

«a quarterly magazine about
twentieth century design»



the modernist

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aidan turner-bishop is chair of the north west group of the *twentieth century society*. he's an exiled mancunian, born in withington hospital. a tesco's now stands on the site.

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natalie bradbury is a manchester-based writer, and editor of the *shrieking violet* fanzine, a free print and online art and culture magazine.

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phil griffin is a freelance writer and curator with a special interest in architecture and urban issues.

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richard martin is an academic and writer currently based in lisbon. a former policy advisor at cobe, he completed his phd at the london consortium and has taught at birkbeck (university of london), middlesex university and tate modern. he is a member of the when we build again collective.

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dr. marco iuliano is a senior research associate in the department of architecture at cambridge university. his research focuses on the intersections between architecture and the visual arts. in 2012 he organised the international conference *still architecture* and curated the exhibition *cambridge in concrete* (university of cambridge and royal institute of british architects).

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richard brook is a senior lecturer at the manchester school of architecture. his particular research interest is the architecture of modernity, the machine age and functionalism. he is the curator and author of the recent *infra_manc* exhibition and publication, shown at cube gallery, manchester.

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stephen hale teaches film and literature at the manchester college. he has written on aspects of twentieth century art and architecture, italian design and italian cinema. he would like to be reincarnated in rome in the late 1950s / early 1960s.

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joshua abbott is a printer living and working in london, and is the creator of the *modernism in metroland* website.

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dr. steve millington is a senior lecturer in human geography at manchester metropolitan university. he is co-editor of two books, *cosmopolitan urbanism* and *spaces of vernacular creativity*, both published by routledge.

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robert griffiths is a lecturer in media technology at the university of central lancashire, and whilst he teaches all things new, he is not a neophile and deplores the trap of progress and built in obsolescence.

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benjamin tallis is a freelance critic and curator who writes on art and politics for a variety of european publications. he is a former diplomat who worked on eu security missions in the balkans and former soviet union and is currently researching a phd on borders in central and eastern europe.

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ian tocher is a freelance writer on architecture and gardens. he is based down south but makes frequent trips to friends in manchester for urban walks around the city.

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jack hale is a founder member of the *manchester modernist society* and co-founder and editor of «the modernist» magazine.

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emily gee is an independent writer and curator based in liverpool and is sub editor of «the modernist» magazine. her practice considers the manifestation of power structures within urban space and she is an ardent fan of concrete.



Welcome modernistas, new readers and returning friends. This new edition might seem all grown up—our second year is bigger and dare we say it, better?—but perennial students that we are, we spent the summer recess indulging in a little guerilla heritage at the former UMIST university, where we set up a temporary school for the day, declaring the site a modernist conservation area and conferring celebratory degrees, before decamping to the Barbican for some salutary lessons on 'art as life' from the Bauhaus.

Whilst principally remembered as an architecture school, the Bauhaus had a broader, more utopian ambition; a vision of an experimental, revolutionary pedagogic model; a place where the principles of art, design, philosophy and learning could and should transform the everyday world.

So as we graduate from toddling infant to anxious junior, what better way to start the coming year than with a 'back to school' edition for the autumn term! Taking inspiration from the city itself as a laboratory for learning, curiosity, experimentation and play—the epitome of a perpetual college without walls—the modernist henceforth aspires to be a mobile manifesto, a peripatetic pamphlet, a call to arms for the mildly seditious, a true University of the Air!

Welcome to CAMPUS! From decorated schoolyards, dreaming spires and concrete quadrangles, to cultural quarters, urban panelaks, the forgotten radicalism of the OU, via the vagaries of modern Olympic stadia, we hope you find something to delight, entertain, perhaps even inspire. Like the man says, 'TURN ON, TUNE IN, DROP OUT...'



The Hidden Cambridge

Ten years of frenetic activity transformed the layout of the city. The result, a Cambridge of concrete and steel, is physically present, but rendered almost invisible, overwhelmed by its noble neo-gothic predecessors. The most tangible sign of this modern Cambridge, built between the late fifties and the early seventies, is its raw and innovative materials, its buildings a reminder of a brief post-war era of hope, interrupted all too soon.

The man who started this revolution was Leslie Martin, who came to the School of Architecture at Cambridge in 1956: an appointment warmly approved by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner. As first professor of architecture, Martin demonstrated clear ideas for the academy adapted from the Bauhaus: the direct bridging of Architectural Theory and Design was emphasised as a key educational concept, an idea still valid yet underestimated today. Martin had the capacity to attract scholars of the highest intellectual calibre such as Colin Rowe, Peter Eisenman and James Stirling to his School, visiting lecturers such as Alvar Aalto, Franco Albini, Richard Neutra, Louis Kahn and Le Corbusier; and the energy to sit on influential University committees, orienting the new buildings towards this new idiom.

