the serendipity of technology

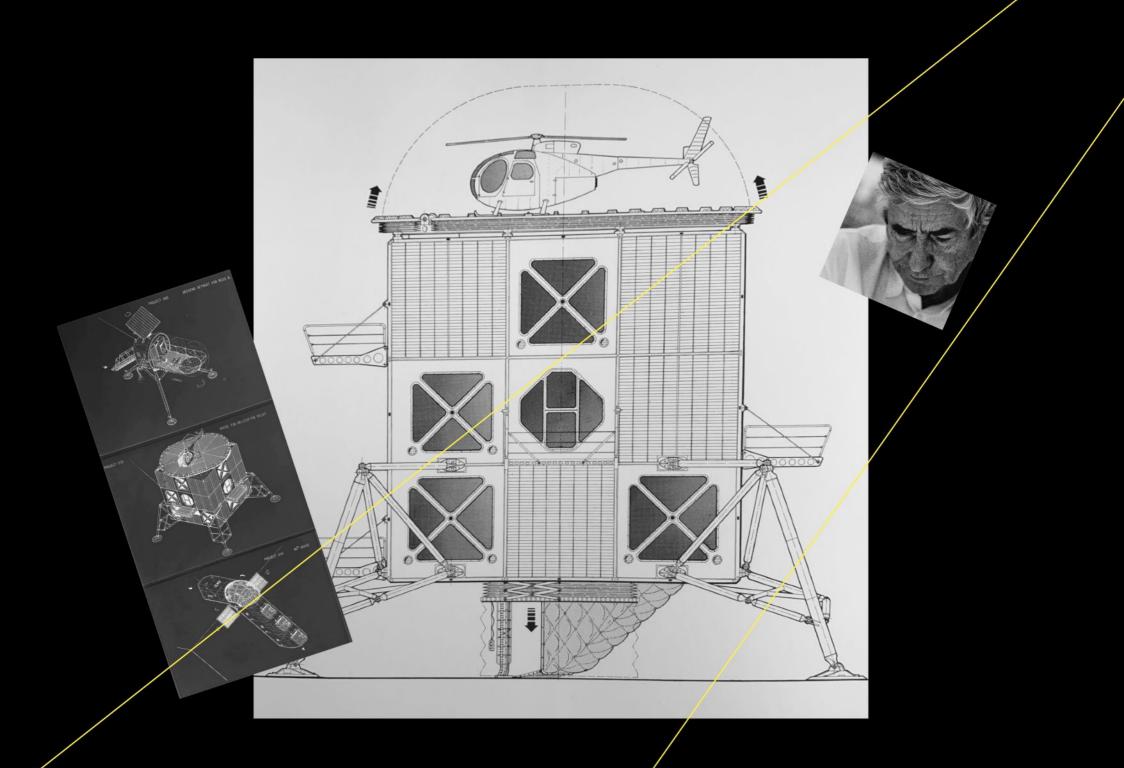
Serencipity

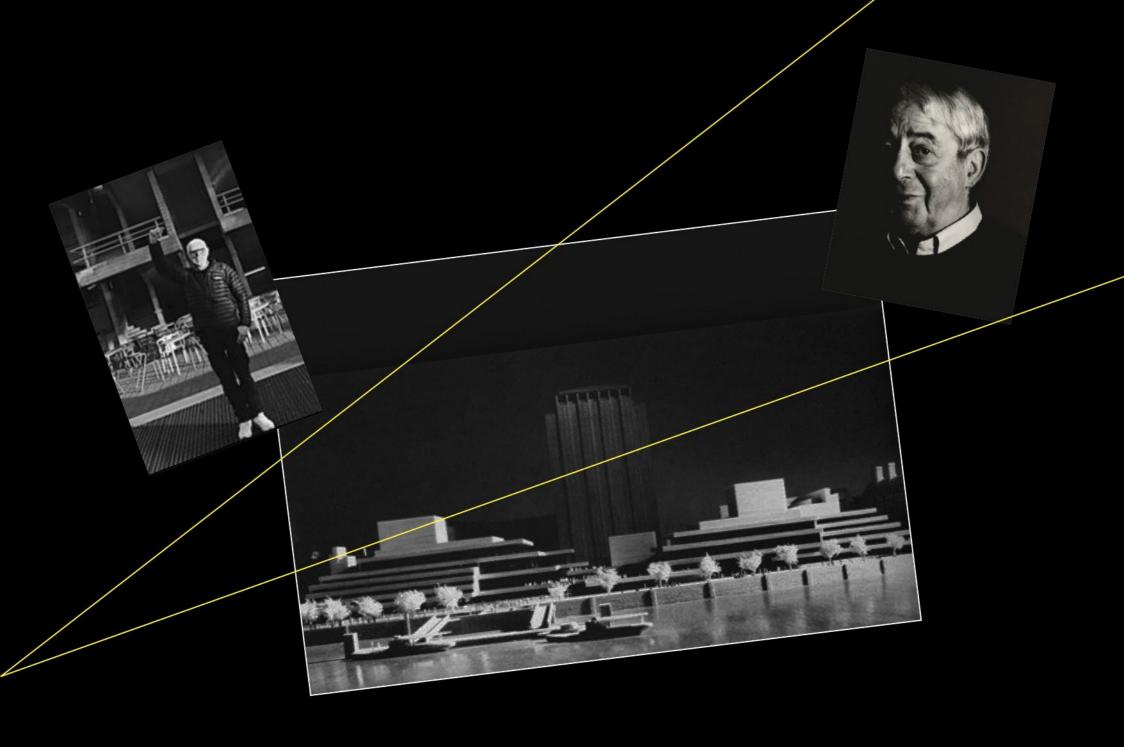
noun [mass noun]

the occurrence and development of events

a series of serencipity | [count noun]:

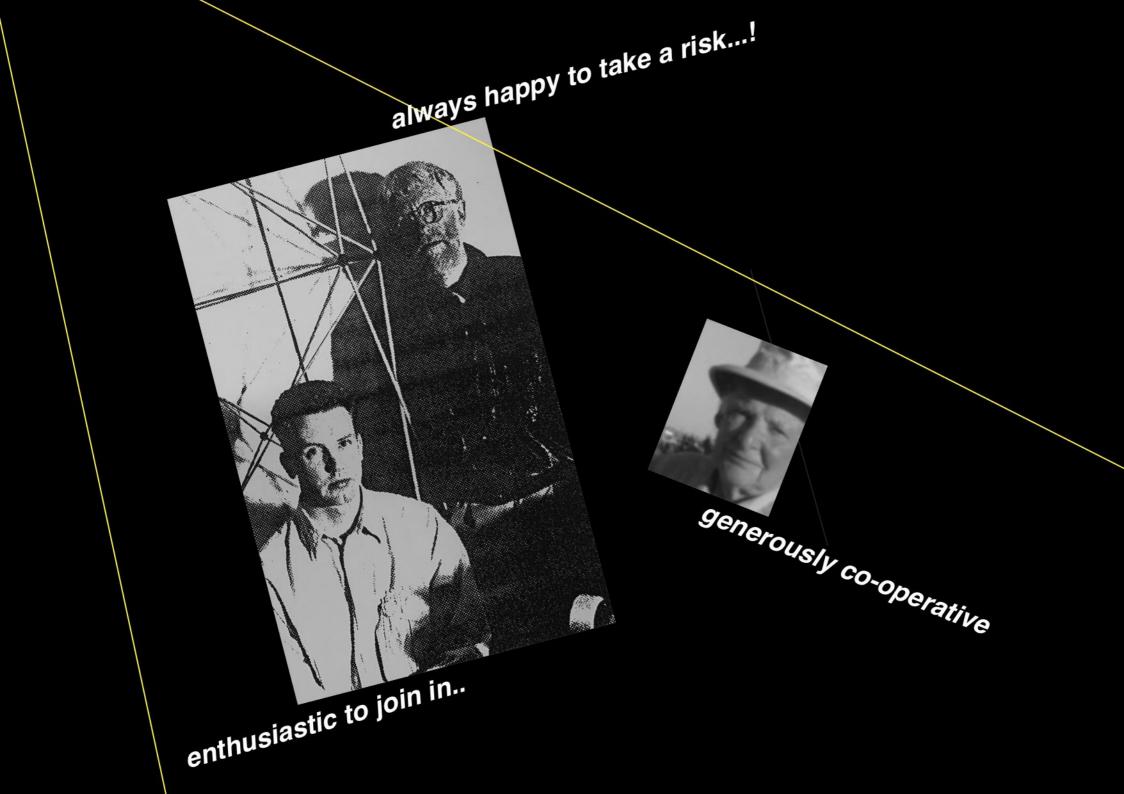
Technology ("science of craft", from Greek τέχνη, techne, "art, skill, cunning of hand"; and -λογία, -logia) is the sum of techniques, skills, methods, and processes used in the production of goods or services or in the accomplishment as scientific investigation.





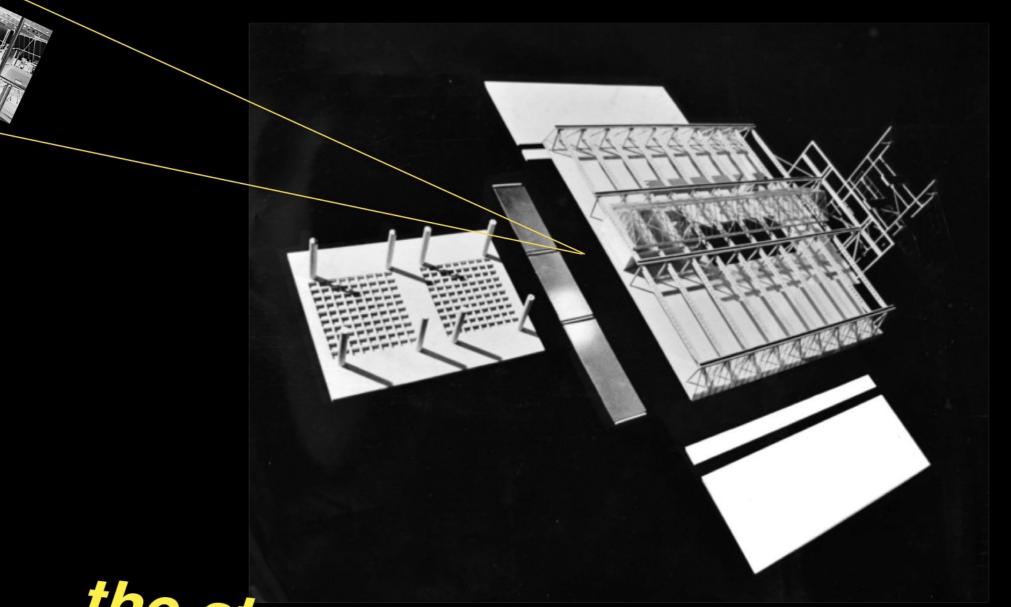






a risk with....

