BLUEPRINT ISSUE 299 • SOHEI NISHINO • POSTLERFERGUSON • JAMES STIRLING • ANTHONY VIDLER/ODILE DECQ/KENGO KUMA/BOLLES + WILSON/KERSTEN GEERS/PIER PAOLO TAMBURELLI/RICHARD MEIER/ANTONINO CARDILLO • THE LINDSTRÖM EFFECT • FEBRUARY 2011 • £5.50

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JAMES STIRLING/MICHAEL WILFORD FONDS, CCA MONTREAL

36 DIAMOND LIGHT SYNCHROTRON
In the countryside south of Oxford lies the Diamond Light Synchrotron. The project has become a centre of excellence in British scientific research. The remarkable building, 235m in diameter, is ring-fenced for funding and will see £69 million invested in it over the coming years. Tim Abrahams reports on the existing facility and how plans to expand it will continue to synthesise the architecture with the research it houses

42 POSTLERFERGUSON
Martin Postler and Ian Ferguson are best known in the UK for an arsenal of build-it-yourself cardboard weapons. Owen Pritchard meets the designers and finds that despite their infamy, the company has ambitions beyond the design of single objects. Through collaboration with international clients, PostlerFerguson is finding ways to operate in new markets by exporting their skills and knowledge

48 JAMES STIRLING
Pritzker prize-winning James Stirling was the architect behind Britain's most famous post-war buildings. The most prestigious architecture prize in the country is named after him, yet his work continues to divide opinion. Ahead of a major exhibition at Tate Britain later this year, Anthony Vidler writes about the archive and legacy of an architect who remains Britian's most important modern architect. Accompanying his essay, Blueprint asked eight leading international architects how encounters with Stirling's buildings and the man himself have influenced them and their work. With contributions from Richard Meier, Odile Decq, Kengo Kuma, Peter Wilson, Antonio Cardillo, Kjetil Thorsen, Kersten Geers and Pier Paolo Taburelli, the responses reveal Stirling's international reputation and an insight into how his work is interpreted outside the UK

JAMES STIRLING

MY INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECT

JAMES FRAZER STIRLING IS BRITAIN'S MOST CELEBRATED AND DIVISIVE ARCHITECT. AHEAD OF A MAJOR EXHIBITION AT TATE BRITAIN, *ANTHONY VIDLER* AND A HOST OF ARCHITECTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD DISCUSS STIRLING'S OWN INFLUENCES AND THE IMPACT OF HIS WORK