In 1959, only three years after Martin's arrival, the first sign of the new architectural course was unveiled: the School of Architecture extension designed by Colin St. John ('Sandy') Wilson and Alexander Hardy. In the same year, Le Corbusier opened the ceremony for his honorary degree in the new extension saying "*Le intentions sont claire*" / "The intentions are clear," speaking about the new addition, re-

alised using *Le Modulor*, the system of measurements he developed in the forties and fifties to achieve harmony in his architectural composition. Le Corbusier's passage at Cambridge is a story within a story: three students at the time decided to mock him during the ceremony from the windows of Gonville and Caius College, shouting his famous slogan "*à bas l'académie!*" / "down with the Academy!," as Le Corbusier himself, struck by the gesture, famously recorded in one of his sketches.

Where, on the map of Cambridge, are all these architectural signs that embody so much innovation? They are rarely close to one another, with the exception of the Sidgwick site, home to two important early examples of the 'modern' Cambridge: Casson and Conder's Arts Faculty Building (1958–61) and, later, close to the cloister, one of the most well-known and controversial examples of post-war British architecture, James Stirling's History Faculty (which narrowly escaped demolition in 1985). Meanwhile, close to the river Cam is an interesting example of the relationship between old and new, the monumental Erasmus Building (1959–60) designed by Basil Spence to complete the Victorian Friars Court of Queens' College, in a very elegant language; another completion of this kind is the later Cripps Court at St. John's College (Powell & Moya, completed in 1967).

Martin was directly involved in the design of some college buildings, such as the recently restored Harvey Court for Gonville and Caius College (with Sandy Wilson and Patrick Hodgkinson), completed in 1962. In partnership with Sandy Wilson, Martin also built the only existing tower in

University accommodation, the William Stone building for Peterhouse College (1963–64); another tower of offices and laboratories is the Arup Associates project on the New Museum Site (1966–74), soon to undergo a delicate process of renovation.

The extension of the School of Architecture, and Harvey Court, had the good fortune to be acknowledged by Reyner Banham in his *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: Architectural Press, 1966) alongside another important masterpiece, a campus conceived ex novo on 42 acres outside Cambridge, the Churchill College. The architects involved in the competition were the avant-garde wave of the time: of the 20 sets of projects submitted, 4 were selected as finalists, and the selected teams were required to implement their preliminary proposal. The finalists were Howell, Killick, Partridge & Amis; Chamberlin, Powell and Bon; James Stirling and James Gowan; Richard Sheppard Robson & Partners. The latter group won the competition and developed the modern scheme in five phases, from 1959 to 1966, when college status was granted to this very interesting example of campus with buildings of concrete and brick.

Certainly, any list of this era's most innovative and imaginative collegiate buildings must include Denys Lasdun's Brutalist Christ's College (1970), remembered as the 'typewriter,' plus the extension of Darwin College (especially the dining room), designed by Howell, Killick, Partridge & Amis. In contrast, Ralf Erskine's Clare Hall (completed in 1969), was the first example towards a less iconic architecture, one more attentive to the college as a social space: a style widely taken up in the Cambridge of the 1970s and '80s, following the 1973 oil crisis. All these structures share a great level of experimentation—especially in their use of materials and shapes—a feature making these buildings particularly vulnerable, exposing them to all the usual preconceptions and debates about their future retention. The task of the architect today, is to restore them, navigating the narrow space between conservation and improvements for their continued use.

Leslie Martin retired from the School in 1972, after sixteen years of tenure. Two years before, Pevsner was already obliged to revise his 1954 Cambridgeshire guide: the Cambridge panorama had changed rapidly and, in his view, could finally compete with the most advanced academic campuses on other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Harvard and Yale.

The Department of Architecture of Cambridge University celebrates its centenary this year (1912–2012). More information on the subject can be found in the following catalogue '*Cambridge in Concrete. Images from the RIBA British Architectural Library Photographs Collection*' (exhibition catalogue, Cambridge 2012, edited by Marco Luliano and François Penz), which features in depth coverage of many of the buildings mentioned, alongside contributions by noted experts, including Deborah Howard, Nick Bullock, Peter Carolin, Dean Hawkes and Nicholas Ray. *Cambridge in Concrete* will be displayed at the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2013.

(p.10)
le corbusier and professor martin
in the school of architecture extension
photograph: richard einzig, (c) 1959

(p.11)
erasmus building, queens' college
architects: basil spence & partners
photography: henk snoek, (c) 1961
henk snoek / riba library
photographs collection,
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