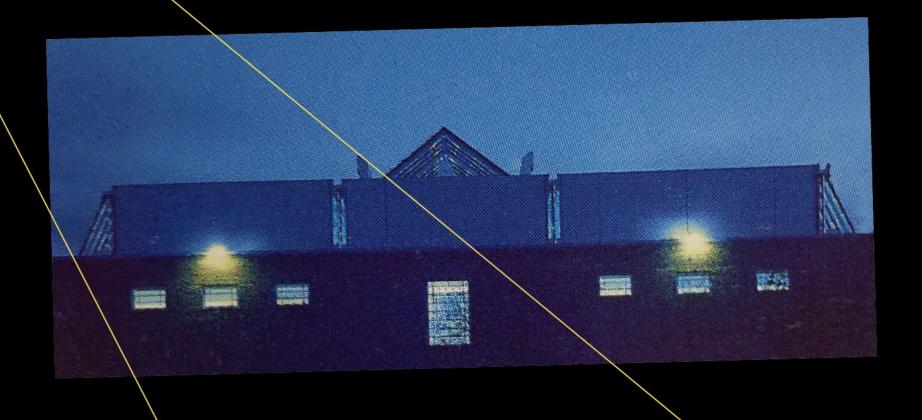
an unlikely proposition!



the starship enterprise..!

a story:

1989 and hard nosed builder called roy, overseeing completion of his futuristic site in liverpool, would go at 16.00 hrs every day to 'bridge control', and fly this building through space - a pretend captain kirk from the popular TV series STARTREK. a silver and green ship through dark space - imaginary maybe, but that was what this project was for me - a way of dreaming the dream of architecture, maybe irrationally in purely professional terms, but perhaps valid in the instinctive world of student ideas...



coming in to land....

...back from the smoke (london)

since returning to my hometown in 1978 (I'd been sampling the high architecture scene in london for over 12 years), I'd dreamed that somehow, somewhere - something new would emerge... land, as it were from space, putting to flight all the miserable dark brick hipped roofed manifestations of the POW (prince of wales) era. the schools of course flew the flag for a brand of modernism and my contribution had come via students' imagination and creative work plus vacation work in fosters. ABK & others + graphic design commissions

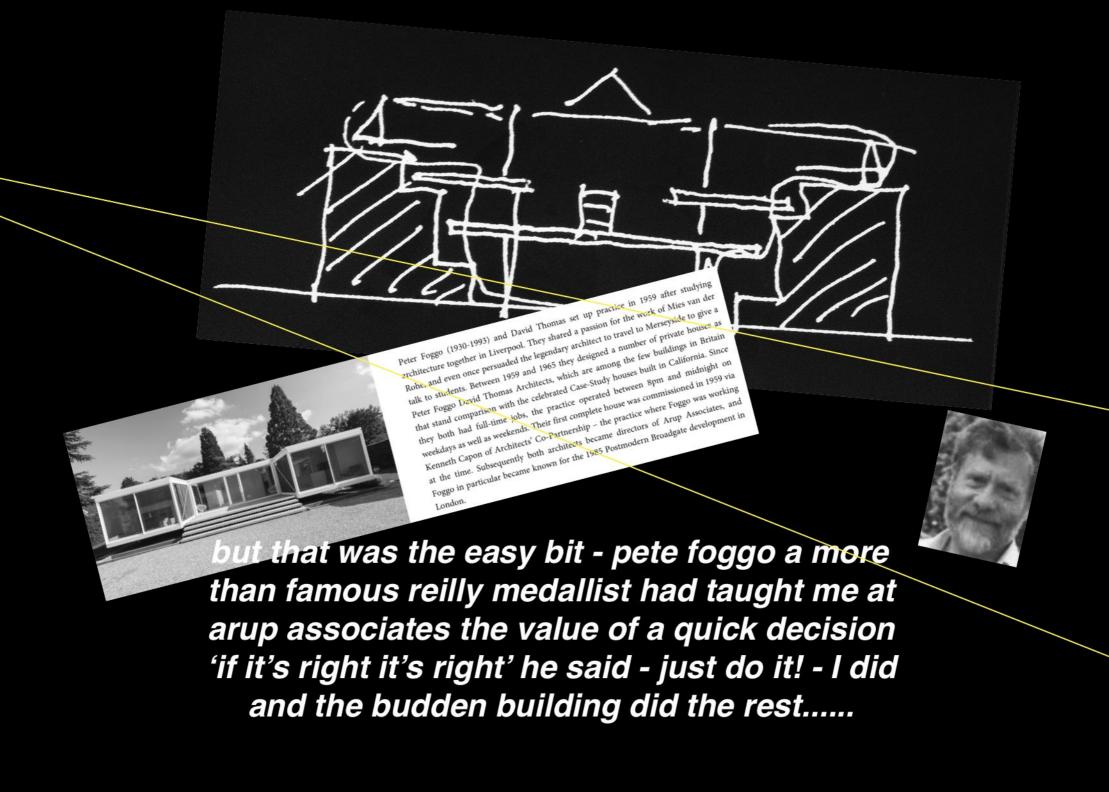
66 The purpose built school Lord Leverhulme had promised the university before the war was finally realized by his son the second Viscount to - the Leverhulme in 1933 ironical Dia year that Georgian houses on Abercromby Square, and while recognisably Modernist in conception, attention to achieving

Reilly et al, have paid close harmony between the new and the old. 3 ??

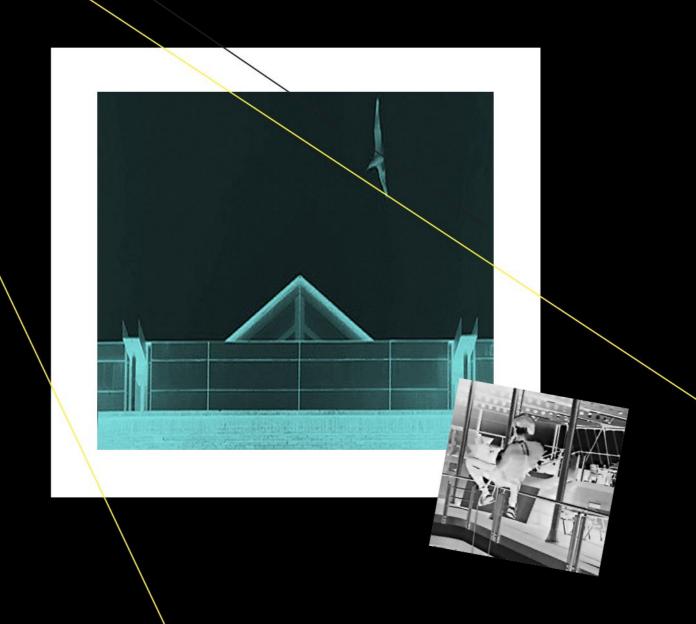
Reilly retired. The SChool of ARCHIER CHIP



so when my colleague gerry beech (wartime) fleet air arm ace and liverpool architect), totally out of the blue one friday afternoon, asked me if I'd produce a scheme for a new studio I was not only complimented (I mean why me?), but was on board like a catapult take off from the carrier that gerry had served on. the fact that he was going on holiday and needed help wasn't the issue - for me it was a chance, and I took it fast and furious, set up a massive parallel motion in the attic and produced an outline design by sunday lunchtime....



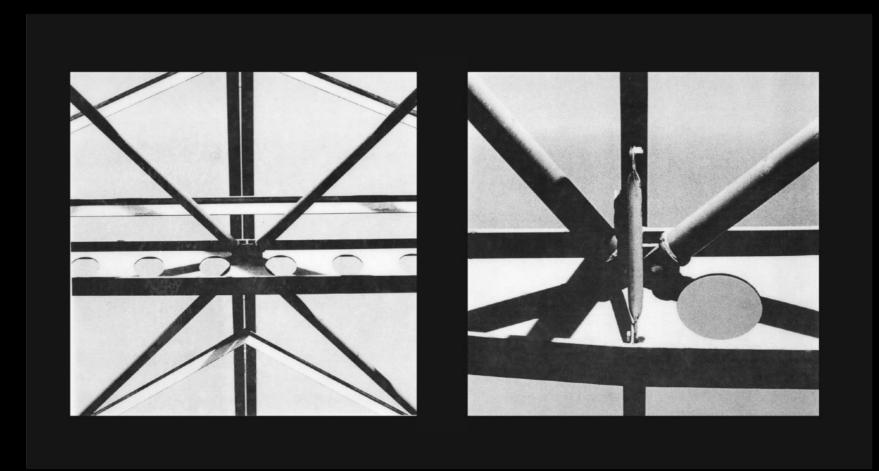
so was it feasible?



or just an impossible dream...

a large extension on top of an existing load bearing brick building! john dale (a retired city council head engineer) thought so - he devised a system which transferred a third of the load to the centre with longtitudinal trusses spreading the rest along the outside existing walls. all very ingenious - he rose to this challenge saying it was such a seachange from his work in the city, that it gave him new life and enthusiasm for engineering...

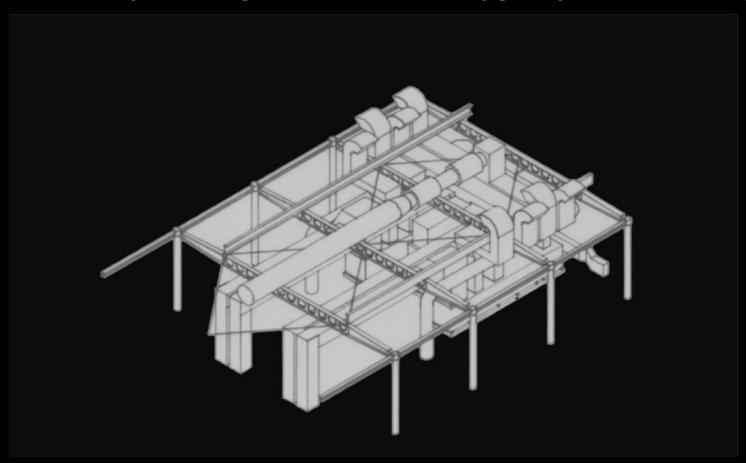
a building to exhibit itself?



possibly - but we'd have to move fast - very fast. the budget was £1M no more (and that included fees....) drawings had to be produced - students were taken on - rod mcallister, paul smiles, sat mand. others tasked to produce presentation work (CAD was in its absolute infancy). the building was to provide an academic and practical polemic. every detail would tell a story. the underlying classicism of the two abercromby square houses and the formally attached budden building was to be the genarating force + a subtle existing asymmetry to be overcome.

classical rigour would extend to services and minor fittings - the whole heating and air handling system would become a demonstrative installation, centrally placed and subject to a logical symmetry.

the university's HVAC engineers dave dutton & henry gunwhy rose to this challenge.





VXX

starting fast...

a small group of students and I started to put it together - a contractor was employed by gerry, and based on a series of sketches done by me, a set of drawings began to emerge over the summer of 1988. no computers nothing digital -A1 sheets of tracing paper, freehand sketches (some done on site) and visits to subcontractors and suppliers. every morning I would take our little daughter sophie (later to become an architect herself) to the university playgroup. every morning I then went to the site hut to chat with tim the site manager and roy the foreman



seen on a nearby hoarding...

VXX

my second architecture book (the first was banister fletcher) was prof cordingley's revised edition of normand's 'parallel of the orders'.

arup associates had, when I left in '78, given me a magnificent book on palladio - our contractor (mears construction) had seen me off with a perfectly formed curved T square on a board totally lacking straight edges

(demonstrating the paradoxical nature of my still ongoing design intentions which had swung between classical villas and parametric curves).

Normand's Parallel of the

Orders of Architecture



R. A. CORDINGLEY

MA, FRIRA, AMPTL

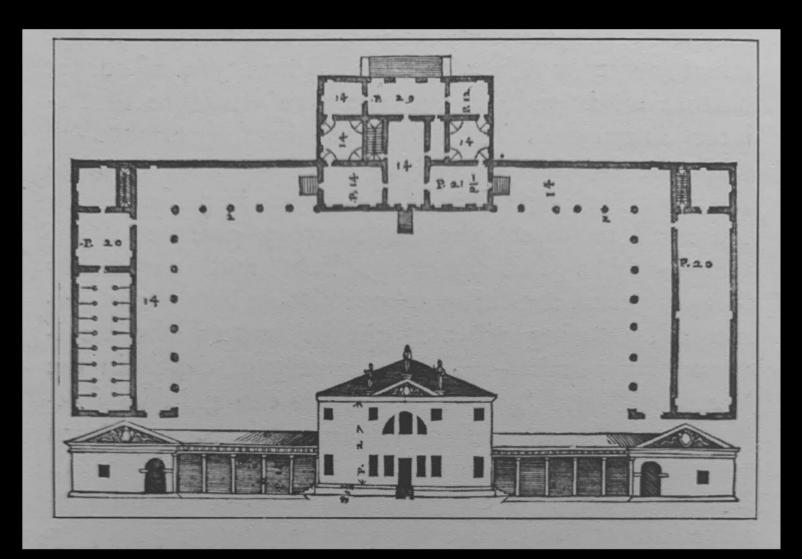
The work is the standard handbook on the subject of the Clamic sedom. Professor Cordingley has completely revised the text and brought it up to date in line with current architectural educational requirements. This edition contains 80 plates including all the original Normand and automa additional once by Mauch, Pugin and Professor Cordingley.

sixth Tiranti edition

so the underlying order of classicism became something of a design mission - an archaeologist would find elements in rainwater pipes, electrical switches, column bases capitals & more.



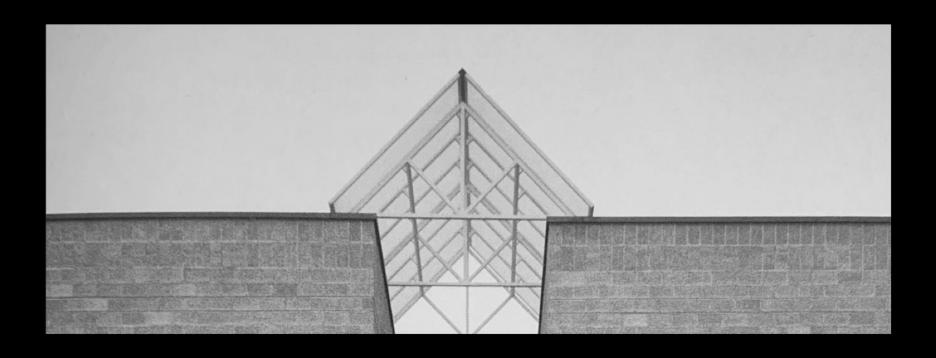
sketch of the acropolis by corbusier - thought to have inspired ronchamp



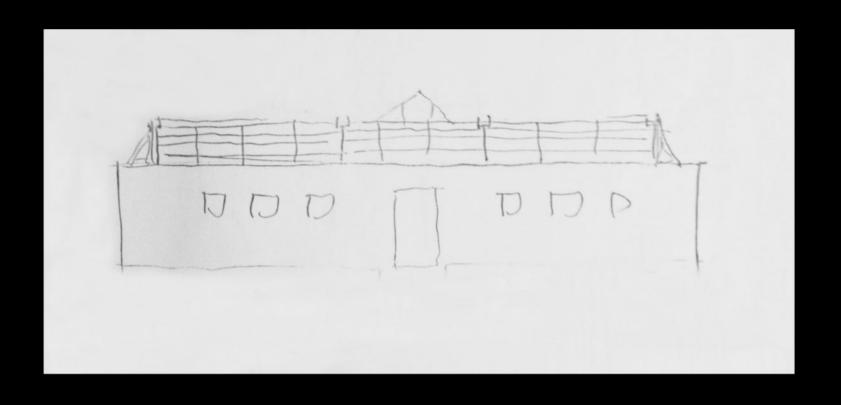




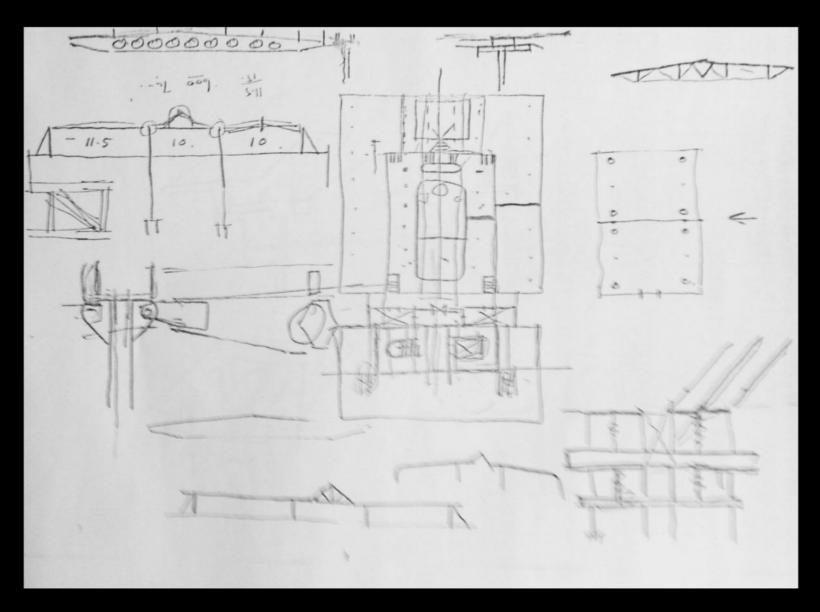
sketch for a house in killybegs N ireland - design published in BD



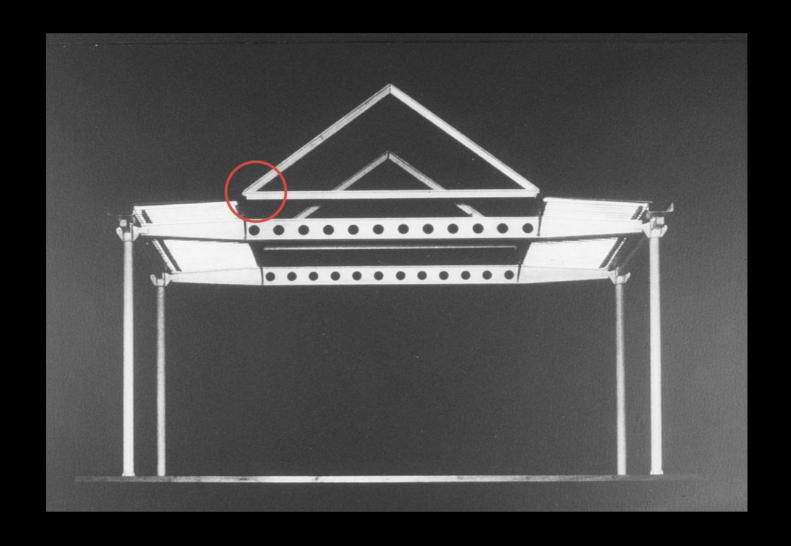
house in pregassona - mario botta



early sketch of the north elevation

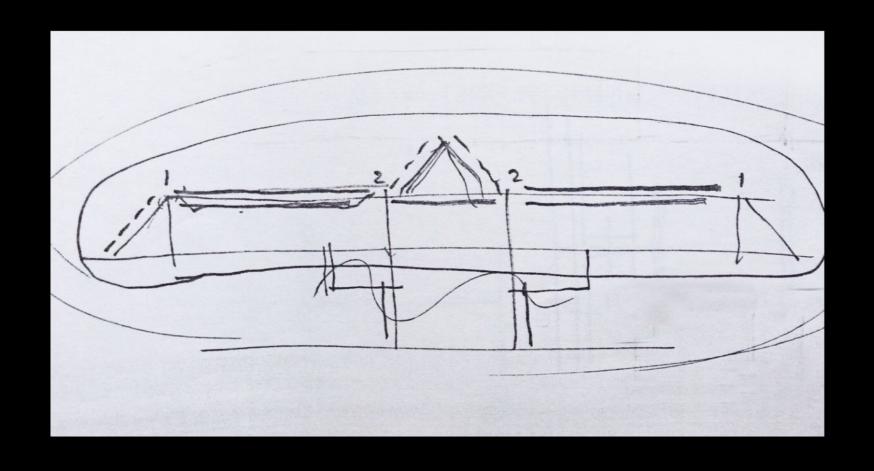


a jumble of ideas - probably done somewhere between lime st and euston...

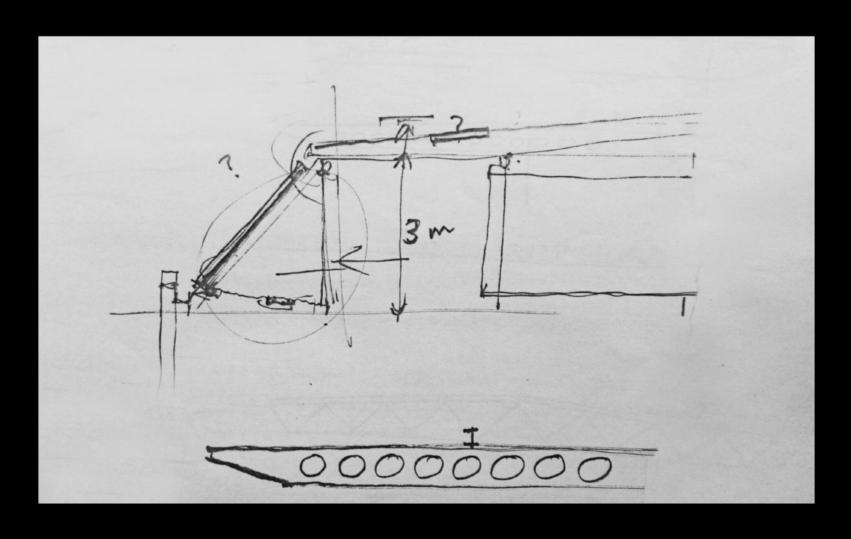


classical typology modelled by ken

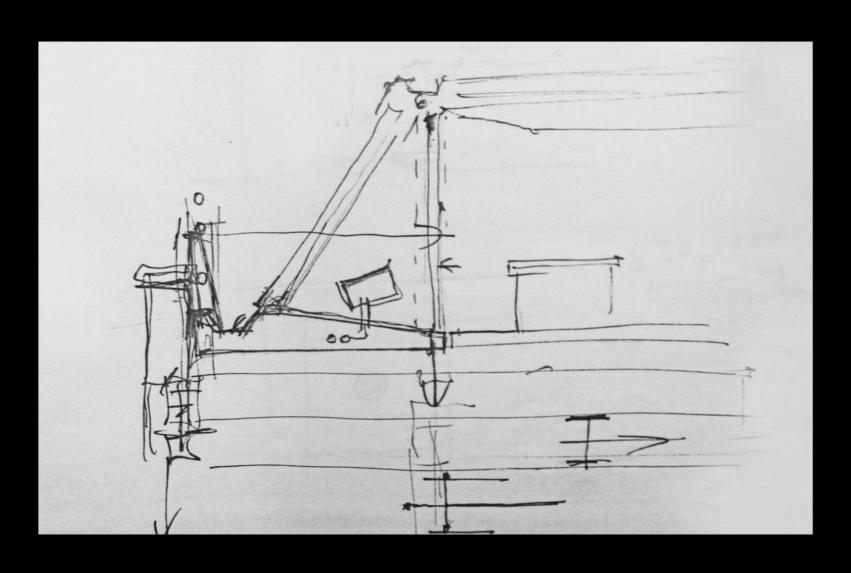
ex police officer...



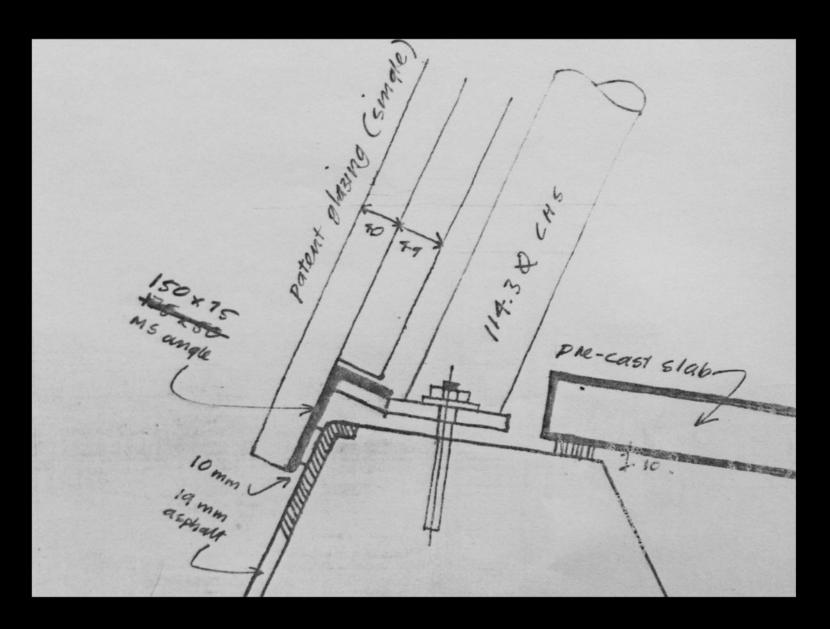
first stab at the section was easy - just follow the budden. here though the idea of frame, beams, pins and glazing begins to emerge



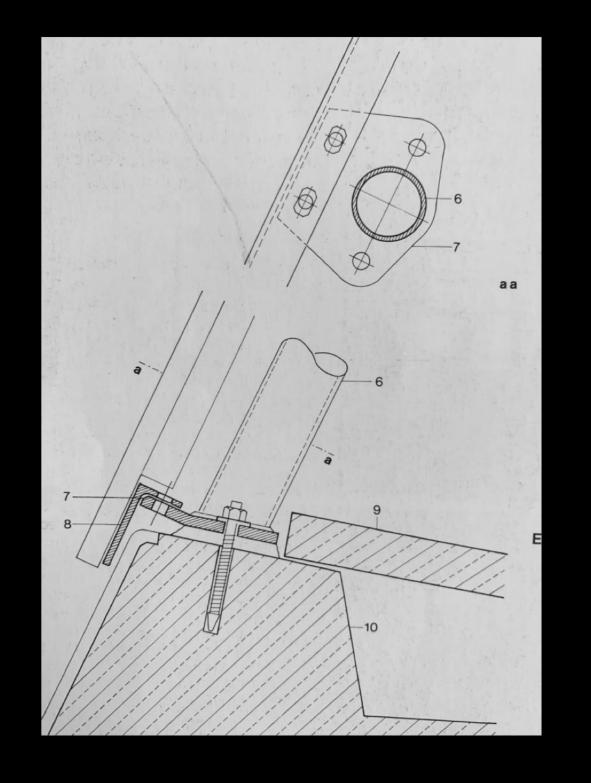
the edge condition - sloping up to disguise the parapet maybe. a mansard form to lessen the impact? beams with holes (fashionable...)

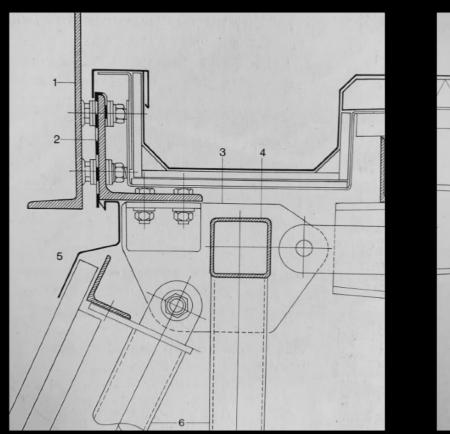


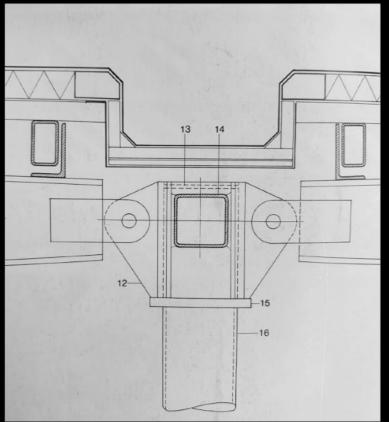
a gutter, a table, a heater, some beams....



have to start thinking scale & detail...!





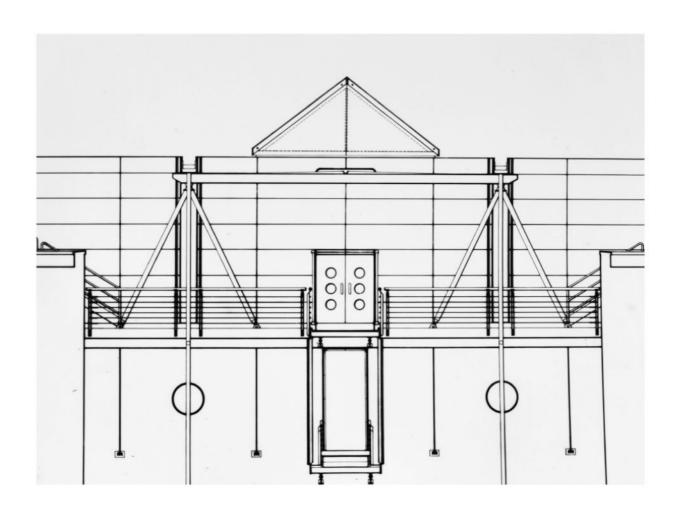


so get some proper drawings done - steel fabricator phones friday wants monday





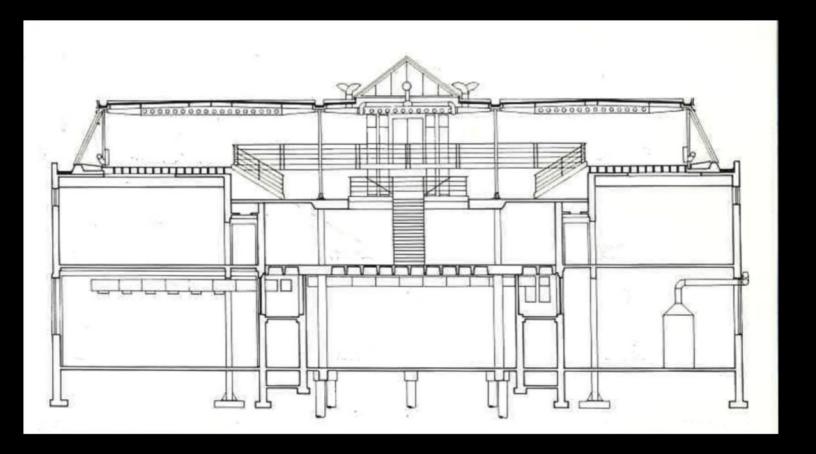
asymmetry would cause problems throughout....

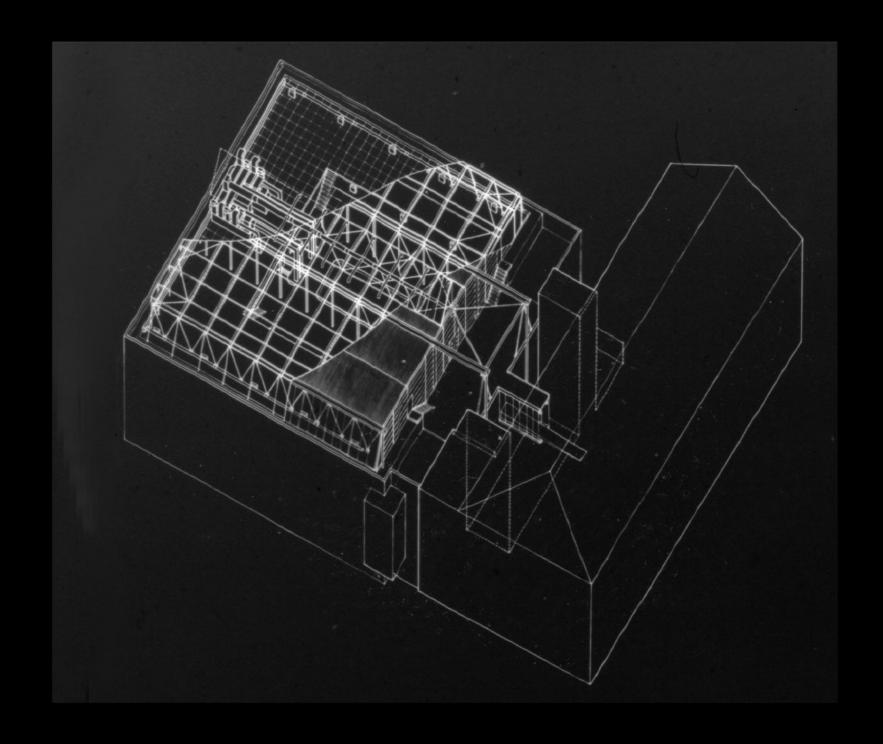


drawing by rod mcallister

construction...!

this was what I'd call 'fraught fun' - by the time it started rod mcallister was helping me and the 2 of us produced all that was then necessary to feed our contractor (monks) with information. I went to site every single day, then to the school for my teaching duties. our contractor and their subcontractors were full of enthusiasm - they saw future PR I think. this was an unusual project for them. I described it as a 'slice of lemon on top of a bowl vegetable soup'. they saw the humour and rose to the occasion. there was little interest from my colleagues - that is until after completion!







monk's of warrington demolish the 'centre court'

scene of years of crits, degree days, parties - sad for all.....



and we have some columns



2nd floor slab concrete pour'

concrte pump broke and squirted everywhere!



ready for powerfloating then RAIN RAIN

concrete went hard so grinding for days.....



an education

outside steel fabricators roydens at rainfoard



health and safety?

inside steel fabricators roydens at rainfoard



the 'dog's bones'

(web stabilisation struts roydens style...)



fabricating the beams

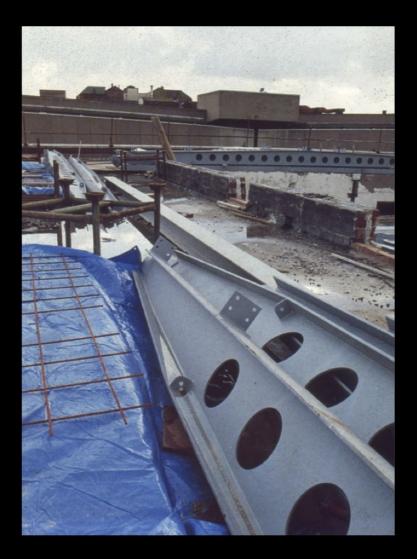
all beams made from 1.2 x 2.4 steel plate (welded)



something not quite right...



almost ready to go to site...





what happened here ...?

newly painted steelwork dumped over a weekend - ah well....



so how's this for a balustrade stanchion then!

8mm plate pressbraked to a U with radiussed ends - in pairs at 3m centres

from idea to drawings to fabrication to construction, problems abound and are overcome... this was a school of architecture but where were the students the staff now? there were rumours - a kind of verbal twittersphere. I can't say that they were all complimentary - fake news maybe... we had no alternative but to carry on - far too late for committee judgements - they could come later (and did!)



steel erection begins...

after much argument - the undercover weekend delivery argument settled



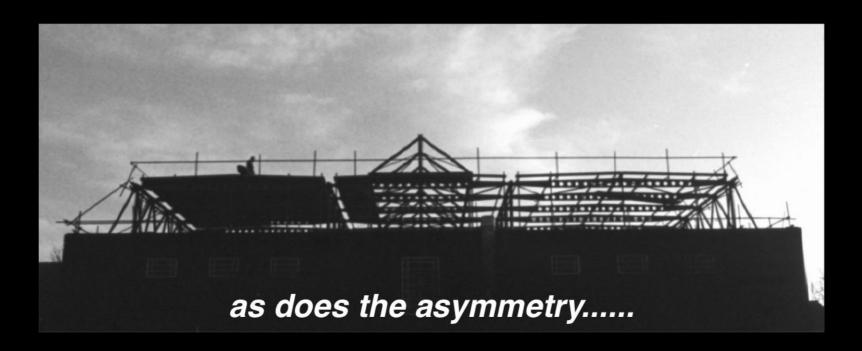


the frame begins to grow...

the most exciting time on any job

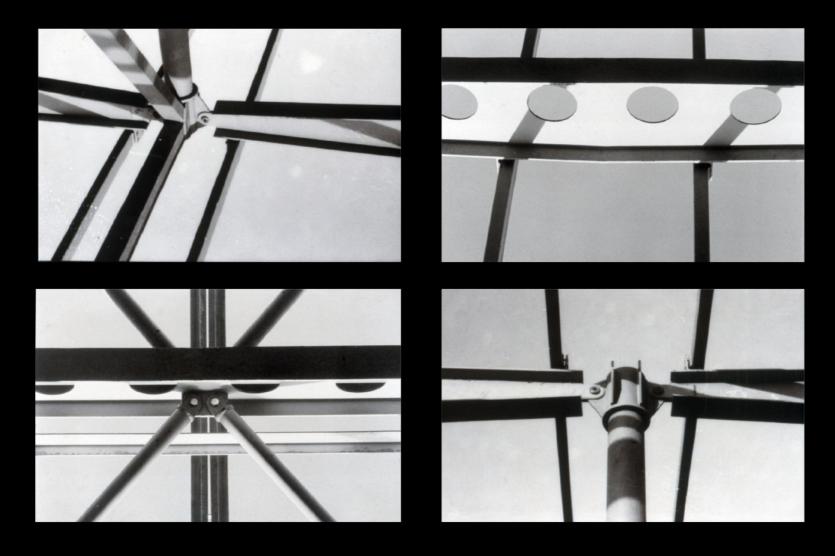


the symmetry starts to show



this all imprtant north view clearly shows that the building by following the lines of the budden building below is not a pure classical form. on the south elevation I was seriously worried about the two escape doors which ended up both on the same side of a cladding joint. this was sleepless nights stuff but showed how a drawn elevation can badly mislead.

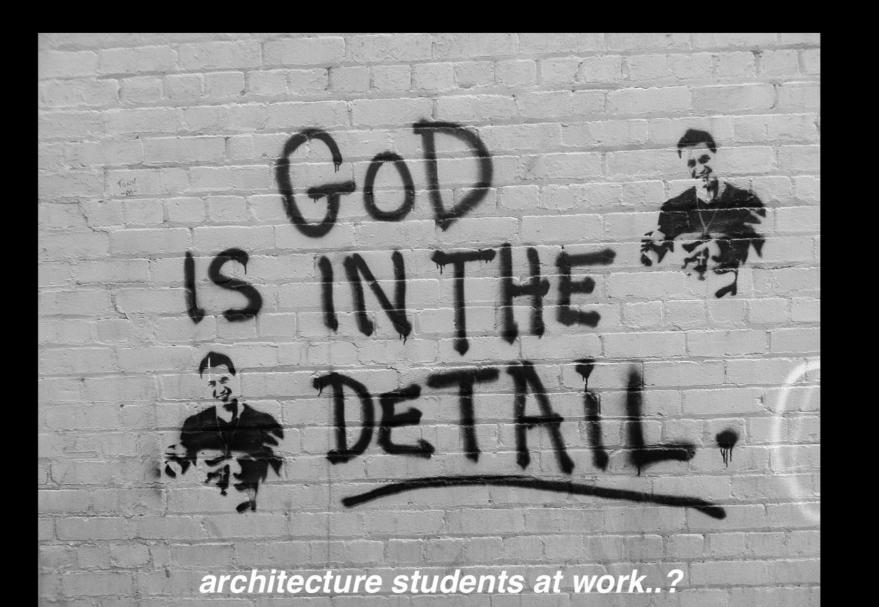
lionel budden surely would have had the same problem?



do photos transcend all the hassle...?

a sunny day and the joy of newly erected steelwork

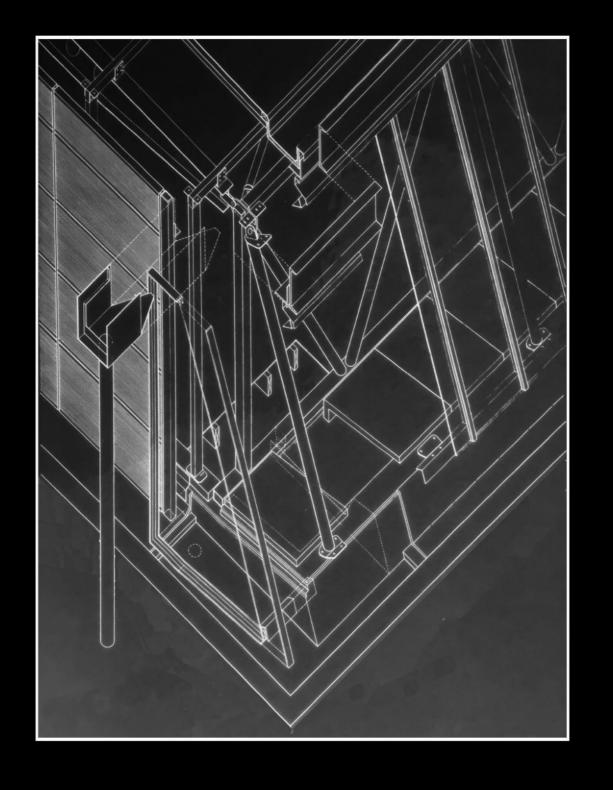






2019 student drawing







suggesting the abandoned extension (a central stair & lift + covered terrace)

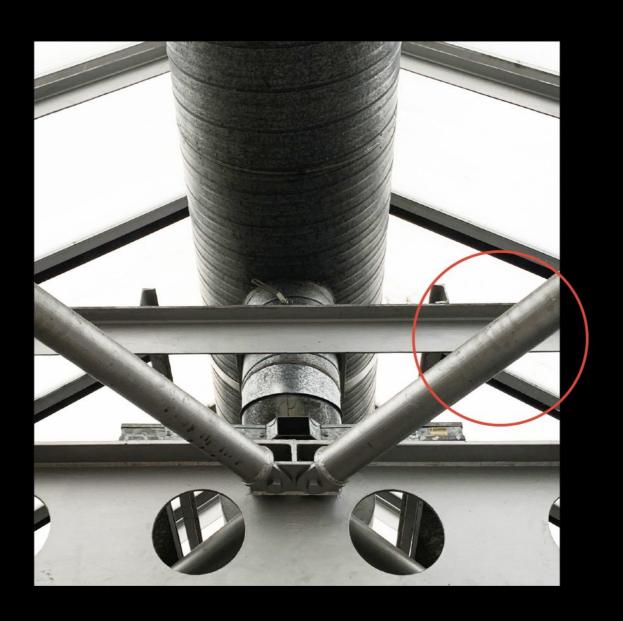


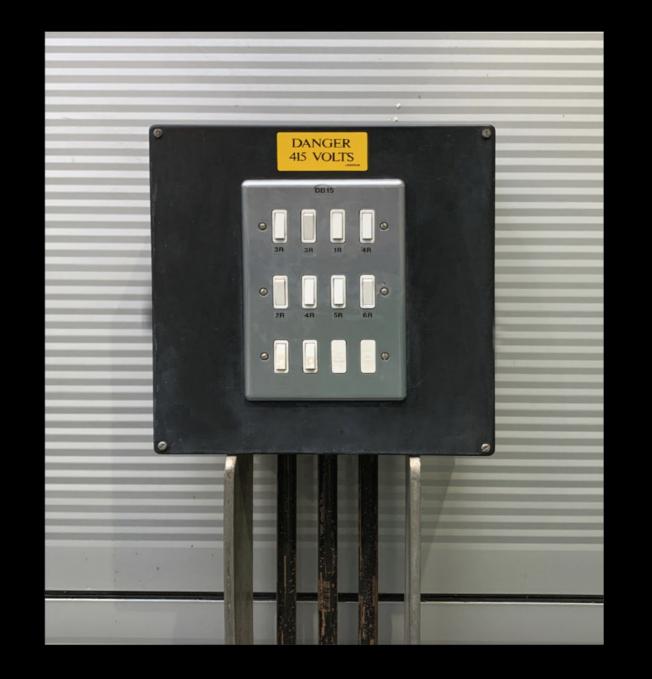


a 'dogs bone' in place





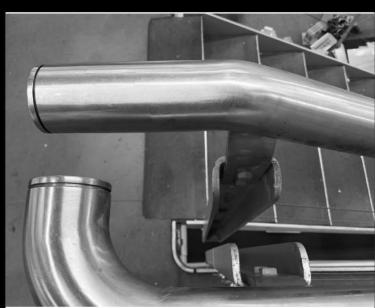
















for those who wondered (like the university building services dept) as to why this staircase was 'hanging...' it was because the landing slab wasn't strong enough for support. this was NOT fanciful - just functional. also the whole scheme survived the fire officer by virtue of the very low headroom escape door







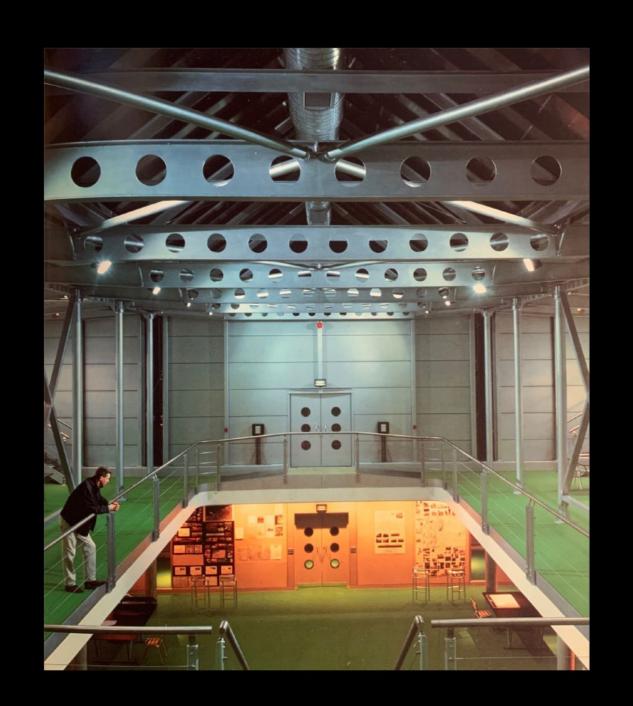
can scarpa trips have been of influence?





yes, as bit by bit, using local workshops - SS tube importers, yacht riggers & small steel fabicators all from liverpool docklands - we achieved a bespoke language (cheaply) which flies in the face of UK building industry norms. the same for lighting - special thorn fittings (now taken away) + £10K worth of fittings from concorde on the basis of the studio being named the 'concorde gallery'. it's now been re-named the 'stirling' - standard office fluorescents replace carefully designed black enclosures - perhaps not quite what the master would have liked?

then the fit-out!



rod mcallister (above left) & I moved the operation to london - there simply wasn't anywhere in the NW to source modern furniture other than ralph capper in manchester who was too high end for us.

we found 2 faux corb LC2 3 seat settees in neal st for £350 each, then 100 aluminium cafe chairs for £16 a shot. we went to ADEPTUS just off tottenham ct rd for ideas on table frames, then to tysons liverpool for plywood items like dollies and drawing storage.

a 'system' was evolved - hot desking with portable drawing boards to be hired complete with american mayline parallel motions





so what happened to these items... the settees were commandeered by students before being moved to the new student designed coffee bar (later closed down by the university) they ended up in david dunster's office and are now in the staffroom...











even the tables had a structural message for students with upside down trestles spreading the load with the CHS tube making them easy to slide..

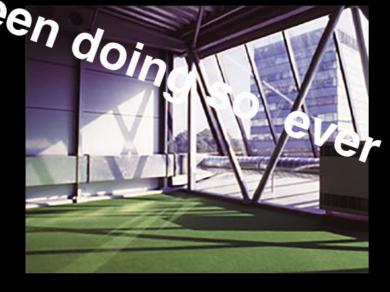






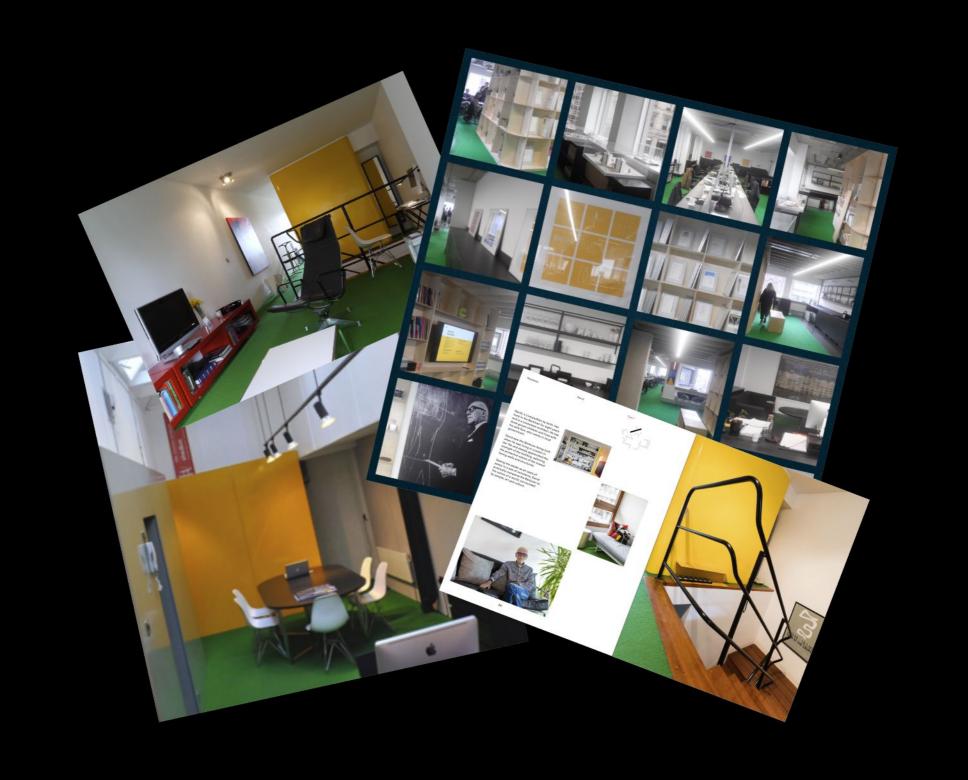
We used it - and have been doi



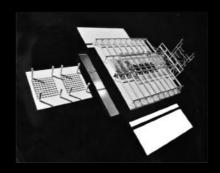


since...

pretty much everywhere...



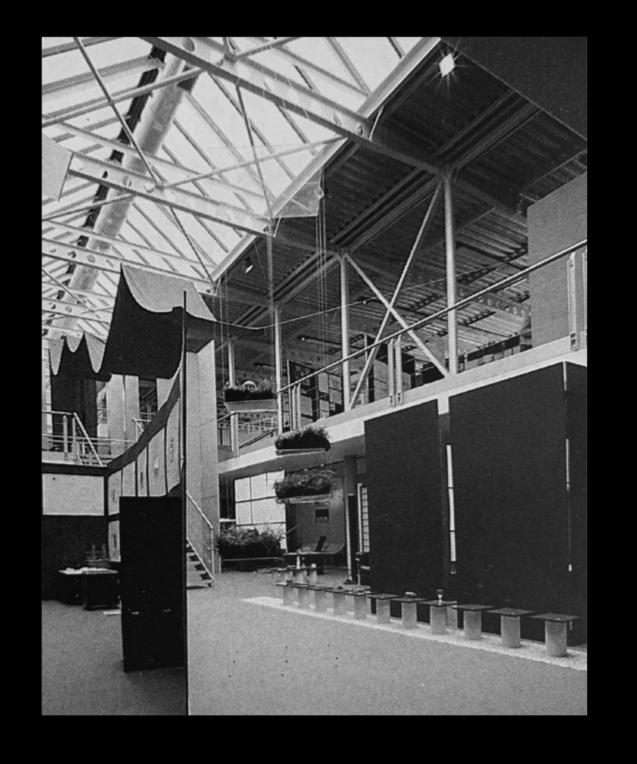
completion...!



a new building seemingly from space - landing on a roof in liverpool. a slice of lemon on the dour matrix of brick neo vernacular that charcterised the city in the 80's - post riots, post the prince of wales and his call to imitate the past with that reactionary 'tesco style' beloved by planners

a gallery and a studio

for exhibitions and & for work









the concorde gallery

a huge party then a series of exhibitions - art shows, fashion shows, degree shows, music...

then the new studio

as was intended but minus the hot desking system. but plus students, models and life...!



there had been innovations in putting this ship into space - the beautiful silver paint inspired by a michael hopkins school in hampshire - the clever distribution of load which (only just) made the whole enterprise possible, the enthusiasm for the project from all involved - contractors, subbies even suppliers. the upside down table trestles - the individual storage untis.

there were problems too - all cooling systems were axed for financial reasons. the roof (including the cork insulation) was ultra cheap with only a 20 yr guarantee), vertical louvres caused drawings to blow about if open for ventilation. the building overheated in a hot summer - the hot desking system never really worked out..





the hampshire school had come as a re-assuring inspiration. silver MIO (bridge building paint) had been applied all over, but it was dull & uninteresting. this hopkins design was a friend in need unusually classical in concept with some mystery (and green) thrown in seemingly to help....



but despite everything the building has survived 30 years of activity, controversy, publicity and (sadly) neglect.

the image of the south elevation and terrace entrance, has been used over and over again to publicise the liverpool school of architecture. the dramatic interior (no other school in the country has such a space) has inspired generations of students - or so I'm told...)

this photograph was taken by the late john donat who influenced architectural photography by using 35mm when large format was the norm.

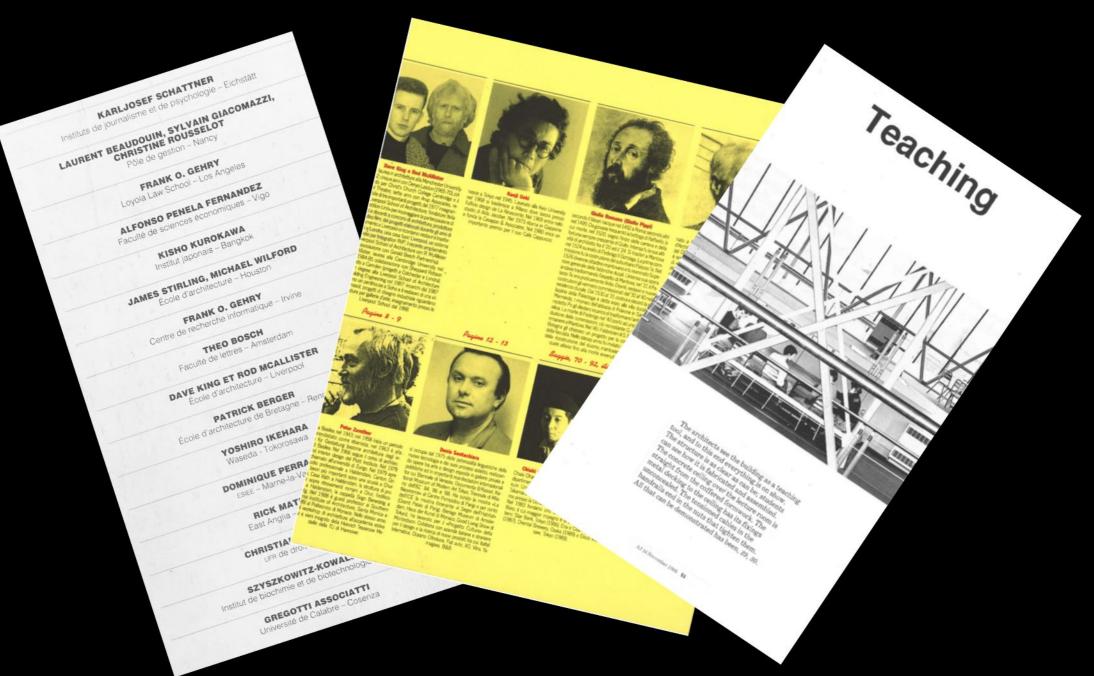
(an odd porch now spoils the crisp clarity of this view, so the shot can't be repeated)



but the story didn't stop with the building...

rod and I walked milan on a friday looking for magazine editors - london & bern plus at an AA party trying to speak to peter davey (then editor of the AR.) subseqent publicity both for us and for the school was outstanding...

subsequently KM (king mcallister) was founded with graduates lee bennett & andy purvis - later, I helped to found shedkm with james weston & jonathan falkingham (all ex LSA)



so what now ...?



maybe time to deconstruct...

take the steel down to the slab levels build a simpler more sustainable roof?

the coffee bar went years ago...

(beautifully designed and constructed by a group of students & positioned opposite to the new studio entrance - it had the corbusier settees, an espresso machine + my pompidou poster in a frame provided by KM. steelwork and timber were gifted - all labour by students)

james weston james riseboro andy day charlie dymond mark howard ian killick alex morris & dan leon



As part of a reorganisation of the Department of Architecture and Building Engineering, a student led initiative produced an overall strategy which attempted to combine the disjointed facilities previously spread throughout the three buildings of the School.

Uncoffee BAR Liverpool & GALLERY

In the summer of 1993 the Department of Architecture & Building Engineering were granted around £60,000 from University funds to make internal alterations to the administration areas of the school. A scheme drawn up by a building surveyor! proposed moving the coffee bar to the ground floor; well away from the working studio.

Word of the plans, put forward during the summer vacation, filtered through to a few students still in Liverpool, resulting in a meeting of staff and students to discuss the very imminent issues (work was about to start). The strategy of the proposals were questioned at the meeting and it was agreed that students would produce a swift rethink.

A logical master plan was produced which located a new coffee bar and gallery space on the first floor, with its new entrance on the main axial route from the Studio, (completed in 1988 and designed by local architects King McAllister), creating a continuous view from the studio entrance through the bar into the Georgian Abercromby Square.

The reception and all administration were relocated within the ground floor suites fronting Abercromby Square. This meant that the design and technical resource library, seminar rooms could join the coffee bar/informal exhibition space on the same floor enabling closer interaction with the studio facilities.





Design Team

Andy Day, Charlie Dymond, Mark Howard, Ian Killick, Dan Leon, Alex Morris, James Risebero, James Weston

Photography Ian Killick

Paintings pictured in bar Max Mosscrop The master plan also incorporated the opportunity to provide a new gallery linked to the existing audio-visual room and for potential expansion into an exterior light-well in the building.

With the new plans accepted, the team of students, advised by Rod McAllister, designed and supervised the general works on site. They then undertook, using any left over monies, to actually build and decorate the coffee bar themselves over the Autumn and Soring terms. The limited budget meant a large proportion of the fixtures and fittings were donated or acquired at reduced cost, including Iguzzini uplighters designed by Renzo Piano, a Pompidou poster and frame by King/McAllister and the rubber stud flooring.

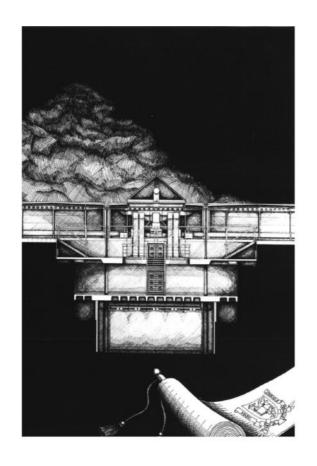
GAGGIA

The reclaimed twin sections of stainfess steel top, central to the design/dimensioning of the main counter, were also rustled up. Two prefabricated steel footings support the 5.5m bar top, which has 1.5m cantilever at both ends: one tapering to provide a high level seating area, and an inbuilt vase for a daily fresh bunch of flowers.

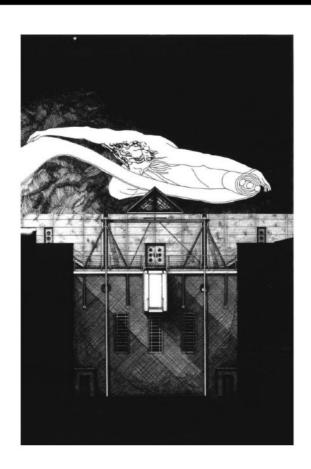
The bar, designed for ease of assemblyits functions and their junctions articulated by different materials - is separated into two main elements. The horizontal body of the main counter houses the storage of all wet goods and services, including the hotplate, coffee machine and refrigerators. The rear vertical cabinet combines the display and storage of all dry stock.

Split between two south facing rooms, the bar is intended to become a forum for displaying various artwork from local artists on a continually rotating basis.

It was completed to coincide with another student initiative: the Static Symposium - a successful two day bash, organised by Liverpool students, with a host of lectures and good lively debate.





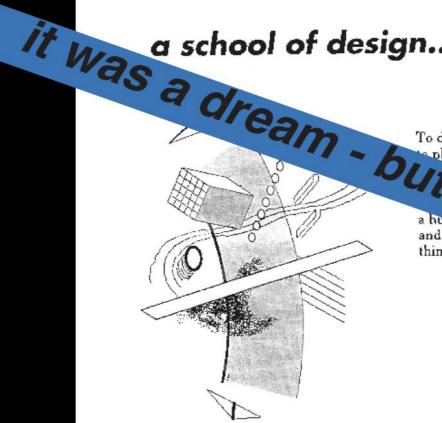


but mark dring's tryptich - hand drawn ink on art paper, will always be around to jog the memory -



- of occasions like the 600 student early '90's symposium that could only have taken place in such a space.....

"Say not thou, What that the former days were the cause better than these?" -Eccles. vii. 10.



