

# the Twenty- fifth lecture

***"Fiat Nihil!"***



## But refusal was followed by Acts of Design.

Bands of polished black and grey stone were installed around the ragged edges of the floor and around each individual column footprint. Instead of the lively rippling of the original design, which even the dullest iconic illiterate might identify as 'watery', the Client Body design flooded the floor with the uniformity of 'Carrara 'C'. This blurry grey marble was then carefully bordered, like an infant tracing an outline, by a double band. The first was of Nero Marquinia, an inexpensive black marble, pleasantly inscribed with thin white veins, that I had already specified. The second ring was of a densely black granite which was given the brilliantly imperishable polish that only such stones obtain. This was a more costly stone than any I had proposed. It gripped, like a black fist, whatever was found rising vertically out of my mortified floor.

I not only use marbles because they come in a variety of colours, but because their veining inscribes them with an evidence of their history as that of sedimentary oolites who were then metamorphosed and invaded by later infusions.

THEY ARE A STONE THAT HAS BEEN 'WRITTEN'  
- even if only by the careless hand of a Nature void of any intent to communicate.

Dense black granite is a stone entirely without either figure or hue. Not only did it well represent the iconoclastic ambitions of my Client Body, but it added that quality I have described, on pages 24-07 to 24-09, as 'stocking-mask' and 'face-lift'. Granite is a material that never grows old - showing so few of the marks of time that it obtained the approval of the Ancient Egyptians in their futile pursuit of the life everlasting. Marbles, on the other hand, scuff a little and even fade. They are softer, adjusting themselves amiably to the blows of fate without pretending to offer that fraudulent refusal to the dimension of time promised by the 'forever new' of cryogenesis and plastic surgery.

Nothing 'scripted' now remained on the interior save a variety of vinyl distempers whose hues had all been subtly altered to bring them to accord with a quality acerbically described as "Nursery" - by a European Visitor of greater sophistication than my 'Client Body).

It was too late to erase the iconic scripting of the exterior.

## IT HAD ALL BEEN BUILT.

But the gardening remained.

This part of the lifespace, still hubristically described as 'Landscaping' (after the gigantic works of 'Mr. Brown's' navies turned cultivated fields into the pretence of a 'Nature' populated by Antique Heroes and Milkmaids), is all-too-often left until it is too late to grow anything of 'architectural' stature. Gardens should always be started in advance of construction. JOA showed, in Harp Heating, how to build inside a mature garden. If trees are planted in hypostylar arrays then whether they are trees or columns makes no difference to the conceptual landscape.

## But the garden is dear too, to the English.

The Client body gave Robert Holden, our cultivated, experienced and imaginative Garden-Designer, a hard time when it was discovered that his planting scheme included plants that were not native to England. This 'horticultural racism' put me in mind of a contemporary commonplace where the English Consumer will shop for food that is delivered frozen, cleaned, and shrinkwrapped from around the globe. Next to this out-of-town supermarket, the Consumer will load-up with inedible flowering plants, with real earth on their roots, from an even larger 'gardening centre'. A long-standing English illiteracy concerning food, that is only now beginning to change, has been associated with the purely symbolic cultivation of 'gardens' that were never anything less than an important part of the public rites of 'being English'.

## So what were these immemorial lawns of the Cambridge 'backs'?

My first visit revealed the river Cam, as a docile body of water, barely twelve metres across, sunk deeply into rounded banks of close-cropped grass. Undergraduates punted their supine cargoes at a leisurely pace. They appeared as explorers, issuing from a flood darkened by giant forest trees. In floppy khaki hats, and camouflaged combat fatigues, torn jeans and over-hanging shirts, they seemed part refugees, part adventurers from some 'other' place. Yet they were not alone, for in certain places, scattered upon the banks, lay others of their kind. It was like a field of battle, No one was left standing amongst the roughly-accounted combatants. Carrying my investigations further I noted that wherever an undergraduate found grass, both he and she would sit down and, very soon, lie down upon it.



There were, however, **certain turfs** upon which no-one, except the **members of an intellectual elite**, were allowed to tread at all. These were enclosed inside the colleges and lay, like the pristine surface of a bowling green, guarded by the columns of gothic cloisters. The only gardens, as such, to be found in collegiate Cambridge were reserved to the private dwellings of the College Masters. It seemed to me that the culture of the 'green places' of Cambridge was an extension of that Saxon antipathy to the urbane that had marked their taboo upon the Romano-British culture that the rustivating German invaders deliberately destroyed. When grass floored a public place one either tried to make oneself socially invisible, by lying down, or accepted that it was not for any human use at all.

Grass was a taboo laid upon public space to forbid it to the social cult of urbanity.

**So I took against this miasma of lawns.**

both because it was Saxon, and because to be human is not to lie like some primordial fish horizontal in the slime of prehistoric millenia. To be human is to stand upright and to use one's faculties for their uniquely conceptual capabilities.

Moreover, the Institute of Management was exploring the idea that **management should be understood as 'theatre'**. The old Hospital suited this ambition. For it was an 'old' civic building with a huge forecourt that allowed it to thearically **monstrare** its gigantic **fac(e)ade** to the street.

I designed the forecourt as a **paved garden, centred on a stone floor surrounded by seats backed-up by flowers and hedges**. To sit is, if not as noble as standing, at least **less ignoble than lying down**. Besides for a 'plaza' to be **lined by sitters** is to provide the erect with Spectators. I did, in fact, make a **modest strip of lawn**. But it lay **outside this theatre, behind the hedges, near the bicycle-parking sheds, where one might collapse, if one must, in decent obscurity**.

I aimed to give this **plaza-garden** the **'tragic' structure of a 'plot'**.  
**-with a beginning, middle and end -**

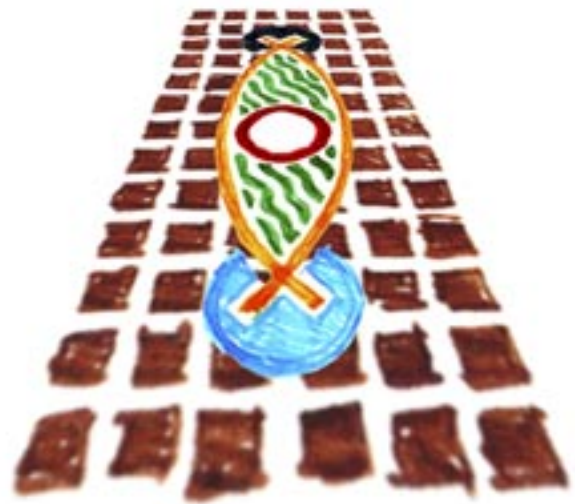


*The shape of a reversible narrative tends to Nothing at the beginning and end of either direction while creating a 'space of appearances', a 'plaza', in its middle.*

**whether coming off the street or leaving the building. But how could this reversible emplotment be configured?**

**HOW COULD AN END ALSO BE A BEGINNING, AND VICE VERSA? CAN A 'PLOT' HAVE TWO ENDINGS AND TWO BEGINNINGS - BOTH OF THEM INTERCHANGEABLE?**

The syntax of a **reversible narrative** - so **common in architectural space**, took on the semantic of a **boat**. Like one of those **ferries that chugs back and forth** across a river, its **proW and stern are interchangeable**. Either of them parts the flood only for the water to close again behind, **never remembering anything of the passage of the craft**.



*When is a beginning and end and an end a beginning? The answer is when it is a narrative rehearsed from building to street and then street to building. More importantly, it is when these termini 'close' like doors, upon their 'history' while leaving what they traversed, their middle ground, their arboreal 'trunk', swollen with a spatial amplitude sufficient to accommodate the urbane theatre of a social cult which may, or as easily may not, reverberate with their inscribed narrations. They are like beads on a necklace whose meanings may be patent, or merely murmured below the breath. At least they will be filled with the airs of speech and the speech of manifested airs.*

# I made three boat-shapes.



Coming from Trumpington street one crossed, on a small bridge, a boat filled with water. This water flows from 'Hobson's Conduit, down each side of the street, even today. It would be very shallow, but, flowing over a black bottom, seem deep. The middle part was tripartite with two ends and a centre where paths led out sideways to the bicycle parking sheds - designed to keep one's saddle dry. The whole was shaped by raised flower-beds. Their masonry retaining walls were topped by a bench of planks. These dry more quickly than stone. A topiary hedge, behind the beds, cut down the wind. Four, more secluded, semi-circular 'exedrae' bracketed the whole like columns.

The first I could fill with the spring-water of Hobson's Conduit that still flowed, physically, down both sides of Trumpington Steet. Hobson had been an inn-keeper who always gave his guests a worse horse if they refused his first offer - hence 'Hobson's Choice'. The street is the 'infinite net' whose sign is water. Here it is also the serpentine semantic of the Oceanic terminus of any 'istoria' of somatic space.

No iconically literate culture would ever substitute the referent for the sign.

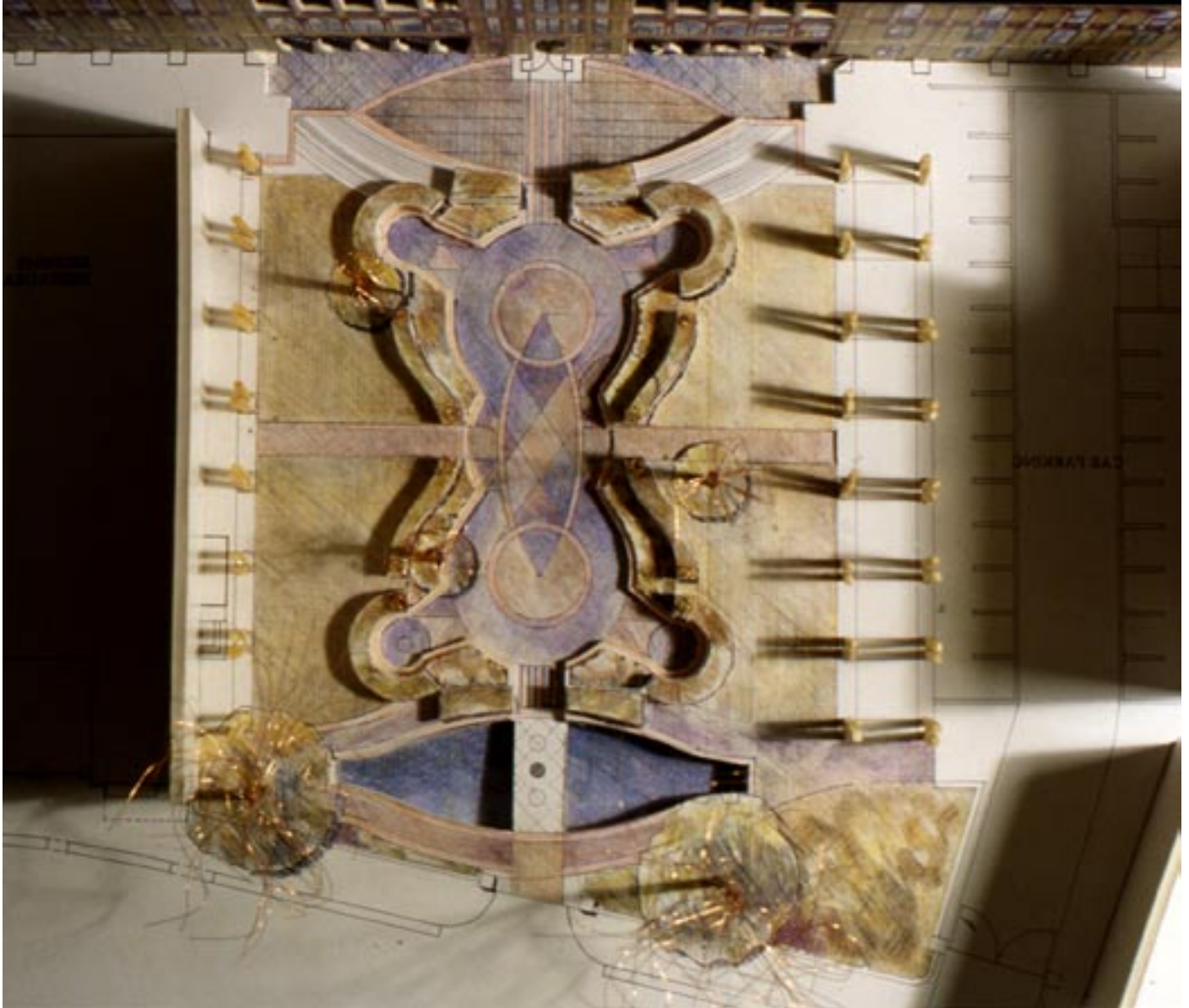
Swift satirised the philosophers of Laputa, who carried heavy sacks of referents to save wearing-out their lungs with speech. What would he have made of Architects like Mies and Ando? Placing my water inside a boat-shape at least saves it from the Corbusian kitsch of being a "rushing river". Is one crossing Okeanos in a boat, or are these two sinuous sides in some way trying to 'copulate'? I would place 'alpha and omega' sculptures at its interchangeable prow and stern.

The second boat-shape is the centre of the 'emplotted' triad. It is divided by a path to the bicycle sheds. Four smaller 'bowers' lead off two larger 'plazas'. All are lined with dwarf stone walls holding raised planting beds. The University promised these to the Warden for an hostel for disabled students so that they could be closer to plants. Some of these low walls are surmounted with slatted benches made of oiled wood -which dries easily after rain. The beds are backed by topiary hedges. These repeat the footprint of the walls, sheltering sitters from the wind.

Behind these a lawn is banished to a proper privacy. Here the recumbent may disport their tired, ignoble, self-image.

# Stuffy Conferences need to 'break' into fresh air.

So the **final space**, again **boat-shaped**, and against the ground floor arcade, was merely **paved**. Apart from being capable of receiving a **sudden flood of 'break-outers'**, it had to bear a **fire engine** and allow it **room to manoeuvre**.



*The 'space of appearances' is theatrically manifested as carved out of and shaped by stone walls, clipped hedges and flowering plants. Its floor is paved with iconic patterns and inscriptions. It is a theatre on which humans can properly 'be'. It is a framework on which sculptures, lighting and any other inscriptive media can be both 'hung' as well as 'steadied' so that their conceptual body can intersect with the corpus of quotidian space.*

Ways of **'inscribing'** these spaces, with **plants, pavings** and **sculptures** sprang easily to mind. They provided a **structure** to the **'discoursings'** that any **iconically-literate litespace-design** culture could deploy.

This was a **garden** that was both a **flowery, planted 'arcadia'** as well as a **hard-floored, benched and paved 'plaza'**. It was no **'Lawn'**.

## But **fund-raising** for this **element** came to be **prohibited** by the Institute.

I understood that it could affect the **reputation** of the **Business School** for **fiduciary sobriety** if they sought funding for **'luxuries'**. But this was to misunderstand both the culture of the **English**, and the psyche of the **'Patron'**. The patron wants to **show off** his act of **charitable munificence** to the World so that it sheds lustre upon **him and his family**.

It is no secret that the one thing the **majority of the English** will **admire** is a beautiful **garden**. The 'garden' is almost a **national symbol**. A screen of **carefully-tended flowering plants** is the favoured greeting in the **hallways** of many of our **most prominent institutions**. They proclaim a subscription to the **verdant mythos** of the Island Albion. It is even a sign of a **sincere subscription** to the **solid virtues** of Capital and an **honest abjuration** of '**expenditure**', when these **blooms** are of undying plastic.

**In Bruges, one of the wellsprings of the Netherlandish capitalism that irrigated what would eventually grow into the global forests of the British Empire, there are two, equally extensive, equally polychromatic, flower-markets. One of them is entirely of plastic blooms. The plastic tulip is the talisman, the secret sign, of a commitment to Capital over Expenditure.**

**The plastic peony is the prudent peony.**

## **BUT WHAT OF THE ROOF-GARDEN?**

**SENECA HAD DECLARED THAT THEY SAPPED MORALS.**

BUT AT LEAST THE ROMANS KNEW OF THEM, WHEREAS THE NORDICS NEVER LEFT THE GROUND AT ALL. IT COULD BE ONE OF THE REASONS THAT CAMILLO SITTE NEVER MADE SENSE OF ALBERTI'S CURIOUS STRATEGY OF ENTOMBING THE 'NEW ANTIQUITY' UNDER THE EXISTING FABRIC SO AS TO MAKE IT SEEM AS ANCIENT AS 'THE AGE OF GOLD' - IN ILLO TEMPORE. THE ROOF GARDEN, ACCORDING TO MY ANALYSIS PRESENTED IN 'BABUINO', LECTURE NO. 07, PAGES 04-15, WAS USEFUL TO ALBERTI'S PROJECT. LIKE THE WEEDS THAT FRINGE THE TOPS OF RUINS, THE ROOF GARDENS OF THE MEDIAEVO-HUMANIST CITY REIFY THE IDEA, REHEARSED IN CHRISTIAN ELLING, OF THE 'CATACLYSM OF DOMESTICITY' THAT BURIED THE ALBERTIAN TEMPLES THROUGH WHICH, AS MARK JARZOMBEK PROPOSED: "PHILOSOPHY WOULD BE INTRODUCED BY STEALTH".

*My proposal for the Ark's Roof Garden was simpler. It would rehearse the idea that Architecture was the bringing of 'civilisation' to 'the place of choice'. The Architectural Ritual combined the will of the Founders, who 'came from afar' and the 'Genius Loci' which had been from Time Immemorial. The result was a novelty - a third thing. A 'child' which was the New Institution. The Ark Roof Garden was half way between the Entablature, carrying the Cargo of the Advent, and the Street, and Site-Gardens, which enacted the 'Genius Loci'. It could therefore legitimately enact the 'result' of the conjunction and represent the Institute itself.*

*The means at hand were transformed from a mere balustrade into a yellow Trabica-Raft (made of 'bars of light') which carried the Cones of Hestia (conical red balusters) over the undulating sea (the blue handrail). In iconography, as advised by Levi-Strauss, the components do not need to be in their 'natural' relationships. They need only 'present', and indeed are better presented, oneirically - as in dreams. The floor of the terrace should extend the Hypostylar Forest of Infinity already en fleshed by the 'Order' of the Ark, Castle and Gallery. Anything else on the Ark Roof should read as a 'novelty' drawn from the conjunction of the Genius Loci - Cambridge - and the Founders' Ambitions for the Judge.*



*The 'Flare-Path' focusses, with perfect crassness, on the weakest. Architectural Element (which even Pevsner noted) of the facade - the silly 'toilet-block' entrance bay. It will be dug-up and fixed one day - when civilisation comes to commerce.*



*The red 'cones of Hestia' balusters rest on the yellow lattice-spandrel 'Rafts' and ride over the blue balustrade 'Ocean'. All in turn are 'carried' by the Phylogenetic History scripted on the Ark Wall. The Planters are both 'Capitals of Thought' and the 'Cargo of the Rafted Entablature'.*



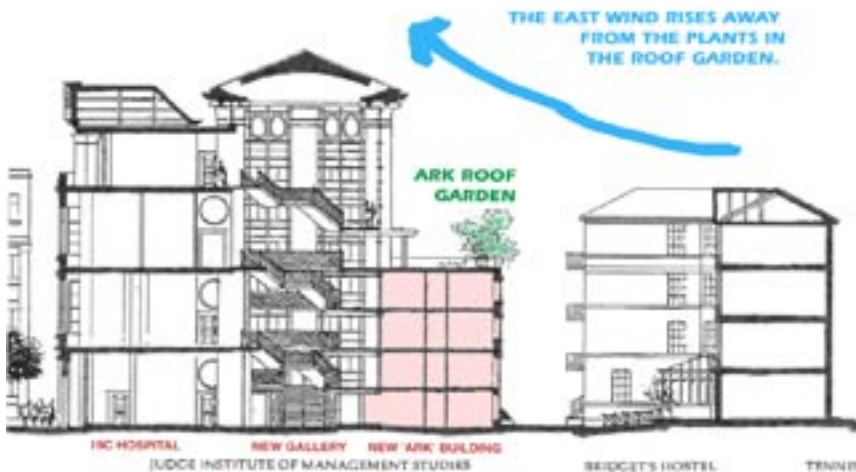
The Planning Permission Elevations showed a row of small trees in the nine-ton single-unit black concrete planter-'capitals'. Seven show in this elevation, and two are on the opposite side of the Ark-making nine in all.

JOA's Architecture was the **only one on offer** which could **award its users** these **opportunities for self-knowledge**, and even **self-promotion**. But such is the **total iconic illiteracy** of our **Public Culture** that a **conversation on the matter did not even begin**. The **subject proved**, even after **five years of working together**, as **lifeless as a cadaver**. "**Capital**", was something one **did not spend**. It never became, even after **masses of reports and sketches**, and even **BEING BUILT**, the head of a columnar Order!

The **idea** that ones **lifespace** could be **scripted with meanings** beyond the **customarily moronic**, and the **downright commercial**, seem to **engender** the desire to **erase all such levitations**.

The **glossy black concrete planter-capitals**, aka **jardineres**, had been **cast in single, eight-ton, pieces**. This ensured their **water-tightness**. The plants would not **water-log** because a **drain-hole** led from each **planter onto the roof**. **Two small holes** had been **cast into the top-side of the planter-capital**. They lay at the end of the **'Y'-shaped recessed grooves** which **housed and protected the automatically-controlled irrigation-pipes**, which were **fed, by gravity**, from a tank in one of the brickwork **Sixth-Order Columns** along the **Gallery**.

The **tanks and the supply-piping** were never installed. The **cost-saving was fractional**. The roof was paved in the **cement tiles** used to hold down **polystyrene slabs**, and then **bordered with the round river pebbles** used for the same function. The **roof became used mainly for outdoor 'smoking'**. The **giant planters collected the butts and the old Coca Cola tins**. They became **oversized dustbins**.



The proposed Roof Garden on top of the 'Ark' Block is sheltered from the wind by having buildings on both sides that effectively 'lift' the currents off its plants.

The **scripting of the Gallery Floor** was **erased**. The **scripting of the Forecourt Floor** was **erased**. Now the whole **Roof Garden** was **gone**.



To allow for whatever might eventually be designed I specified an Erisco-Bauder 'Green' roof - the most costly on the market. By this I avoided condensation staining a cement ceiling. It has not one but two waterproof membranes to keep its insulation dry. It has a copper foil to prevent roots growing down through it. Earth placed onto it retains a layer of 'groundwater' moisture, trapped within pockets in the roof construction which evens out extremes of humidity. It was the 'Rolls-Royce' - or perhaps one should say, 'the Merc.' of 'green roofs'. This shot shows the rubber membranes and the 8-ton glossy-black, jardiere-capitals.

The justification made for these trivial acts of **conceptual vandalism**, that came when the **body of the building** was entirely **conceived**, documented and **contracted**, not to mention **mainly built**, was that the Judge was:-

## "Only an Academic Building".

I could not understand this, and looked for some deeper reason.

For I had found, back in 1991, when JOA joined the project as its Architect, a 'Department of Management' originating from Production Line Engineering in Cambridge's highly-regarded Faculty of Engineering. It was housed, very modestly, in part of the industrial building previously used by the University of Cambridge Press.

I had understood, from the very beginning, that the 'Judge Project' had high ambitions.

It was intended, with initiatives from the highest levels of British Commerce, to attract the best minds in Britain into Industry, Manufacturing, Trade, Commerce and whatever else it was through which Britain, not so long ago, had ruled the World.

*The sense that I received from the eminent businessmen who were promoting this project was that Undergraduates who both liked to use, and were capable of using, their minds, did not think of Commerce as their first choice for an adult career. They thought of Academia if they were almost impossibly clever; A Profession might attract them, or Politics or one of the Arts if a living could be made. Anything was preferred to manufacture, sales or whatever went on in the Industrial Estates or 'Administrative Town Centres' to which Post-War British Planning had consigned the politically troublesome 'Working Class' - whether the collars that chained them were Meritocratically white, or haptically blue.*

What sort of person who had now travelled in 'Old Yurru' now actually WANTED to live in the PSEUDO-YANKEE hutlet-belt of crinkly-tin warehouses and plate glass admin. blocks prescribed by Attlee's 1947 'Redevelopment of Central Areas'?

The grandeur of the Old Addenbrooke's Hospital had been welcomed by the Promoters as an appropriate vehicle in which to sail on this 'fishing for brains' expedition. The 19C Hospital was infinitely more cultured than the Faculty of Pharmacology next door. This latter was the invention of CUEMBS - the University's own Building Surveyor's Department. It was dire. Such was the monkish disdain of the Cambridge Dons for 'show' that they allowed mere Surveyors to design their Faculties. The Promoters summarily dismissed the first Project Manager fielded by CUEMBS. Both the Promoters, and we in JOA, understood that if the worldly ambitions of a top Business School were to succeed, more would be needed than phenomenal brains sitting on battered stacking-chairs, on asbestos-tile floors in beige-painted rooms lit by 8'0" fluorescent battens.

Why then was there this complete collapse of effort at the final hurdle - that of 'decoration'?

## I CONSIDERED FOUR REASONS

1. IT BROKE THE TABOO, WHICH I HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO EXPLORE, ON 'LOOKING POOR', EVEN WHEN ONE WAS NOT.

Perhaps I was mistaken in thinking that one of the attractions of commerce, and the only one remaining today, is that one might be better paid than in any other career. I should have known better. My explorations as one of the Judges, for five years, of the Industrial Architecture prize given by the Financial Times, had taught me that commerce also plays the 'Arte Povera' game. I recalled the Bedfont Lakes IBM H.Q. by Hopkins. Every office in this ostentatiously steel and glass building, had a frameless glass door. Each of them cost, back in 1993, some £500. I thought, at the time, "but this was the cost of my iconically-structured, three-colour densely-patterned, hand-crafted veneered doors at Wadhurst"! Then I thought to myself "yes, but what would the shareholders think?" The veneered doors look luxurious because they are 'decorated'. For one can see that they are just an ordinary flush timber door-blank, such as one has anywhere, but lavished with a huge amount of extra human labour.

*The glass door, on the other hand, just 'is itself'.*

(It required huge capital investments in its 'technology'. But that was O.K. Capital was good. Labour was bad.)





Maybe this is why, in IBM, the glass table, really does have, in almost every office, that incredibly dumb placard saying "THINK"- in caps! In fact, as I thought after the visit. "This is quite clever. The shareholders think IBM is being frugal with its steel and glass box. But those in the know understand how much a frameless toughened glass door really costs. So they know that IBM is not short of money". The Predators are warned off and the Owners mollified, while IBM employees live in a crude, subliterate and savage lifespace unfit for their evident intelligence.

**Although how long intelligence survives a cretinous lifespace is a question that does come to mind.**

*The received wisdom teaches that a life devoted to 'Business' renders one financially rich but culturally poor. The place to contradict this was the Judge. I was always convinced of this, as were some of the Professors. Had I not, after all, just after being awarded the contract, and on my first 'briefing' by the Professors of the Institute, been invited to a lecture on the History of Management Theory given by a Professor from the University of Hawaii. His theme had been the demise, in the 1980's, of what he called:-*

## "THE RAND MEGADEATH MODEL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT THEORY".

The Professor recounted how, before the '80's, Management Theory was seen mainly as number-crunching. But when, in the 1970's Japan overtook Germany as the world's second biggest economy, the paradigm changed to one prioritising 'culture'. It was, at that time, the 'new idea'!

I nearly jumped out of my seat! For I well recalled that those early 1980's were also the time that brought an end to the Leslie Martin project, begun in the late 1950's, to found Architectural Theory upon Mathematics. This was exactly when Dalibor Vesely asked me to be his 'Practitioner', across the road at the Scroope Terrace studios of the Cambridge's Faculty of Architecture! I found clever undergraduates, in 1982, who still drew everything in hard pencil and had never heard of Lous Kahn. Cambridge Architecture was like some Polytechnic for Space-Plumbers. Vesely took over the intellectual lead from the Haptic Positivists of the parochial, small-town, pitched-roof, timber-framed, 'Fenland Pragmatics', and closed, for twenty years, the 'Mathematical' umbrella that sheltered their studios from Architecture's intellectual culture - such as it was then - and the real world of the late-20C's shattered cities.

Now, here was a Professor from the other side of the globe, demonstrating a paradigmatic synchronicity between my own world and that of the people for whom I was just beginning to create a lifespace.

## We were 'in step' !

So why, when I had clearly demonstrated, with the pages and pages of painstaking iconographical 'translations' (shown in the preceding lectures) were my Client Body still confusing what they called "my patterns" with the vulgar idea that Decoration equals Luxury? Why could they not accept that transferring laser pigment onto plaster tiles was not the 'buon fresco' that they, in what I could only consider a very complete confusion, insisted that was used, for hundreds and thousands of pounds sterling, on the ceiling? Clearly it was not 'looking rich' that bothered them.

**IT WAS LOOKING SYMBOLIC THAT FREAKED THEM. COULD THIS BE, AS PAUL RICOEUR SO AMIABLY ADVISED, BECAUSE "THE SYMBOL LEADS TO THOUGHT"? BUT WHAT IS 'CULTURE' IF NOT SYMBOLIC THOUGHT?**

It was the huge columns covered in mazy designs which my iconic notes indicated to be overflowing with mysterious ideas (that would be commonplace to anyone interested in iconic history) that instilled the "fear and loathing".

*I had done my best to prove that decoration could be 'surface-scripting' - a way of mediating ideas, as it had been throughout 9,000 years of Architecture. But I had totally failed to persuade My British Business Client Body that this gave them the chance to demonstrate the new, post-Japanese, Management Theory Paradigm that 'culture' (even Kultur) was very much a part of 'business'. Could it be my Clients feared 'ideas' as such?*



## 2. JOA WERE NOT THE FIRM TO TRANSFORM THE DESPISED MEDIUM OF 'DECORATING' INTO THE INTELLECTUALLY-CREDITABLE MEDIUM, OR EVEN PARLOUR-GAME, OF 'SURFACE-SCRIPTING'.