ALL IMAGES: JAMES STIRLING/MICHAEL WILFORD FONDS, CCA MONTREAL

ANTONINO CARDILLO
ITALY

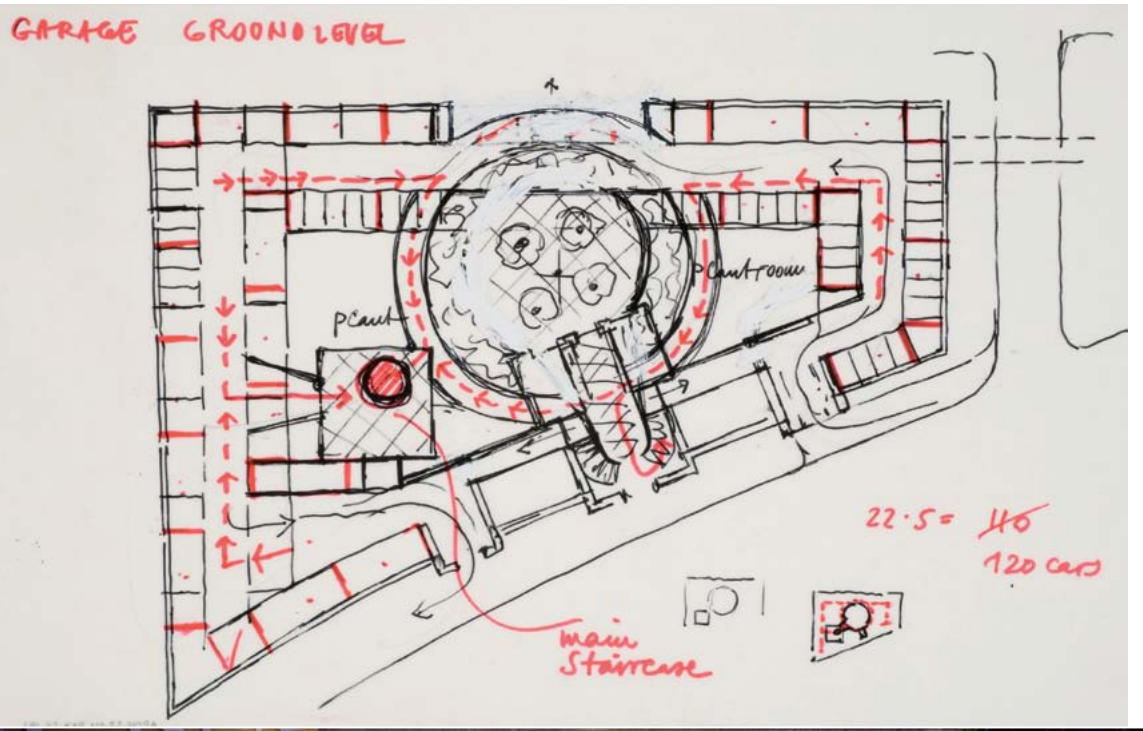
The first time I came across the work of James Stirling was during my studies of Contemporary Architectural History. I still cherish the memory of seeing a black and white photo of the engineering department at Leicester University built in 1959. The hypnotic harmony – that was somehow out of balance – achieved by cantilevering the volumes of the building, seemed to make reference to the Club Risakov by Russian avant-garde architect Kostantin Melnikov. It gave me the impression Stirling wanted to carry on writing the truncated history of Russian avant-garde.

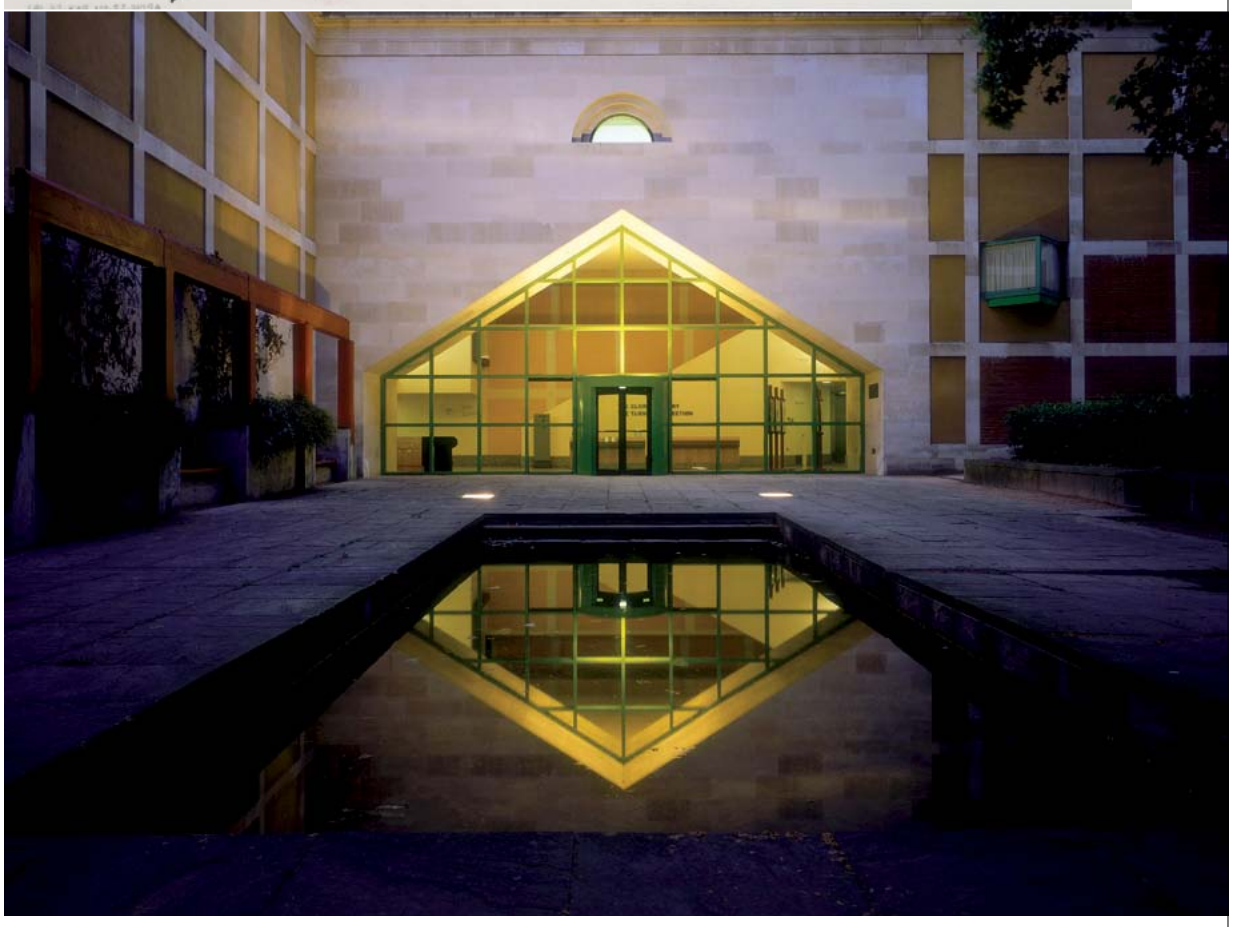
Particularly with the engineering department at Leicester University, Stirling produced a romantic vision of the curtain walls and horizontal windows belonging to the modernist vocabulary of materials. This ability to critically combine these somehow obvious materials is a constant in his work. At a certain time on his creative path, though, Stirling swapped part of his modernist vocabulary for more historical references.

