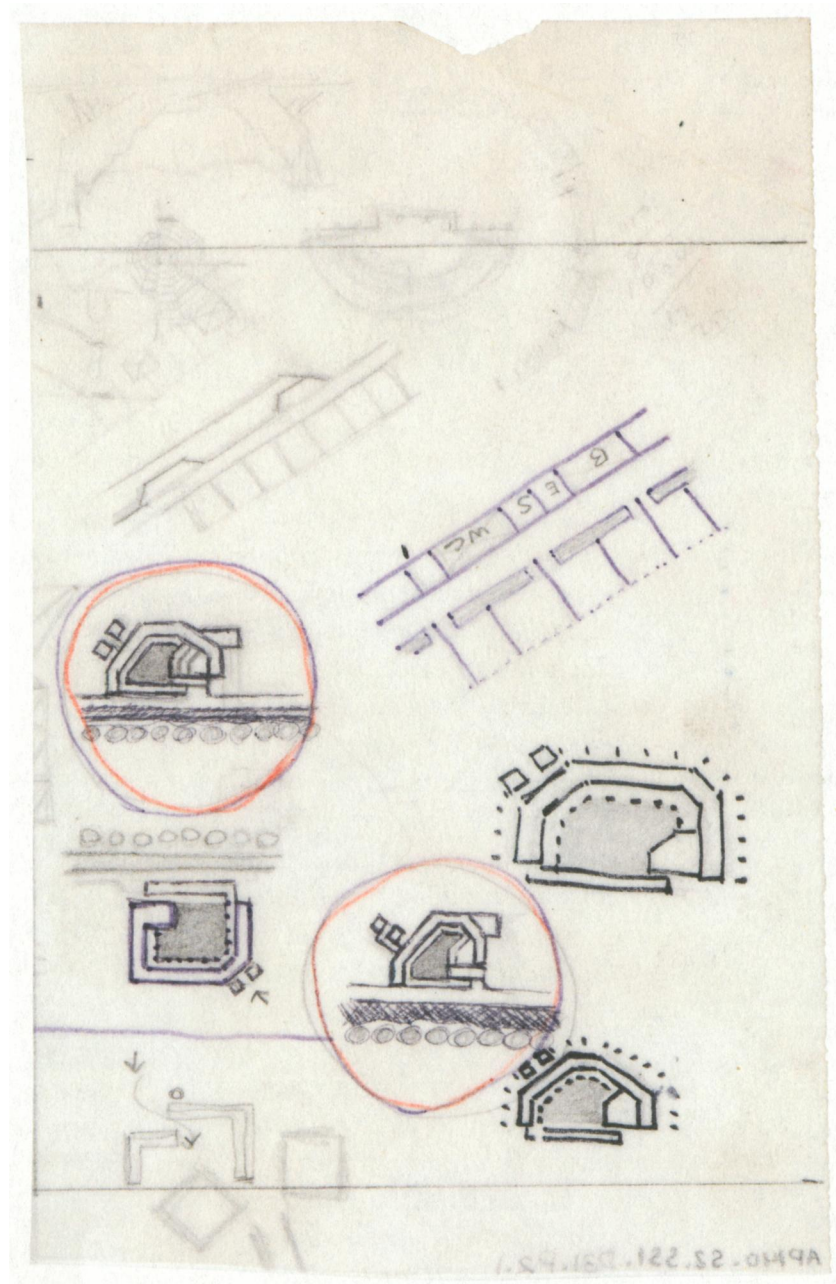
In the Olivetti project the landscape garden and the loose grid of the Milton Keynes city plan are brought into productive conjunction. The office-pavilion curves like a finely machined tool round a lake and holds its warehouse behind it like a cloak, a vast gridded landscape-equivalent. Seven conceptual drawings by Stirling show him working out this scheme. One imagines him fiddling with his quick thumbnails on three successive sheets from the same pad. Taking the faceted section he and Gowan had tried for Selwyn College, he bends it in response to the lakeside and at the bottom of this bend the columned corridor droops and bulges in pregnant dotted lines. Another sheet tries to relate this linear form to a warehouse shape behind – first this is square-ish, then a truncated wedge and finally a kinked parallelogram. As the sheets develop so these shapes migrate and mutate, disappear and

reappear. The bulging form in the first drawing, for instance, resurfaces as a grand piano shape linked with a long angled ramp, and Stirling tries several locations for this dynamic and slightly surreal combination (which would actually house a conference room and restaurant): sometimes it's placed at the axis where office and warehouse meet, sometimes back at the lakeside. The sequence shows that the desire for some kind of enigmatic synthesis was lodged into Stirling's conception of the design long before the appearance of Magritte-ian *doppelgängers* and strange scalar juxtapositions in Krier's presentation drawings. These headquarters buildings, these confections of sociability and routine, were clearly ideal fodder for Stirling's plastic imaginings, continuing the theme that had been initiated at Leicester with Gowan. They remind us that this watershed moment of modernist utopia and post-modernist 'return' was also a moment when industry seemed to offer new dreams and metaphors as ways of dealing with its own crisis. As such, rather than Cedric Price's now over exposed projects from this same period, it is these schemes that would surely repay our consideration.

But why do we need an exhibition on Stirling now? Vidler ducks answering this directly but the question is bound to pervade any experience of the show. And it might well have different answers as the exhibition travels from New Haven to London and Stuttgart before ending in Montreal. Americans might want to engage Stirling with ideas about what they term architecture's criticality; Europeans about the state of the postwar city and its capacity to embrace memory dynamically; Brits, if they can forget their old quarrels with Stirling, perhaps about architecture's relation to the state or its place in reviving fading folk memories of the public realm. Is it even perhaps because the architect as sponge, absorbing everything yet constantly searching, has some new relevance (maybe he can save us?). Or is there a kind of nostalgia for the hand of the architect, as if all the complexity of the world might be replaced by the smaller, contained complexities of thinking on and between lines laid on a crowded paper? Vidler knows that recourse to pat ideas about cities as archives, buildings as cities or archives as minds will not get us very far. His answer, perhaps, is staring us in the face – invention, subtlety of urban intervention, making sense of new needs and changing cities, can only come out of architecture itself, of 'thinking architecture from the inside'. That is the satisfaction of Stirling's drawings.

Anthony Vidler, *James Frazer Stirling: Notes from the Archive*, CCA, YCBA and Yale University Press, 2010

The exhibition *James Frazer Stirling: Notes from the Archive* is on view at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven (14 October 2010 – 2 January 2011); Tate Britain (5 April 2011 – 21 August 2011); Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (October 2011 – January 2012); and the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal (May 2012 – October 2012)



James Stirling, sketches for the Florey Building,
The Queen's College, Oxford, 1966
Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal