

The Twenty
Fourth Lecture

Demolition Derby



David Kindersley and Lida Cardozo was appointed to inlay, in the 'eye' of the 'mandorla-boat', a commemoration of H.R.H.'s dedication of the new building. The 1.5M-diameter black-veined Carrara Arabescata floor-discs of the 'absent columns' were reserved for future commemorations of significance to the Judge Institute.

At this point the design of the Gallery interior was complete.

The price of Inigo Rose's ceiling, the design's most important element, had been reduced from the hand-painted buon-fresco version costing £650,000. It could be reproduced, exactly as painted, by Scanachrome of Skelmersdale, for £65,000. £100,000 had been donated by one of JOA's previous Clients to pay for monoprinting the Gallery columns. This was some 75% of their cost. The cut marble floor was designed, tendered and within budget. Forty years of striving to respond to my initial rejection of the 'future' that I found being built in North America was finally bearing fruit in Cambridge in a Faculty of Management designed to bring Business under the 'management' of Culture.

What more appropriate project to reify a modernised Architecture—the 'paradigmatic' medium of Urbanity?

Yet when finally faced with the full practicality of these designs all the fine talk about "painted ceilings", "plenty of colour", decoration, and Art that had gone on during our long, interested and amiable meetings, over a period of two years, suddenly went strangely silent. Doing something of this sort is all very well, it seemed, so long as it remained inside Museums and the consenting privacy of Country Houses. To be faced with its absolute practicality by an Architect who had spent forty years of his life single-mindedly inventing all of the technicalities, legalities and functionalities to render it completely and absolutely real, right now in the 20C, for, as one of the Client Body put it, "a merely academic building", seemed to be giving my Client Body cold feet.

One of the members of the Client Body described, with evident satisfaction at the speaker's own scholarship and the design's sense of the temporal depth of Architecture, how JOA's design had a portion that was 15C, another that was 16C, another that was 17C - and so it went on until the 19C. Then the pleasing litany stopped. I could not avoid remarking that "If I thought there was nothing 20C about it I would resign". I was informed after the meeting that my remark had been thought hurtful. But I meant it. Only in Britain could one build in a serious university while making no gesture at all, even if it was a critical one, to the architectural culture of the 20C! I was shocked by the possibility that anyone could believe that 'Classicism', or 'History', had ended with the 20C, when we were already 40 years into Structuralist, and even Post-Structuralist, 'Post-Modernity'! Was this Cambridge or some subliterate 'outpost of Empire'?

Educated persons of taste, in Britain, have been bred to believe, in their proud disinterest of its 'modern' manifestations, that 20C visual culture is commercialised trash. To inscribe it all over the internal surfaces of a great building in the centre of Cambridge University would be a disaster if it proved vulgar. I had done my best to make it otherwise, both by obtaining a professional fresco-painter, and composing my own efforts in as sophisticated a matter as I could.

But I now began to see that my Client Body were considering even worse scenarios than mere failure.

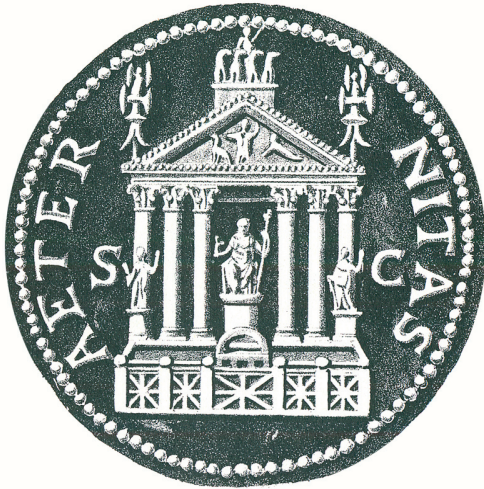
What if the Interior turned-out beautiful, tasteful and intellectually capable?

What if it became admired as a Modern building of more ambition than to be merely decent, cheap and practical? Where might this leave Ex-Imperial Britain's sacred 'heritage'? The Gallery of the Judge was as tall as the nave of Kings College Chapel. What if the 'atrium' of a mere Business School came to be even 'compared' to the 'jewel in the Crown' of Cambridge's 'Heritage'?

Yet what was the iconography of this famous 'Decorated Gothic' Chapel? The portcullises, roses and crowns were the icons of a Tudor Monarchy that combined Yorkist and Lancastrian bloodlines before God and their troublesome subjects. Its iconography was the heraldic badging of a social structure of merely antiquarian constitutionality. The stone ribbing of the chapel was craftsmanly beautiful. How could any 20C building challenge that particular quality? Who, except some technophilic devotee of 'High Tech', would want to? Britain's Architects had, in the dying years of the twentieth century's aniconic Modernism, risen to unusual heights of global approval. Most of them had achieved this eminence by practising a richly-decorated version of the Post-WWII Welfare pragmatism that Peter Smithson once described as "aluminium folk art". Only James Stirling had graduated from this school of amiable haptics to become, as Summerson described him, the supremely brilliant 'Joker' of the last years of a Modernism that had now become, after Smithson's 1958 lectures, just another 'period style'.

No-one, even amongst these global luminaries, was inventing how to lodge ideas in quotidian space so as to 'temporalise' them into narrative sequences. No-one had invented a 'Sixth Order' specifically to restore the 'frames of trabeation' so as to stabilise these reified epiphanies for long enough to allow them, like a great river of Time, to move - "as one". No one was exploring the invention of the means, both technical and conceptual, of this necessarily novel, but absolutely necessary, inscriptive medium. Whatever would be 'inscribed' into the fictive landscape of the Judge Institute would be so far in advance of current practice that it could not fail to bring lustre to the project.

So what lay behind the collapse of support from the Client body?



Classical Architecture had none of the plump little balusters that one finds in the Renaissance. The temple of Faustina at Rome had fences infilled with diagonal crossbars called 'cancelli'.



The Temple of Adonis at Byblos has its sacred, conical, aerolith guarded by a fence of similar 'cancelli'-crossbars which 'cancels' access to the innermost part of the shrine.

Was it merely an aspect of a more generalised aniconic project?

The attorneys in Rome, not yet supplied with a backspace key, erased text with diagonal crosses that they called 'cancelli'. In their Architecture, this name was also given to the latticed railings used to prohibit access to shrines.

To 'cancel' therefore has had an iconic sign for some 2000 years - at least!

The 1990's had ushered-in a period of violent, full-volume, iconic denial. Instead of being merely modest and passively reticent, in the manner of 'invisible' glass walls, featureless white walls, honestly wooden and stone (veneered) walls and all the other signs of a state of decent, subliterate, passivity, the buildings of the 1990's had begun to heave and puff to prove their absolute rejection of every sign of order, coherence and meaning. Somewhat ironically, considering their rejection of the means to meaning, these buildings made it certain that they could be 'read' by covering their anti-facades with diagonal slashes, 'pixel blurs', plumply pubescent skins and blistering mirrored reflectivities!



The 'Diagonal of Denial' in its most commonplace, 20C, iconic form. The Roman 'cancelli' translated into a contemporary way of saying 'NO'.



Will Allsop's hall ceiling, in his Institute of Design in Toronto, is 'true' to neither structure nor material. Instead, it is an icon, painted onto an industrially synthesised surface, that explicitly 'cancels' the ceiling as a 'picture plane' that could carry iconically engineered information.



Liesboskind's ceiling in the University of North London carries the same 'crosses of cancellation'.

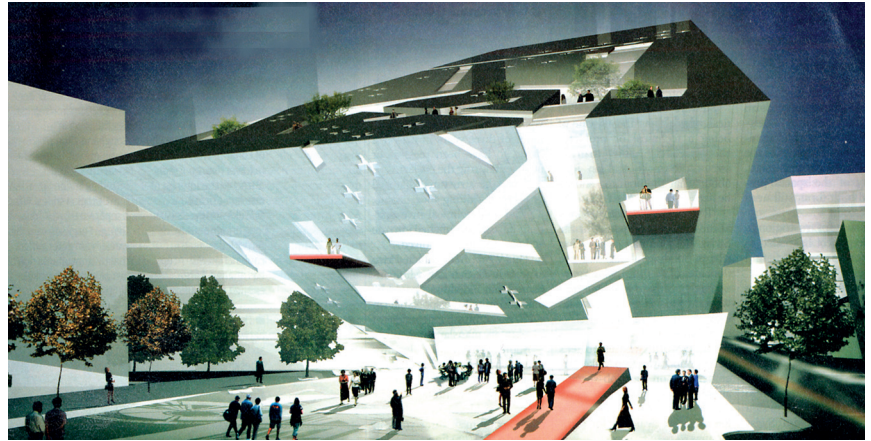


It might seem reasonable to cover the Holocaust Museum in Berlin with a violent, even hysterical, iconography of cancellation. It could equally be thought to reveal an inability to locate genocide in a sufficiently rational light to explain it. How can we hope to avoid these events recurring (as they already have in other parts of the world) if we can not face them coolly. Surely calm is necessary if people are to come to understand the inadequacies of political systems that cause populations to turn to the murder of minorities, of whatever sort?

It then becomes even harder to understand, after Liebeskind's Holocaust Museums (for there are more than one), why going to the opera in Dublin should be under a Cross of Cancellation. Is singing now forbidden in Ireland? Is this the new 'Arte Povera' - the 'humble face' that the lovers of Handel must turn to the pop-culture masses who subsidise them?

Liebeskind's Museum used the 'cross of cancellation' as an iconic analogy for erasure, liquidation and murder.

Frank Gehry had already 'invented' Architectural Deconstruction in the late 1960's. He understood, in the urban wilderness of Los Angeles, that the only thing to do with a building-plot in the 'burbs' was to turn a hapless 'ranch-house' into a Work of Fine Art.



Liebeskind's 'stealth bomber' competition-winning design for Dublin's new Opera-House goes to the trouble of grafting his 'analogy of erasure' onto a diagonally-sloping anti-facade. What is it that the Dublin Establishment fear that this 'plane' (neither ceiling nor wall), might 'say' to the Public? Why did even this absolutely incoherent surface need to be 'erased'?

What clearer proof could there be that Architecture is nothing without a City & vice-versa?

1994, when the collapse in iconic confidence occurred on the Judge project, was already five years after Gehry had been awarded the Pritzker Prize. Decon was the New Architectural Establishment. JOA's room in the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of 1992 was a powerful, replete and polychromatic narrative proof of the possibility of urbane culture. But it was already running against a tide which became overwhelmingly strong in the late 1990's and 2000's. Diagonals of Denial and the Crosses of Cancellation were already seeded and sprung up under the husbandry of Architects, such as Norman Foster, who normally prefers to protest the 'iconic innocence' of his cleavage to a mechanistic functionality.

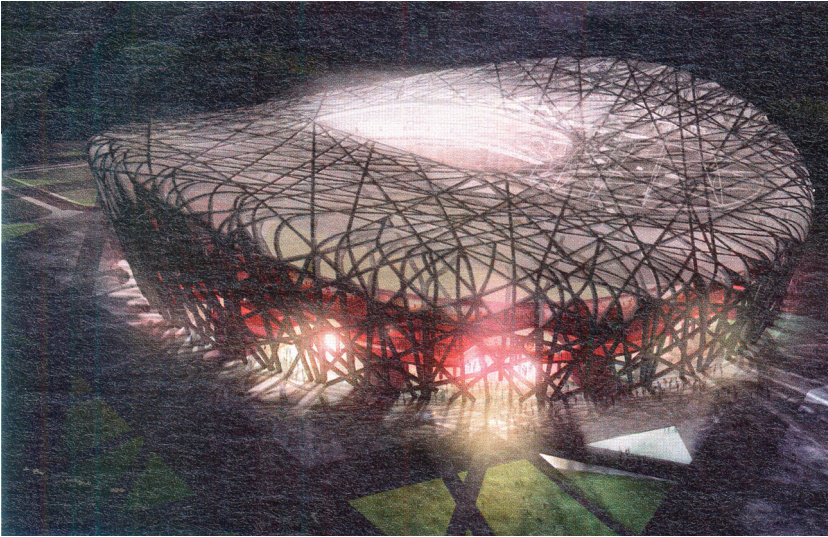


Federation Square, Melbourne, Australia, is a dull box whose facades have been 'graffiti-ed with as many Diagonals of Denial as the Architects, 'Lab Architecture Studio', can muster.



Foster's 'gherkin' stands like a rocket on its launchpad that gives this 'urban arcade' no urbane qualities at all.

The 'Diagonal of Denial' slashed its way through all defences.



Herzog and de Meuron's design for the Chinese Olympic stadium is a blob that is slashed about by a perfect frenzy of diagonals. It uses "as much steel as an aircraft carrier". The Architect's local 'cultural consultant', Ai Weiwei, a Chinese Artist, makes a point of holding up priceless ancient vases before dropping them to smash on the floor. Could this be a prerequisite for, or a premonition of, the ethological fragility of the Chinese building boom?



The Central China T.V. building, by Rem Koolhaas, slopes diagonally around an almost Beaux-Arts 'honorific (empty) centre'. Any such 'seriousness' is immediately denied by surfacing everything in 'diagonals of denial'. Is this cowardice, or merely iconic incompetence?

Koolhaas and Herzog and de Meuron offer a more aestheticised, more European, version of the ethic of denial. It approaches that of 'la politique du pire' in which the activist causes as much terror and confusion in the hope that collapse, when it comes, will usher in a better world. History seems to teach that it seldom does. Both firms seem to have found fertile ground for an extraordinary flowering of their self-conscious 'trashing' of Architecture. Not even Mao's 'cultural revolution' left such monuments to self-immolation. But then, as Liebeskind wrote in 'Radix-Matrix': "the conventional Architect is tinder to the bonfire". It seems that he intends that his profession is also to be consumed.

BUT CRANKY WINDOWS AT AN ANGLE TO THE GROUND ARE SELDOM CONVENIENT.
And they are expensive. Something cheaper was needed.



One sees, sometimes, on the television, a way of disguising the face of persons who might be sensitive to recognition. The area is isolated and the mosaic of digitised pixels is enlarged so as to blur the image.

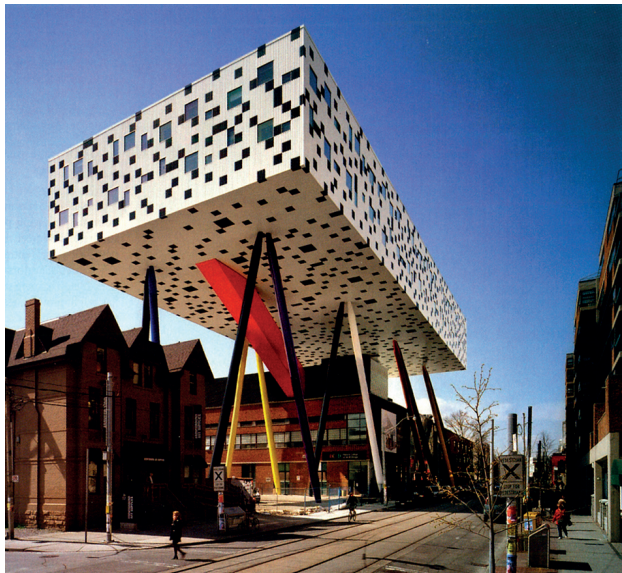


What should one call this practical way of muddling-up the face of a boxy building?

PIXEL BLUR ?

PIXEL BLUR has become such a cost-effective **icon of dissimulation** that a new project is seldom announced without its quota of **randomly displaced windows**. The a-formality destroys any capability such facades might ever have for any **iconic narrative** except one advertising the **self-destruction of syntax**. It is **questionable** whether it **helps internal planning** to oblige windows to **wander over the external walls**. It seems as arbitrary a discipline as any other. Certainly it **prevents** any **appreciation**, or **judgment**, concerning their **composition**.

They just say: "Not really trying".



Alsop's Toronto Design Institute was born of Ron Herron's walking city (Lect. 04 page 04) The "pixel blur" iconics of this marching invader advertises a new cult(ure) of Dissimulation and Negation.



The rainscreen aluminium cladding on eleven new apartments by Arroyo and Gonzaga, in Oviedo, Northern Spain, proclaim their freedom from sense with 'dithered' window-placings as well as a 3-colour "pixel blur". The effect destroys reason.

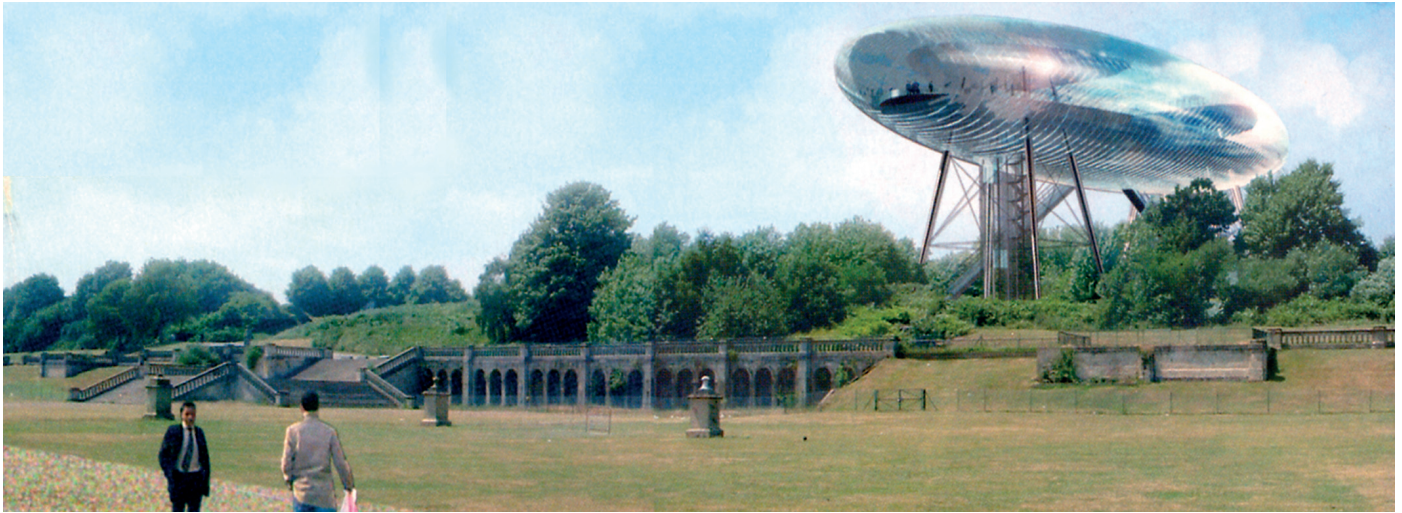
Some may argue a **pedigree** that **descends** from the **1950's cult of laissez-faire 'vitalism'** trumpeted by the **Smithson's** and the **I.C.A.'s Independent Group**. Beginning with a promotion of **American consumerism** to combat the **dingy dirigisme** of the **post-WWII welfare ethic**, **1950's Vitalism** changed, in the **1970's**, under **Llewellyn-Davis and Weeks**, into a **cosy pseudo-Scandinavian a-formality**. **Josic, Candilis and Woods** were its **Continental counterparts**. All of this **'free-growing a-formality'** was underpinned by a **Cold-War politics** that saw its sharpest encounters with **Nixon promoting the Eames' 'catalogue-architecture' version of consumerist suburbia**. If this **pedigree** is forwarded to **authenticate Pixel Blur** it may be discarded. Cultural anarchy **fails to make even tactical sense** 20 years after the fall of **Totalitarianism**. The **origins of Pixel Blur** are those of the **Cross of Cancellation**. It is a merely a **less laboured form of the architecture of iconic rejection and denial** of both **'Modernity' AND 'Tradition'** which marked the **Neo-Neo style of the 'Noughties'**.



The attraction of the iconic 'Negation' capable of Pixel Blur can be transferred to the most modest projects. An iconically denuded block of apartments by the ex-Classicist James Gorst can also be 'de-facaded'.



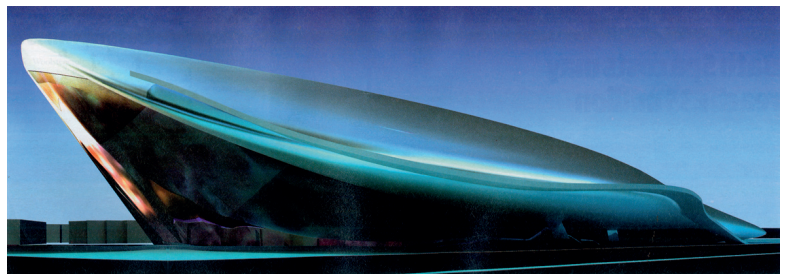
An 'Alessi' store in Milan by Morra and Magistrini carries this pulping of the iconic culture (and set on the diagonal too) to the levels of visual hysteria required to part the consumer from his hard-won wages.



The 'parti' of Chris Wilkinson's proposal for Crystal Palace descends from 'Walking City' as does Alsopp's Toronto School of Design. Like Wells' "War of the Worlds" it heralds the idea that nothing can exist between a Nature now defined only by science and the mechanisms of inscrutable power hatched by the physiocrats who worship at that cult. Here today and gone tomorrow, these 'walking cities' bring forth memories of the plagues of the horseborn nomads from the east that Adam Smith describes, on page one of his Wealth of Nations, as the greatest danger ever presented by history to the civilisation of the West.



Wilkinson's Crystal Palace 'city-mincer' after sun-down. During the day it reflects the eye. At night it appears to be empty.



Like some new-born emerging from its amniotic sac, Austin-Smith and Lord won a competition with this design to house Ashford's Council Offices, Museum and Exhibition space.

A third way of cancelling any capability of a building to be recognised by any of its conventional attributes is to polish its outer skin until it mirrors everything except what lies inside it. It is a

'Cloak of Invisibility'.

Edmund Burke, in his 18C essay 'On Beauty', argued that humans are attracted to objects that are rounded and shiny. His explanation was that such forms recalled the soft, smooth, flesh of infants and the plump pubescence of adolescents. Such icons evoked the primal urges of maternity and mating. It seems a trivial if powerful iconography for a public medium like Architecture. Even Las Vegas has more to offer than such a purely pubescent aesthetic! Yet Burke's insight can be brought to bear on this version of the Noughties iconography of Denial.

For it brings to mind the more contemporary phenomenon of plastic surgery. The tightening of wrinkled skin and the plumping of sagging flesh seeks to arrest the 'river' of Somatic Time.

These tautly-rounded skins are like architectural 'facelifts'.

They will never grow old.

Like addled eggs they will never be born to any form that reifies an idea. They will never acquire those marks that inscribe the nobility of an history, even of their own, let alone of any larger arena. But, bearing in mind their ambition to deceive and dissimulate...

IT MIGHT BE MORE ACCURATE TO DENOTE THIS TACTIC AS 'STOCKING MASK'.

If there was one building that a 20C 'functionalist' hoped, one day, to design, it was a concert hall. The raking floor of such a room has been constantly exploited in order to authenticate a building that "escapes", as the journals graphically put it: "from the box".

Norman Foster, in his Gateshead Concert Hall disguises two such halls, complete with their surrounding promenade-platforms, inside a glutinous pre-natal sac of reflective glass that not only reduces their forms to an absolute primitivity but throws the contingent images of its context back in what can only be described as a perfect 'pixel blur'.

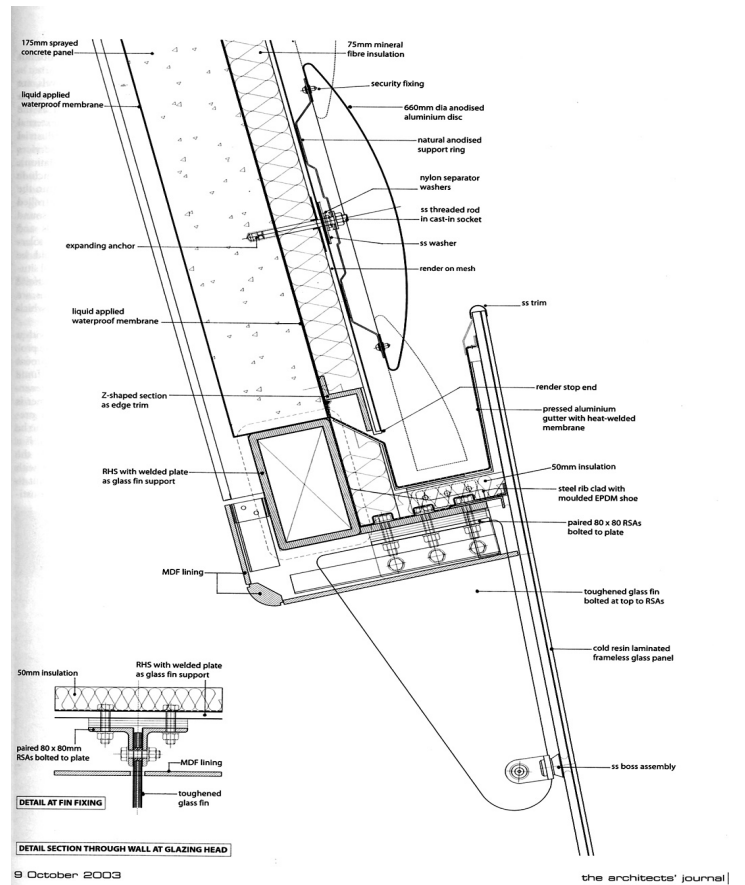
The design of Future Systems' Selfridge department store in Birmingham, below, is another that adds 'pixel blur' to 'stocking-mask'.



Nicknamed the Gateshead Grub by the trade press, Norman Foster's twin concert halls shine with the taut plumpness of pubescent limbs while shattering all attempts at iconic congruence into a Pixel Blur of mirrored contingencies. These are temples to a humanity reduced, like extremely primitive life-forms, to mere bodies of physical stimulus voided of any capacity for discursive thought.



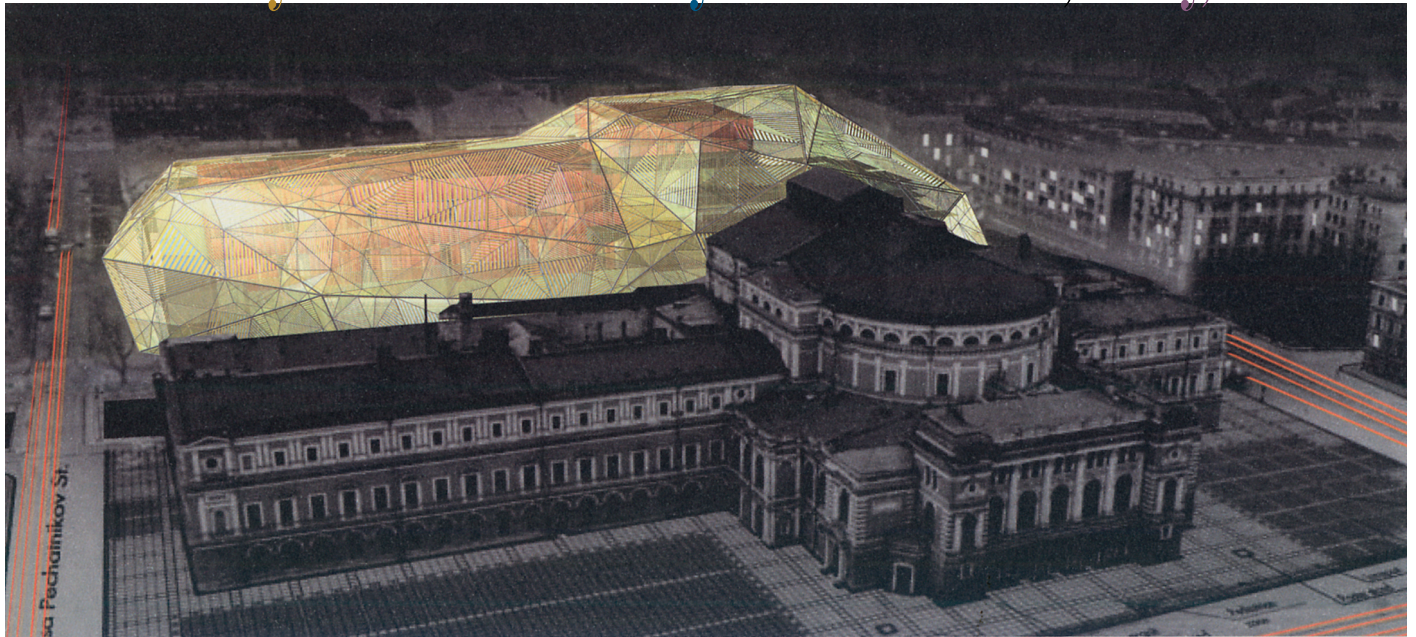
The Birmingham Selfridges by 'Future Systems' - the consultancy of Amanda Levete and Jan Kaplicky, is both 'blurred' as well as 'blobby'. It qualifies as wholly 'pixellated' and tautly 'stocking-masked' into a permanent innocence.



The fabric of this structure is a conventional steel armature filled-in with sprayed-on concrete. It is waterproofed with liquid rubber paint and covered in foam insulation. This is then 'decorated' with sky-blue stucco and its distinctive shiny (for a short time) pearly aluminium dimples. From its Protozoan beginning, rising from the Blue Deeps, to becoming a massive Mountain of Bling, Selfridges awaits the conjugal Columna Lucis from a Trabica of Truths.

The **iconography** of **pre-natality** found in **Face-Lift/Stocking-Mask** is carried further by the design, by Dominique Perriand, for a new Maryinski Theatre to be built **side-by-side** with the present one. The new one is projected with a **crystal skin**. It is as if cast in Baltic amber,

like the **chrysalis** of a butterfly that will never, sadly, hatch.



What could hatch from the pumpkin-coloured chrysalis of Dominique Perrault's new Maryinski Theatre in St. Petersburg except the butterfly of a 21C Architecture? All the life (light) from the strong yellow stucco of the 'old' theatre, with its civil, cultured and urbane architecture, appears to have been sucked out of it to illuminate the shining chrysalis of the Noughties. But nothing will be born from it, at least on this plot in St. Petersburg.

It is **Frank Gehry**, at home in the USA, where '**Architectural Deconstruction**' began as the local '**Santa Monica Style**' who reveals, **quite without apprehension**, what it is that motivates all of these '**iconographies of denial**'. It is that state of the **cheerful destruction** of **every device** of **architectural composition** which marks his work, and that of his contemporaries in the USA. For whereas in Santa Monica, this **ruin of architecture** appears no more than commonplace, in the rest of the world it looks like the **end of every civilisation** that **there has ever been**. So it is resisted, mostly passively, by these '**architectures of denial**', or **actively**, by war.



Gehry's 'trademark' designs, like the Disney concert hall in L.A., use planes as pure as any delineated by Dutch de Stijl. Gehry agitates these sheets of mirrored light to a point at which, like the Neon of Vegas, or the sun shimmering on the sea, one absents thought and submits to the ecstasy of a hyper-luminous over-stimulation.



Gehry's designs change when he has to puncture his 'drowning not waving' wall-planes with everyday banalities like doors and windows - always the acid test of attempts to "think outside the box". MIT is one of the global epicentres of the computerspeak revolution. Gehry 'ruins' it into a picturesque bidonville of Arte Povera evocations of folk-friendly references to 'Pueblos' and grass-skirted 'Kavas'.

For it cannot be denied that the iconography of Gehry's huge Stata Centre, the projected powerhouse of the computing culture of the USA, is an uncanny match to the ruins of Islam's assault on what its jihadists call 'the great Satan'.



The US Economy used to depend upon expendable automobiles and durables. Today its 'military-industrial' complex depends upon trashing the whole lifespan. If one must rebuild every 15 years why not build the 'new' already-trashed?

Going to war used to be the opportunity for poor young men to trash the palaces of rich and powerful old men and, as Genghis Khan boasted, "steal their gold and enjoy their women". Today, now that atomics have outlawed war, we build the New as trash, the young enjoy Welfare and the women are 'on the Pill'.

All of the varieties of early 21C design illustrated on the previous pages demonstrate that an humane lifespan will never descend from the merely plastic manipulations of an Architecture stripped of iconicity. Yet an iconically-discursive architecture can not come into being without acting as the agent for a lifespan which has a story to tell.

Or, more accurately, which is the vehicle of a culture, and its builders, with a story to tell.

The question posed by both Gehry and these iconographies of denial is "what is this story to be"? Is it to be one of the ruin of urbanity, architecture and what I still call 'the city'? If it is, then there is nothing more for an Architect to say. Ruin or silence are the two alternatives presently demonstrated by the leading Architects of the West. But if it is not, then what IS this 'story' to be?

My own attempts to answer this question, which was already posed to me by the North America of the 1950's, had come to their first major fruition, after four decades of spadework, in my designs for the Judge. The fact that their 'flowers' if one may use this analogy for the 'parlative' dimension of decoration, were now to be cut-off, must, when placed within a context of the contemporary 'deconstructon' of every coherent and disciplined dimension of city-planning, architecture and the applied arts, no longer seem surprising. Looked-at from a certain distance of time, perhaps it would have been even more astonishing if the surfaces of the Judge had been inscribed as I had conceived them.

Yet, though I could never have imagined it at this terrible time, I did achieve my aim, completely and almost immediately (within two years). But it was in another, more confident and adventurous place. It was with an equally large building, and on a smaller budget. It would be to them, rather than the ancient University of Cambridge, that went the credit for being the one's who, as my tutor Bob Maxwell put it, "broke the taboos of Modernism".

It goes without saying that public art is no longer considered a serious matter. The University of Cambridge is no exception. My colleagues in the University Surveyors Department took delight in showing me broken-down asbestos-cement sheds in which they said "so and so had obtained a Nobel Prize for physics". My own understanding of any 'university' was that it was precisely the cross-fertilisation of the Arts and Sciences which constituted both inventive, as well as civilised, thinking. Cambridge prides itself on its Science. But why should this be to the exclusion of the Arts? And what did these 'Building Surveyors' know of either? Where were the Clever Professors, as well, of either?

My sense of Cambridge's Dons is that they preferred to wear a hair shirt in public, to suit the populist style of the 20C, especially after WWII. Meanwhile, a quiet word could be had with Oxbridge contacts in the Ministries and Companies from whence flowed the funds for their arcane researches. Their late-20C buildings proclaimed their 'Arte Povera' credentials with garments of raw cement and honest brick. Their interiors were similarly brutalised by the exposure of bricks, cement and large planks of varnished pine. When completed by cream-painted walls and illuminated by fluorescent tubes, this damply cool Fenland lifespace served to dispel any suspicion that the University might be as richly endowed with funds as it ensured that it was with minds. Who could not say that this was not a rather exactly 'scripted' surface? Perhaps I should not have been surprised at the muted reception to enrich the Judge interior with sundry iconic narratives, drawn from a wider lexicon than the dingy coats of arms (now reduced to 'Bierkeller Brown') mouldering on the ceiling of the chapel in Isaac Newton's own College. But, on the other hand, if Modern city-design needed 'humanising' then what better position to lead the assault than from the intellectual 'high ground'?

So while I was devastated to see Inigo Rose's ceiling-design finally rejected, I was not 'surprised'. It was suggested that I have a look at the ceiling of a Gothick college refectory that sported, like a young girl's bedroom, gold stars pasted-onto a blue ground.

Desperate to escape this iconic puerility I 'phoned California to ask David Hockney. I received, from him, one of his amusingly decorative faxes saying me that he did not 'do ceilings'. I knew he did ephemera like Glyndebourne Opera's stage 'flats'. Architecture has such a low cultural status that painted scenery for opera singers is better for an artist's reputation than an 120'0" long canvas over the clever heads of one of England's intellectual epicentres. I was not entirely sorry. It was a move born of despair. The 20C estrangement of Painting from Architecture has ensured that no contemporary Painters know its iconographies. Hockney's later work proved that to be the case.

I was finally recommended to make this ceiling of wood.

YES, REAL WOOD. ONE LEARNS TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS MEANS 'WOOD' IN THAT 'RAW' STATE - UNTOUCHED BY A HAND WITH A HEAD ON THE OTHER END OF ITS ARM. THIS IS 'WOOD' AS GIVEN BY NATURE TO MAN, RATHER THAN BY ONE MAN TO ANOTHER, OR TO ALL MEN.

The purpose of this instruction is always to erase the scriptability of a material.

It is to prescribe that the pages of a book will be made of lovely, natural, wood veneer, instead of pulp, bleached and whitened to register ink marks. When threatened by inscriptive tasks the 'man of taste' turns, as Augustus Welby Pugin noted with characteristic acerbity, to "papering with veneers". Covering surfaces with veneers of God's manufacture is the unfailing badge of an iconically dissimulative, fraudulent and iconically impotent culture. It is a culture that has lost its self-image and can no longer advertise itself to itself either to foreigners or to its own children who must extend it into the future. One sees it in the very beginning of Modernity as Adolf Loos moved from Neo-Classical plans, that revealed his decorative impotence, to tortured spatial labyrinths whose meaninglessness he confirmed by veneers of lushly-figured (but natural) slices out of trees and rocks.

So, mere Professional-for-hire that I am, I consulted my skills and designed the ceiling that roofs the Gallery today. It is admired for its bold and jolly 'pattern'.

Scripts 16-08 to 16-11 of these Lectures explore the meanings of the architectural figure known as the 'Coffer'. It has a 'golden star' in its centre which is located on a dark blue ground, the colour of darkest Night, or Chaos. It symbolises, amongst other things, man's search for enlightenment in the darkness of ignorance. This, as I go on to describe, is all very well for a flat ceiling. But when the technical ingenuity of the Architect manages to raise it into a vault the 'golden germ' has to sprout and flower and bear witness to what it is that is carried to the New Foundation by the trabeated beams of the Entablature.

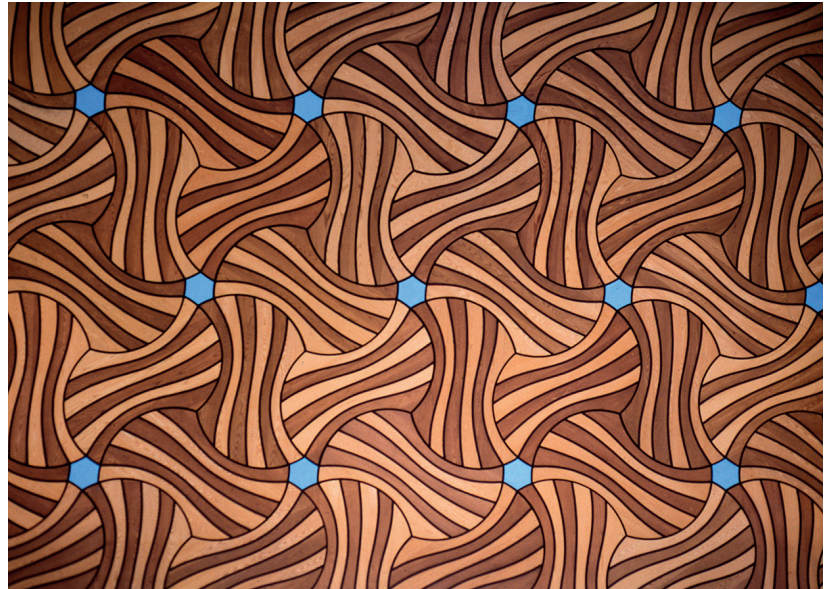


The golden star on a night blue background descends, in the West, from the ancient, and obscure well-documented figure of the Architectural 'coffer'.

The 'flat nihil' made it clear that the cargo of this Entablature was to be Nothing. But this was not the 'positive' NOTHING that Augustine proposed that God chose to make before His Creation. Nor was this the Un-Time before the Time of the Hypostylar 'Forest of Infinity'. This, now, was a mere muteness imposed, on itself, by a creature which could speak but no longer knew how to discourse with images. To 'parlay' their lifespaces is to make men real (in the true sense of 'Royal'). To 'Pragmatise' the lifespaces is to make us into cyphers.

So I took my Client Committee at their word and made them, out of wood, some "golden stars on a blue ground". I took the eccentrically-rotating 'florete-star' at the centre of the coffer and expanded it into the eccentrically-rotating iris of a camera-lens. Then I reversed the figure-ground of this icon. I placed the "blue background of darkness and ignorance" into the foreground that was 'revealed' in the central 'eye' of the opening iris. Then I coloured it the pale watery blue of the sun as it is 'scattered' by the molecular constituents of terrestrial atmosphere.

A Cambridge Physicist, John William Strutt had, as Lord Rayleigh, won a Nobel Prize in 1905 for discovering Argon. Rayleigh's name had also been given to this blue colour of the atmosphere. It seemed appropriate to make such a mathematico-physico entity as the 'Rose of Light' for what one of my more acerbic colleagues called "Fenland Tech".



My double-solecism of a coffer on a vault that opened to reveal, not the light of understanding in the darkness of obscurity but a pinhole of pale blue atmospheric gas - a conceptual vacuity, all revealed by a slick and silky 'physis' made of lovely 'brown', 'natural wood'.

If this was the 'understanding' demanded by the Client Body then this was the 'adventitious cargo' that the Citizens of the Judge Institute would 'stand under'. My decades of technical ingenuity, that had enabled me to strip away the 'trabes' of the raft, and reveal its conceptual cargo, projected upon the inflated sail of a vault, was here revealed as entirely futile. Not only was the vault covered in 'coffers', which was an iconic solecism all too common to the Neo-Classicism of every age, but even these 'chests of valuables' turned out to be empty of humanity. The proposition of this 'vault' was that this Institution bore no superstructure, no 'cultural load', of humanistic ambitions and ideas brought by the 'Adventurers', to their New Foundation.

And where was the 'University' when the design of the vault was being projected?

The 'imprese' of the University is that of a 'city' which is represented by the Hellenic emblem of a 'Tyche' - a woman crowned by a battlemented wall. She was first employed by John Legate who was appointed official printer to the university in 1588. Its cryptic meaning was attempted in a sermon by Archbishop Robert Leighton as 'hinc lucem haurire est et pocula sacra replere': - "hence light we draw up and fill the sacred cup". Prudishly, as suited the 19C, he omits to include the milk gushing from the breasts of the urbane muse. Whatever might be the exact Latin, the icons are clear. The base is the four-square icon of both Architecture and the 'cubic earth' from which the genius/muse of Cambridge rises up. She fills her 'sacred cup' with lights and transforms them into the milk with which she feeds the cubic body of civilisation, causing it to flower. A Listener referring to pages 20-07, 08 & 09 will find an iconography of 'liquid light'.

The fact was that no-one, in 1994, was likely to have any idea what a vault was for - in an iconically literate Architecture.

I thought, at first, that this vacuous ceiling would suit the reputed Positivism of Cambridge. But I prefer to believe the reverse and reserve my odium for a Client Body that preferred to shelter in the shallow pretence that cultures have no conceptual superstructure. Why locate a School of Management in a University if it was not to show how commerce could serve, by paying tribute to a Culture, and not the reverse? Was the 'project' of the Judge merely to suck promising brains out of Cambridge into the wastes of 20C pop-Consumerism?



A 16C printer's imprese that was ultimately adopted as an emblem of the University. In Cambridge, the Cup when filled with Light is the Milk that Fertilises the City.

The proof that this was the **fate** of the **home**, at least, of the Judge **continued to be demonstrated**. For the next **parts** of its **domestic body** to be **stripped of their mentality** were the **giant columns**.



The power, even splendo(u)r, as well as the amiable fullness, of the Architecture could 'carry' any scheme of decoration. But that was not the point. It was not the point AT ALL! I had invented an Architecture of unprecedented power, for the sole reason of 'supporting', through its 'steadying solidity' a decoration of unprecedented brilliance (at least when measured against poor little ex-Imperial, late 20C Britain). The reduction of my iconic engineering to this pathetic rigmarole, (as another JOA Client described them) of "Nursery Colours" was an act of pure iconic 'funk'.

The giant columns were, at this time,, already 'plated' with their 3,000 A3-sized curved plaster tiles. Every column had already been fitted, on every floor, with curved plywood doors, giving access to their diversely 'robotic' interiors. The curved surface of these doors had already been moulded, by radio-frequency cured adhesives, into A3 plywood tiles matched-in to their columnar surrounds. None of this had been entirely inexpensive. My designs for 'monoprinting' the tiles were complete. The transfer technology had been established. An industrial product, from the French firm of Langlands and Bourgeois, had proved to be successful. £100,000 had been donated, earmarked, by one of my previous Clients, to pay for this, and this alone. Nothing lay in the way of this extraordinary event, except the fear of the Cambridge Client Committee that they would suffer ridicule from the silvery tongues that discoursed around the pseudo-Gothick refectories of the College high tables.

And so a more cunning path was trod. The A3 tiles resembled masonry. What is masonry? It is stone. What colour is stone? Creamy yellow of course. Who, then, amongst the clever artistic subliterati of the Colleges could carp if these monstrous stalks were simply rendered beige, like the normal 'academic building'. Yet anyone with the slightest grasp of architectural culture knows that only a 20C Fascist could happily authorise 26M-high columns of s(h)olid s(h)tone, accentuated by big joints. JOA's 'masonry' was a 'monstrosity', in the proper Latin sense of 'monstrare' - to show. It was a nightmarish vision of an overbearing physicality which must then be contradicted, so as to transfer its power, like the mechanism of any effective metaphor, to the more abstracted function of carrying ideas mediated by graphically iconic images. These 'A3'-sized 'stone blocks' were deliberately 'set-up' to be inscribed so as to become 'video-masonry'. My 'conceit' was to regard them as 'bales of text' (ref page 20-12) to be 'unpacked' within the 'steadied' giantism of my novel Sixth Order. All of this information had been in the hands of the Cambridge Client Committee for months. But none of this could compete with the certainty, as sure as the milk that comes from the double-breasted, pin-striped, udders of the Great Mother of Anglo-Classicism, that s(h)tone was cream-coloured. And so another act of iconic vandalism was committed.

The columns were painted cream.

JOA had, over the twenty years of its independent consultancy, perfected the use of transparent coloured washes and lacquers. We used these mainly on wood but also on plaster, sand render and concrete. Any painter knows that mixing colours on the canvas with successive 'glazes' results in a more lively and beautiful result. Being transparent, the character of the material shows through. Being mainly softwoods or pale hardwoods like birch or sycamore, an effect like watered silk was possible. JOA's windows always use either a softwood or hardwood interior overcoated, on the exterior, with a powder-coated (painted) aluminium shield. The aluminium protects the wood better than any paint from ultra-violet degradation. The wood acts as thermal insulation - preventing condensation. The windows that were already erected were just so tinted, internally, in delicate blues and greens. Some were iconically structured, some just enjoyed discoursing between brute matter and a colour that was pure light - or mentality.

But the Cambridge Client Committee was gripped by an overwhelming certainty. It knew the sort of thing that John Tiltman, of Buckingham Palace, knew. This is that Wood, in the Public Philosophy of Britain, is brown. Nor is this an ordinary brown. It is what a Continental client of mine, with a high architectural culture and a taste sharpened by a sense of 20C political history, called:

Bierkeller Brown.

All of the remaining wooden parts, consisting mainly of doors, architraves and partitions, were varnished this disgusting hue, so very fragrant of the 1930's by-pass, half-timbered, Gin and Jaguar hutlet-belt.

I sensed the enormous psychic relief felt by my Client Committee when they issued these instructions. Yet they might as well have put a gun to the 'book' of my building and pulled the trigger, tearing out its pages and shredding them into tatters. The whole purpose of the palette of materials that I had developed, over forty years of practice, was to enable a discourse, even at the most primitive level of 'choose a colour", between Matter and Idea. It was the reason why my firm had spent hundreds of thousands of pounds, of my own money, researching every possible way of colouring every material used in building -results I eventually termed 'photolithic'.

My object was always to separate the **Nature** (that is the 'deep structure') of a material, from the **Artifice** of its use in any **human 'design'**. The easiest way was to **stain it with a blush of colour**, so that its '**material**' nature was still **visible**. This retained the '**truth**' of the **material** while still allowing the designer to use its **brute body** to carry the '**phos**', the **light** of immaterial colour, to serve as the 'artifice' of an **iconically-scripted idea**. JOA always used **solid, resistant, materials**. We never used '**trash**' like the **rendered polystyrene** that covers Saudi Arabia and Texas. Nor did we lower our conceptual sights to the **crass dissimulation** of the 20C's '**truth to materials**'. We showed respect for the **simulative** nature of humanity.

Painting plaster tiles cream to make them look like **stone** is the sort of dull **pseudo-truth** that Dean Swift invented for his **Philosophy School of Brobdignag**. Here, the **Savants** moved slowly around carrying **weighty haversacks** stuffed with '**real things**'. They were **unsatisfied** that a word, like '**wood**', was a **mere sign**. The philosophers preferred to offer each other the **semantic referent**:- a **lump of real wood**. **Staining the rotary cut veneer** of a flush door a disgusting dark brown **abolishes** the ability of this '**act of decoration**' to **denote an idea**. The brown sludge merely confirms that the substrate, the '**paper**' on which one should be '**writing**', is a **piece of wood** - perhaps even a piece of **really and completely 's(h)olid wood!** It is the '**book of wood**' one sees in a **veneering shop**. Like the shops that sell books for their **leather spines** rather than their contents, or even their **titles**.

A dark grey-purple methylated-spirit stain (the colour of shadow) sinks quickly and evenly into the wood of a flush door leaving its grain unfilled and 'visible'. A coat of semi-matt lacquer gives the surface of the cheap veneer a gentle sheen. By this chromatic 'illumination' of the wood I am able to 'see through' the conceptually-trivial slab of factory-manufactured 'timber-product' to the 'cave' of the room it guards and hides. In this way I use an iconically-literate lifespace-design to 'dissolve' the materiality of the miserable flap-valve of the door to recall the true proposition of the 18C Abbe Laugier that the ideal polity has no physical barriers but is governed by law, custom and morals alone. JOA have often been able to do such things, and much else. But not at all when constrained by the high levels of iconic 'fear and loathing' that I found suddenly operating amongst the Cambridge Client Committee of the Judge.

A coating that 'confirms' the material of its substrate destroys any ability to 'script' it.

The **Gallery ceiling** too, had to be coloured with the **goodly brown goo** of '**wood**'. It was not its **colour** that '**spoke iconically**' but its **pattern of spiralling irises**. The '**woody**' look was just a '**comforter**' plugged-into the **eyes** of those with the **sad craving** never to be **detached from the umbilicus** of '**Natural Materials**'.

When working with **some of our Developer Clients** in the City of London, JOA had learned that **money spent above eye-level** should never be directed to '**appearances**'. It seemed that the **Surveying and Valuing Profession** who prescribed what was built in that global centre of commerce was that none of the hundreds of thousands of her daily visitors ever raised their eyes up to the level of an **Entablature**, to **view its cargoes**. After all, **why should they?** A **century of denuded roof-lines** and a **half-century of whitened ceilings** should have taught them the **futility** of enquiring after any such '**standing under** (an) **under-standing**'.

It had been confirmed that this was, also, to be the fate of my designs for the Judge. But **what of the floor?** Even the **most mindless 'business' superstructure** could occasionally be **found to hover over a stone floor** inscribed with a design marked by those **material superfluities** which describe an attempt at **iconic representation** - however **conceptually** decayed.

But my Client Committee had the bit between the teeth it was a 'liquidation'.

They even **banished the slight grooves** in the **synthetic ceiling tile**, a mass-produced material sold **either smoothed or 'rilled'** into the appearance of boards. By **this slight act of iconic erasure** they removed the meaning of the **Entablature** as '**tablatum**', that '**planked surface**' which was the '**table**' that supported the '**tabulae**' - those **iconic representations** of the '**cargo**' which are the '**cultural baggage**' of **Architecture's superstructure**.



The same off-the peg 'rilled plank' architectural element on another JOA building - and with a smaller budget.



The 'trabes' or beams of the Judge after being stripped of their 'rilled planking' - a ready-made product.

The floor design had no chance of surviving the nice attention of iconoclasts of such acuity.

A lesson that I had learned in the first few months after graduating was that:

THE BIGGER THE BUDGET FOR A BUILDING, ESPECIALLY AN INTERIOR, THE MORE LIKELY IT WAS TO FALL INTO VULGARITY.

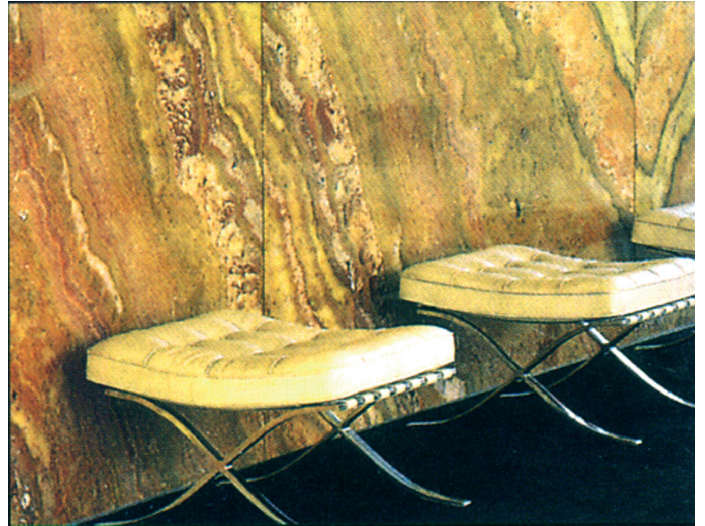
For neither the Architects of the early 1960's, nor their wealthier Clients, had any idea how to use such funds to decorate the wandering slabs and cylinders that passed for architecture in those days. They would, instead, lavish a higher budget onto the dull sheets of 'beige marble and veneered wood that tiled their carefully 'informalised' floors.

Indeed their model was none other than the illustrious Mies van der Rohe, one of the three Modern Movement paragons allowed to the deliberately under-informed Architectural students of the 1950's. Mies, considering what to do for the 1929 German Pavilion for the Barcelona Expo happened, in Hamburg, upon a large block of Moroccan onyx. He had it sliced into 20mm sheets and anchored to steel frames. In order to avoid the appearance of a mere veneer, he terminated both ends of his detached, 'plan libre' wall with solid columns of the richly-veined stone. The effect was of a sumptuous solidity.

THE BLOCK OF MATERIAL NOT ONLY GENERATED THE FINAL DIMENSIONS OF THE PAVILION BUT CONSUMED OVER ONE FIFTH OF ITS ENTIRE COST.

The architects who worked after WWII, and the Clients they came to serve, both public and private, followed Mies by attempting to enliven boxy buildings by, as Pugin put it: "papering with veneers". What saved the Barcelona Pavilion from entire conceptual enervation was its perverse avoidance of many of the pragmatic or symbolic features of inhabitation. It was, it is true, 'established' upon a plinth. It also sported an overhanging roof that could be said, from certain angles, to 'shelter it'. But it did not make much of a show that it had ever been 'constructed' - that is - to be a work of human artifice. Beyond all these, however, was its refusal to be recognised, or even to actually be, an act of spatial enclosure. It had no recognisable entrance to a territory of 'having been enclosed'. Nor did its walls actually meet each other to perform the physical division of an interior from an exterior. They were explicitly contrived to 'float in space' - like the enfleshment of a suprematist composition by Malevitch.

The Mies Pavilion reified a refusal of this most fundamental of all reasons for building - the possession of territory. But the 'plan libre', as Corbusier was to christen it, was not, like that of the Abbe Laugier's architecture of columns, an icon that could be merely superimposed, as 'decoration', upon the banal necessities of territorial demarcation. No, it took the prison of walls, and physically shattered it. This laid upon the Modernist an Utopic fate from which the only escapes were complete failure or the violent denial of human nature. In pursuit of this suicidal tactic the pavilion became 'iconic' and entered 20C history as one of the principal models that its equally suicidal Architects strove to realise. The Mies Pavilion perfectly reifies that collapse of the inscriptional capabilities of Architecture which, I argue, underlies the inhumanity of 20C lifespace-design.



The African Onyx which Mies used to 'anchor' the disembodied composition of his 'suprematist' Barcelona Pavilion. The temporally 'geological' text of this stone takes his conceit out of any reference to the decayed iconography of an European lifespace-design in a state of advanced collapse. But in loosing itself from all cultural traditions it loses historical metrication and enters a temporal field that is not a properly conceptual infinity but merely an escape from human history into a dimension of time so vast as to be vacant of significance.



As with Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe not only detaches the column from the wall but releases it from its Serlian role of marking the crossing of absented, or 'virtualised' walls. It thereby loses its ancient identity as the hypostylar reification of the concept of a pre-temporal infinity. The column becomes a merely optional piece of domestic furniture to be pushed this way and that like a king demoted to a walk-on part in a bedroom farce.

It mattered not at all that all, in the interior, was ready and prepared to be built.



A badly-lit photograph of the interior of the 1:50 scale model does not show the monoprinted columns to advantage. Nor does it show how their inscriptions would have been 'baled' into A3 'blocks'. But it helps to indicate the generous scale of the abandoned floor pattern. Its 'woven' diagonal grid was capable of ingenious module shifts to accommodate the irregularities of Wyatt's 19C building. The intertwining 'serpents' ripple in the Ocean of the original Nothingness. This floor enfleshes the history of our gestation and rise from liquid obscurity. The columns, inscribed with signs that are the unique property of our species, would have risen like phylogenetic rockets. The Client Body doused the fuse and birthed the bloodless pallor given below..



The 'stone-coloured masonry' of my Sixth Order columns, having failed to achieve that positive which can result from a double-negative, now stand inertly in a lake of de-activated nothingness rimmed by a black scum. I find it hard not to characterise this as a lake of the lifeless bordered by the lightless.

NOR, CONVERSELY, DID IT REALLY MATTER WHEN THE 'FIAT NIHIL' WAS PRONOUNCED AND THE FLOOR WAS ERASED AND REPLACED BY ANOTHER 'NOTHING'.

For whereas the original design had inscribed columns rocketing up as iconic fireworks out of an hypostylar hall (that was also the primordial Okeanos), so as to both pull down and 'support' a conceptual superstructure for the 'city' of the Judge, the new interior, from bottom to top, was now being firmly guided towards being just another fagged-out Neo-Classical gesture towards an 'Enlightened' uninventiveness and illiteracy that began in the 18C and has 'run to empty houses' ever since.

Only the fact that it was nearly all already built with the giant rhetoric of the Sixth Order, along with an added geometrical complexity imposed by 'listed building status' saved the Judge from the 'stripped Classicism' in which all such morbid enterprises clothe their entropic doom.

The Gallery floor had a ragged edge. It was eaten into by the two giant drums of the new stairs serving the 19C Ward Blocks. It was punctured and perforated around its edges, like a postage stamp, by the 1.5M drums of the 6th Order column-bases. Its two short sides were skewed at 45°. All of this 'disorder' was ignored by the 'Oceanic' pattern that snaked diagonally around the columns.

The fact that this floor-pattern was 'unframed' at its ragged edges served to confirm the potential extension of the hypostylar gridiron towards its properly-conceived infinitude.

The design that the Cambridge Client Committee invented, without any aid from myself, began by erasing all vestiges of 'pattern' (as they called it).

This, at least, was a simple act of refusal that can be, more than often, the spur to a better design.

AFTERWORD for the TWENTY-FOURTH LECTURE: 'DEMOLITION DERBY'.

I had become aware, at the first International Venice Biennale of Architecture, back in 1991, that the length of time it had taken JOA to develop both our ideas as well as our designs, had rendered them unfashionable. I had never wanted to run a design bureau of my own. I enjoyed my work too much to become a mother-hen for others. But circumstances had both given me the opportunity to start a bureau of my own, as well as a peculiar set of familial catastrophes (being driven out of Cyprus by the Turkish Invasion of 1974) that saw both relations as well as old family friends giving my fledgling practice some domestic projects in Bayswater and Belgravia as well as the simple commercial (warehouse-workshop) projects of Poyle and Kensal Road.

I had not enjoyed working for other Architects. It was not merely egoism. I found them dull. JOA's private clients were almost always more interesting. So, apart from a few friendships with Critics, in their capacity as writers, I, and my small bureau, worked in isolation. Now, however, JOA was on a 'public' stage. Perhaps I should not have been surprised that, having done without our professional peers for so long, and with such seeming success, that they should not be pleased with us. I failed, for example, to understand, at the lunch given by Phyllis Lambert, the Seagram Heiress and founder of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, that one did not 'talk shop'. Wristwatches, on the other hand, were permissible. Talking about 'Architecture' was best left to journalists, whom one (of course), never read. To understand oneself was (to James Stirling) to emasculate the wellsprings of creativity. I have seldom felt so overpowered by a sense of the miasmatic dullness of contemporary Architectural discourse as I did at the Lambert Lunch, social high-point of the round of 1991 Biennale parties.

What I had not foreseen was that this mood-swing in the Professional hothouse would affect my supposedly hard-headed patrons of 'Business'. I could see from Venice that the struggle, by my Profession, since the 1960's, to create an ur-Architecture capable of carrying ideas, had been summarily abandoned. Deconstruction was mistaken as a licence to trash the very medium itself - let alone any 'conceptual cargo' it might 'carry'. My colleagues became mute on anything pertaining to their proper professional culture. I gave up going to the Biennale parties after this and Rima and I merely walked about Venice-talking to literate people, like Tudy Sammartini, about such as Athanasius Kircher. I also bought books, some so extremely heavy that they had to be shipped home via freight. We revisited the 'Casa Frolo' on the Giudecca where we had spent our first night together after being married in S. Giorgio de Greci. We found a splendid 'occiali', whose succession of products I have worn every year since. One cannot be depressed for long in Venice!

The shock came later, when JOA's hitherto amiable Patrons trashed the interior of the Judge.