I am not of this opinion. For I know as I script this now that JOA have succeeded, all on our own, in doing what needed to be done. JOA have proved 'Surface-Scripting' - even if, as one may hope, others do it better in the future. "Who", I thought while facing the complete ruin of my life's project, "is there to whom I can turn for help? My 'Business' Client Body could have called on the services of anyone in the Arts and Sciences. Yet either they seemed reluctant to see the profit for their project in the 'Sixth Order' tools that I had placed in their service, or, and I could not tell which, they were so persuaded of the irredeemable intellectual dullness and cultural barbarity of their own world of Commerce, that they were afraid to put these tools (as Heidegger would have said) 'to work'.

*I would have accepted, at this time, the work of almost anyone on the internal surfaces of my building - so desperate was I for the 'proof' that what I had invented was 'practical'. After all, there was no Profession of 'surface-scripters' so what was there for me to lose?*

## 3. WHAT WE WERE PROPOSING WAS NOT ARCHITECTURE AT ALL. IT WAS ART,

It was, therefore, inappropriate for JOA to design it. Concerning this we were advised:

**"John, Art must be meaningless".**

I SAW, THEN, THAT MY FATE WAS SEALED. ILLITERACY HAD BECOME AN IMPERATIVE!

I should not have been surprised! Who was not iconically illiterate today? But why were the 'Traditional' 'works-of-art, that the Client Body so admired, created if it was not for their meaning? The 'Art' part of it was only to give the 'meaning' horsepower. I had intended to give this derived (unlike the 'Deconstructed Picturesque') a happy interment by gracing the columns of the Gallery with 3000 A3 aleatory compositions derived, unlike the 'Deconstructed Picturesque'. from reasoned (if arcane) parentages. I had hoped to rebuff Benjamin's hand-crafted "Aura of the Work of Art" with this demonstration of a graphical and (this was the Novelty), conceptual 'SPLENDOR'.

My office thought, at one time, of having our business cards overprinted with the slogan "Museum Quality Guaranteed".

This was after a friend from SOM called me. "John", his voice said down the line, "I hear you are designing a Museum in Houston". "No," I replied, "its (only) a Faculty of Engineering". "Oh", he said, "Gerald Hines said it was a Museum. He wanted to know if you were good enough. I said you were". I understood, just then, how far the miasmal ethical rot of 'Art' had spread. Gerald H. was the Houston realtor who introduced to the USA, and then to Britain, the French practice of hiring a 'Design Architect' and an Executive Architect to work in harness. Designing a 'Museum', in which even a half-decent composition is invariably messed-up by having it wildly 'over-furnished' as a cabinet de curiosities, is something to which no intelligent Architect should ever aspire. The proof of this is Liebeskind's Holocaust Museum in Berlin, where the composition of the Architecture reaches a level of such terminal chaos that filling it with any sort of 'reasoned' exhibit becomes impossible (or so an Israeli General advised me). And what needs 'reasoning-out' more than the Holocaust - and all such genocides?

*But I thanked my friend for his kind recommendation and said that we "preferred, as he did, the World of Work" where, as we later proved, it was possible to make a lifespace that was as mechanically practical as it was ontically appetising .*

## 4. THAT IT WAS WRONG TO ATTRACT THESE BRIGHT CAMBRIDGE MINDS INTO COMMERCE BY GIVING THEM THE IMPRESSION THAT WORKING IN 'TRADE' WOULD PROVIDE A CULTURED AND CIVILISED LIFE.

The Faculty of Management should be decorated with simple forms and plain materials so as to train its graduates for a life of hard work, keen thinking and service to their company.

**If this was our 'error' then it was my Clients who were mistaken.**



*The Promoters of the Judge were multi-millionaires. They had come to Cambridge looking for Minds. In commerce one becomes accustomed to obtaining what one requires by paying for it. The 'minds' at Cambridge were naturally gifted, certainly. But they got what they wanted by working for it. These were agile intellects which welcomed conceptual challenges.*

## They were rather easily bored!

They give their 'service', if at all, to no-one except their intellectual superiors. In short they were as hard to 'break-in' and 'employ' on some menial task as any thoroughbred. If one wanted to bind them to one's trade one must provide them with a world which gave their minds stonger meat than the mere tabulae of profit and loss.

The Judge School of Management, or Business as it subsequently became, is a lesser quantity than the University of Cambridge. It may not think so. But it is. Students who come to it come to Cambridge before they come to either 'Business' or 'the Judge'. This priority has to be signified. They come to study what 'Business' looks like when seen from this University. They have to come to understand, above everything else, that the priority of this University, as of all others of its calibre, is the intellectual life - the life of Theory. This can be symbolised in various ways.

## One way, in Oxbridge, is a 'Sumptuary Law'.

*It places the Colleges, in which the intellectual life is programmed to flourish, in much finer buildings than the Faculties. It is why Architects are obtained to design the extensions to the old College buildings and the University's own, architecturally sub-literate, Surveyors are allowed to design Faculty-structures.*

International Schools of Business Administration, on the other hand, provide Cordon Bleu Chefs to lunch the over-paid Managers that they hope to attract to their over-priced courses. Their buildings have a slick, iconically vacuous, airport-style, gloss which, they believe, will make the Manager feel that he is already on the escalator which will take him to the penthouse boardroom. The metrication of these places, their system of class, and classes, is fiscal. The Managers are over-paid because it is thought that this gives them authority, by virtue of outranking everyone else's remuneration, to direct the actions of persons of whose work, and work-culture, they know little and are obliged (by their Profession), to care less.

## Science as Numbers plus Money as Power equals 'the Business of Management'.

*How did late 20C Commerce hope to attract anyone of any intellect to such an ethos? The only one's who will come to them will join on a strictly piratical basis. They will be the ones who have understood that reward and promotion in commerce is given on a narrowly fiscal basis. Evidences lay easily to hand that they became sharks whose easiest prey was the company that hired them!*

They will do their best to buy it out, asset-strip it of all the unremunerative parts which made belonging to it a civilised life-experience. They will destroy the morale and loyalty of its staff-members, make them work only for money, and ruin the firm.

I was under the impression that my Client Body understood the sort of people that they were 'fishing for'. I understood that they knew that highly ingenious and clever people needed to be given an ethos which they respected - morally and intellectually. Surely everyone in the world knows that a man with a top-class mind who is shown the levers of power and allowed to work them purely for some singular end, especially one so inhumanly abstract as mere profit, becomes a danger to all around him?

## WHO DID NOT KNOW OF THE RISE OF THE CORPORATE RAIDER?

*I had worked for twenty years to invent my Sixth Order for the precise reason that a stable culture needed to manifest itself, to show itself, and to demonstrate itself - to its own members if to no others. Where more necessary was it to do this than in its quotidian lifespace, and where more natural a place than to enact this everyday 'theatre' than in a society's own institutions?*

*What better opportunity to show a lead in the very old, yet today, at the end of the 20C, intellectually-defunct medium of Architecture than the new 'School of Management' in one of the "Nation of Shopkeepers" most respected seats of learning? Nor were we speaking of some very remote arcana, understood only by a very few. For what was 'Management' but 'Government'.*

*How could a Faculty of Management pretend to be dealing with less than life itself, as it is concretely lived.*

**WAS ITS OBJECT MERELY TO MASSAGE FIGURES INTO COMPUTERS SO THAT THE BOARDROOM TOOK THE DECISIONS THE COMPUTER 'TOLD' IT TO TAKE?**

But then, I began to ask myself why have all 'Business' buildings, buildings from which organisations are governed, become, as the 20C has gone by, more and more bland, glassy, laconic and inscrutable. It can be for only one reason - that the ethic which governs its organisations must remain hidden. There is a taboo on demonstrating their culture. But if a thing is not revealed, a word not spoken, it fades and dies away in self-imposed obscurity, to vanish from the artifice of the human logosphere.

*If the Judge was going to inject this amoral ethos into Cambridge then it had no business, as many in the University already thought, to be there.*

I knew that my Client Committee was well aware of this intellectual hostility, not to say enormous distaste, for 'business'. The English intellectual community tended to look back to the first post-WWII Socialist administration of Clement Attlee as the moment when it held the reins of power. Accustomed to running the 'command economy' of WWII it put into effect the Social State plan designed by the austere William Beveridge (he took a cold bath every morning). But their rule had ended, not merely because administrations always rotate, but because the Oxbridge Intelligentsia, and the upper class from which it was mainly drawn, despised the more popular arts, and especially those of the 20C. Their rule was ambushed by the emergence of the 'Pop Art' in the 1960's. The pipe-smoking, suburban-semi, carpet-slipped 'little man' who Clement Attlee pathetically admitted that he was when he retired from the Prime Ministerial Office, remarked that "he was standing down because he no longer knew what young people wanted". He spoke for Oxbridge too.

Oxbridge's self-inflicted wounds, even after 40 years, still bled. The Ex-Imperial Administrative Aristocracy, led by such as Gaitskell and Cripps, had treated the post-Imperial English like one of their 'Subject Peoples'. The Brit. 'Natives' de-colonised, as the others had done, by refusing the 'style' of their 'Rulers'. But this 'Tribe' had no other High Culture. So the post-WWII Brits ended up with none. The Class who valued Britain's intellectual inheritance were marooned as 'posh' poseurs. The metropolitan, workmanlike and craftsmanly culture of the manual workers was equally emasculated by the self-same ex-ICS. Civil Service Mandarins. Burgeoning in-between, chosen by a Meritocratic Trahison des Clercs, freed from both the native High Culture and 200 years of industrialised craftsmanship, was the newly-predatory Middle Class of "hommes, moyen, sensuel". Where, into this dismal history, canonised by the Thatcher Regime, would fit the Cambridge University School of Business Management?

**JOA's design allowed despised 'Commerce' to bring the old 'High Art', in its most extremely 'elite' form of 'Classical Architecture', via a home-grown British Pop-Art, into a 'working' relationship to the equally 'high art' of Continental European 20C Modernist abstraction.**

**I offered the Business School the opportunity to mediate a synthesis of the 'two cultures'.**

The 'Two cultures' was a Notion coined in the very University into which they were introducing themselves with such huge public display. For what did the Sixth Order do but signify the idea that the superstructure of culture rested squarely on no other agent but Man himself, as defined by Science in all his 'evolved' reality, from a creature born of the marine slime 'up' into the only mammal capable of fabricating the iconolocutory cults of 'civilisation'.

I offered them, indeed had already built them in the hypostylar 'Gallery', a Modern re-invention of the 'Occluded Temple' of the peerless Giovanni Battista Alberti. Not only had no-one, up to that time, even conceived of this Architectural entity and essential urbanistic tool, no-one had come close to bringing it to a palpable, present, reality.

*I offered them the opportunity, as well as the technology, to write upon its surfaces the story of not merely what the Judge was and what it wanted to be - or Cambridge was and wanted to be, which, in the great scheme of things mediated by Architecture, as such, are trivial subjects - but to write about all the things which Man had been, and now could become.*

**This 'tempio', which anyone could recognise as such, both internally and externally, was the 'Space of Appearances' of the "Business School".**



I had proposed that they **inscribe**, on the **wide marbled floor**, a **'boat'** that was also an **'eye'**, that was also the **'birth-orifice'** that sailed across the **intertwining Snakes of Infinitude** on the floor of **Hypostylar Pre-temporailty**. On this **boat**, with its **raised quarterdeck of stairs** to fore and aft (which was which?), the **Institute** could spread a **long table** and **feast** (as in the *Symposion*), the **anniversaries** of its Calendar, beginning with the **foundation of the Judge** itself. The **tiers of terraces, boxes and (seminar-) balconies** were a **theatre** on which could be **enacted the hundred and one rites** that create the **living 'body'** of an **Institute's Being**.