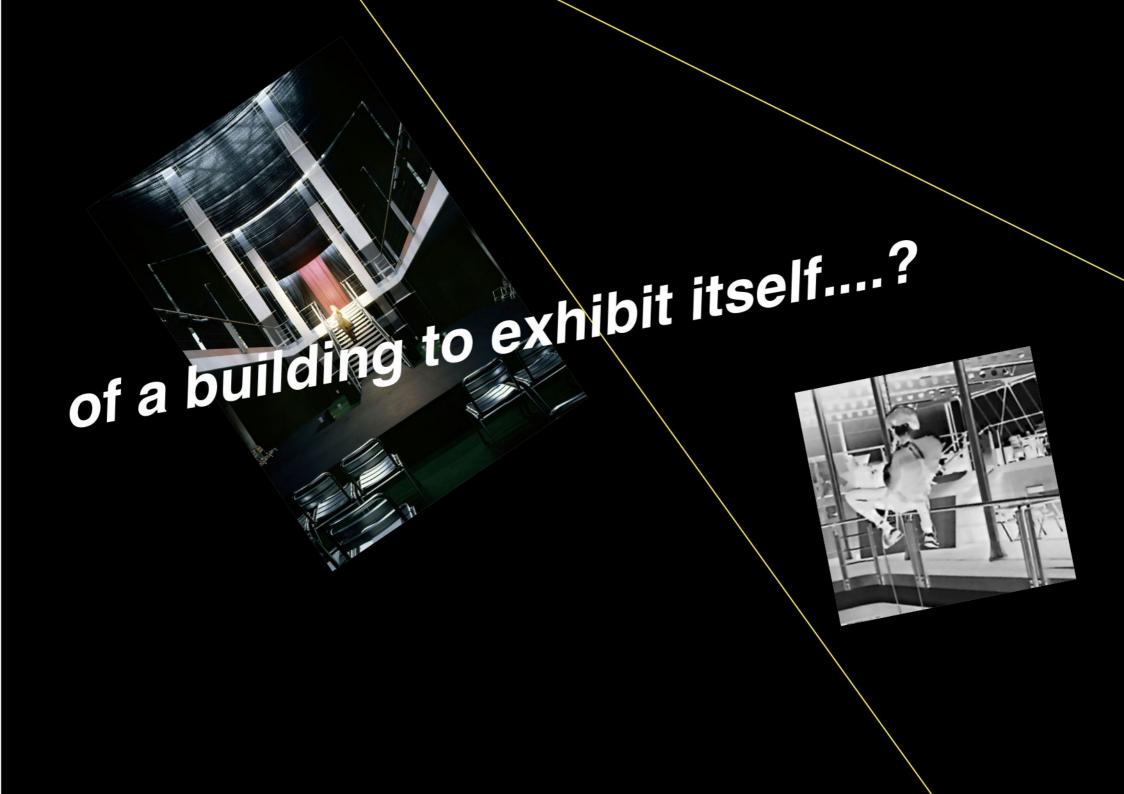
To design is plan and to organize, to order, to relate and to control it embraces

ing disorder and accident.

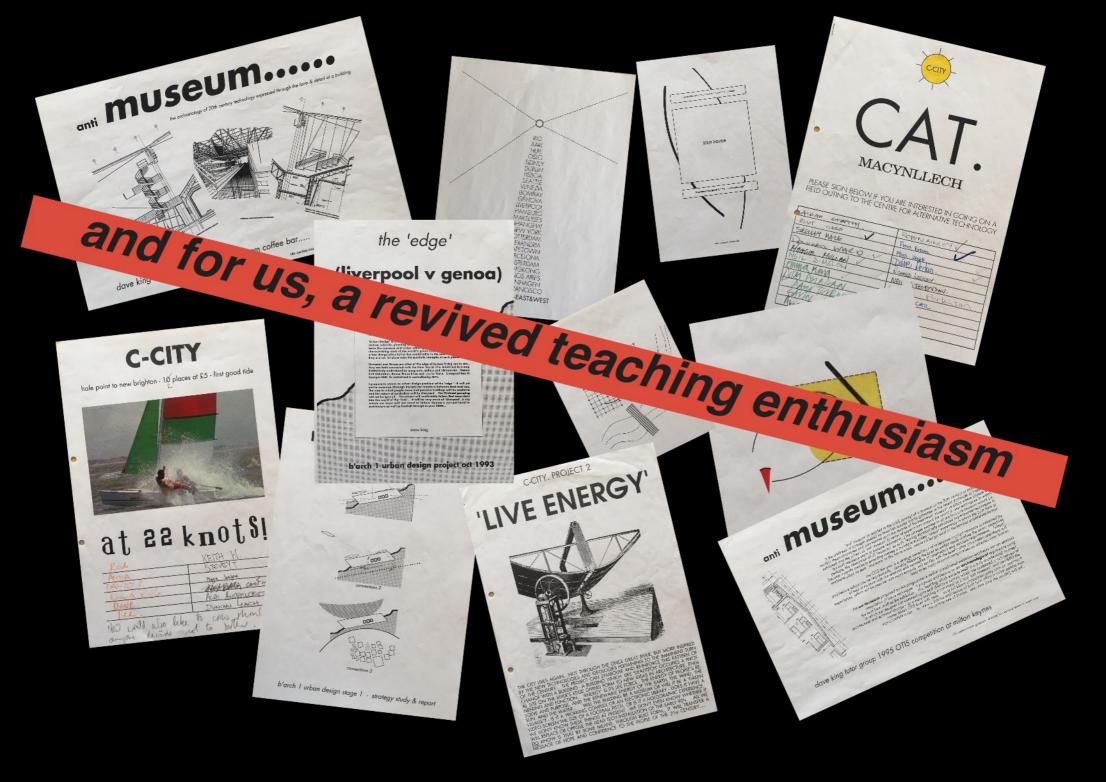
it do the job...? and qualities thinking and doing.

'but can accident be by design....?'

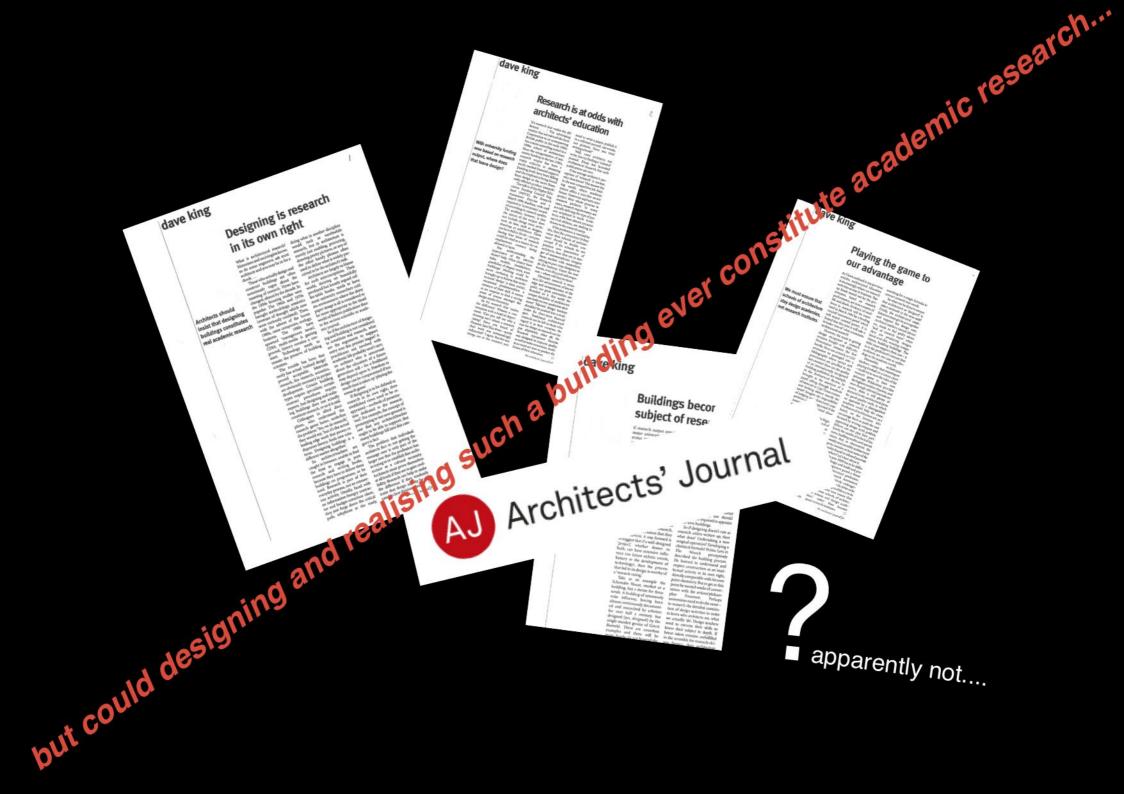
Joseph Albers (1888-1976)









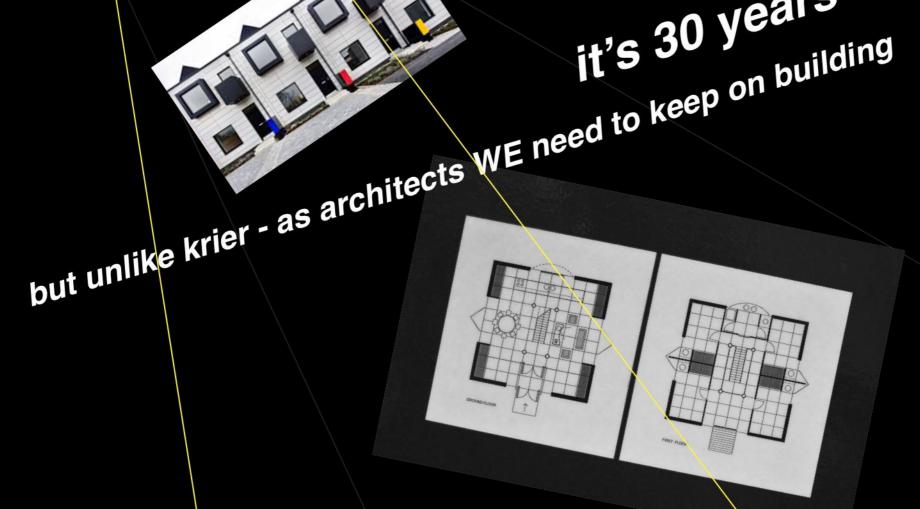




as architects - we have to be. the new studio was an optimistic statement in itself. roy the newly promoted foreman knew this when he imagined a spacecraft. he also (as would captain kirk) saved the day when, in a massive globally warmed downpour the building leaked from 8 hopper heads all at once...!



it's 30 years on...



DK80

and how the liverpool school has influenced a life in architecture...



DK80 - how can this be.... 60 years in architecture? no way - but then they tell me that dates can't lie - so there it is!



thanks for the ride everyone - despite setbacks (like not getting in as a student) and absences - like being away for 20 years. the LSA has been the determining factor in my architectural life. the main thing of course has been meeting so many people - students staff visitors and (wait for this) even the dean who gave me a lecture in academic freedom - or not...! but even though doing buildings doesn't count as research, I don't regret the studio one bit. nothing exceeds the pleasure of coming back home to it...

and...



Memories have huge staying power, but like dreams, they thrive in the dark, surviving for decades in the deep waters of our minds like shipwrecks on the sea bed.

J. G. Ballard