This is evident in the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, Germany. I always get the impression that in this building Stirling didn't manage to firmly control his emerging architectural vocabulary. The lack of synthesis here is also spatial. I like to think of this building as an aborted experiment – part of a creative path that was abruptly interrupted by Stirling's sudden death.

His engineering department at Leicester University, though, has a visionary power. It's a building that's able to communicate with any other period in history – beyond the period in which it was designed and constructed. It's a meta-historical building.

There is an intriguing similarity between Stirling's work in Leicester and the Torre Velasca by BBPR in Milan, completed in 1958. Both projects were engaging with the idea of modular structures and interested in resolving the passage from an octagonal base to a rectangular module.





work on prefabrication and housing attempted to bring both into the spatial forms that had proved so resilient as armatures for the relation of public and private; his apparent turns to classicism and to the typological precedents of institutions were not literal but abstract notations of the history that these institutions brought into the present; his plays with colour were a not-too-subtle countering to 'white architecture.'

In all these shifts, the central unifier was his ability to join and weld volumetrically – an ability aided from early in his career by his recognition of the power of the axonometric projection – not only as representation but as a vehicle for the process of design. It is this process that the archive most clearly explains. It documents the intense and difficult development of buildings that – when built or drawn as projects – seem both effortless and all too final.

For Stirling the development of an 'architecture' was a continuous and continuing process. Even as one drawing or sketch led to another, so each building – apparently finite in itself – was another stage of the never-ending exploration of space and material, function and expression by which (with not a little wit and a great deal of ebullient pleasure), an 'architecture' might be created ■

This is an extract from Anthony Vidler's book, James Frazer Stirling: Notes from the Archive. There will be an exhibition, James Stirling: Notes from the Archive at Tate Britain, 5th April – 21st August 2011

Above: a plan of the Wissenschaftszentrum in Berlin, a project by Stirling, Wilford & Associates, 1979-87

Below: the Clore Gallery extension to Tate Britain, where a major exhibition on Stirling will be held later this year