**What more perfect place to enact these rites than the actual lifespan of the institute itself?**

This was not some princely banqueting hall, **remote** from the **quotidian vitality**. I had given this **'Faculty of Commerce'** its **primordial origin**, the **theatre of the 'banc'** that was the **Bank and the Coffee House** that became the **Exchange**.

**It was that most 'Pop' of 'artforms' - Street Theatre.**

*Yet these nervous shopkeepers, concerned what "people might think", treated it like an 'art gallery' and complained that I was "using purple on the walls". The colour Green also came in for a taboo, but not as definite as Purple! In fact the purple was a pale violet for a ceiling colour scripting (rather feebly I admit) 'a far distance'.*

But without the use of **'pattern'** (as it was disdainfully described by the Client Body) one's ability to **'script'** was as **vocal** as a **mute's** to sing.

I was, at this time, **asked by Adam Hardy**, Britain's leading authority on the Hindu Temple, to act, for the University of Wales, as **one** of the **four External Examiners** who inspected, **every year**, the new **Academy of Architecture** established under the **patronage of HRH The Prince of Wales**. **Adam**, who was the **Director of Studies** when I accepted the duty, was **removed**, the following year, by a **Palace Coup** effected by a group of English Neo-Classicists.

**I ACCEPTED ADAM BECAUSE HE RAN A WONDERFULLY POLYCULTURAL CURRICULUM.**

It had something of the **Manhattan 'Method-Acting'** in it. For **when the students designed a Hindu Temple** they would **listen to Indian poetry and music**. They would **dress in Indian clothes and eat Indian food**. The same for a **Mosque**, and one may presume, for the then-widely-fashionable **'interventions into the Baroque 'Nolli Plan' of Rome**. He obtained, from his students, a beautiful model of a **Buddhist Stupa in full colour**, as well as a **courtyard-full of terra-cotta models of the febrile ornaments of the Vedic temple**. Whatever else it was, **it was Architecture, and it was fun** - certainly more fun than the **drivel being taught in the 'officially-authorized' Schools**. The School was totally polycultural in its intake. It was located in London, by now an even more **polycultural global metropolis than it had already been for centuries**. But how does one teach **Architecture to total novices** when one has **no 'canonic' version of one's own?**

**At least P.O.W.I. was a thorn in the side of the 'Authorised' Architectural Illiterates.**

**I recall falling asleep during some presentations up at Cambridge.**

I was **one** of the the **External Examiners for the First Year** and very tired from my **'Ordeal by Fiat Nihil'** in the **Judge** over the road from the **Faculty of Art History and Architecture at Scroope Terrace**. I heard, as I awoke, the Tutors of the First year **saying of their cleverest Undergraduate**: "Oh 'X' (I think he had a German name), next year he will be doing **'the Presence of Absence'** and in the Third he will commit suicide". I **pretended not to wake up** as I **contemplated the awful futility of a pedagogy** in which **nothing of Architecture was taught**.

**I compared it to my dying struggles across the road.**

**After the Classicists' Putsch I watched P.O.W.I. as it also died.**

After running for some ten years, the Prince of Wales' Institute plucked-up the courage to invite an examination from the Royal Institute of British Architects. Its request to them was for the degree awarded by the University of Wales to be certified as sufficient to qualify for Part II of the RIBA's three-part obstacle-course to becoming someone legally capable of bearing the title of 'Architect'. No one was expecting the first application to succeed. The RIBA had never forgiven HRH for unfavourably comparing the Architectural Profession's post-WWII buildings to the wreckage left by Herman Goering's blitzkrieg on Britain.

For which remark, and this hurt even more, HRH received the vocal approval of the Common Man.

What did surprise, however, was the discovery that History was the weakest subject in the POWI Student's suit of examination subjects. The espousal of 'Classical Architecture', back when the Putsch ousted Adam Hardy, was an a-historical return to the *status quo ante* WWII.

THE HELLENIC AND ROMAN ORDERS WERE LEARNED BY ROTE AND APPLIED TO EVERYTHING THAT CAME WITHIN THE FRAME OF THE ARCHITECT'S CANVAS.

Epistemologically, the project might be termed a 'theory' and, as Levi-Strauss would have advised, to be deemed neither 'right' nor 'wrong'. Its value was in its 'testing'. Ironically, when one thinks of the pedagogic effect of the pumped-up conceptual pedigrees of 'Critical Theory', the P.O.W.I. Students left with many more useful insights into the practice of Architecture than one might expect. I cannot doubt that it was a more rewarding education in Building, City-planning and Architecture, and even Decoration, than a student received from most of the other 'RIBA-Approved' Schools of Architecture extant at the time.

## The Nineties saw the universal triumph of Deconstruction.

*I recall being asked by the Professors of a well known Architectural Academy: "John, can you explain the work of Liebeskind to us?" back in 1992 I had to reply to the effect that I was, perhaps fortunately, too busy to have thought about it sufficiently to 'explain' it to them. It was not until I began to script these lectures that it became necessary to 'theorise' the Deconstructivists.*

But, as Bosquet said of Balaclava, "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre". Ramrod-straight Anglo-Classicism, out of Burlington's aseptic cookbook, hardly 'worked' in the 18C (when compared with its achievements elsewhere). It was soon overwhelmed by 19C Nordic-Gothick, Freestyle, Art Nouveau and everything else, not to mention Modernism. Neo-Classicism has been 'arising, sort-of-working, and then failing' ever since Octavian Caesar. Will it go on resurrecting and then dying away for ever?

*One imagines the scene in Tvardovsky's Solaris when the Protagonists dead wife re-manifests as a corporeal presence and he says: "I am getting so tired of these resurrections".*

## THE FACT WAS THAT P.O.W.I., HAD NO SENSE OF HISTORY !

### SO HOW DIFFERENT WERE THE NEO-CLASSICISTS WHO HAD SUPPORTED MY APPOINTMENT TO DESIGN THE JUDGE?

*For they too, were disturbed by the idea of covering the giant columns in surface-scripted 'bales of text'. Harris had confirmed that the Burlingtonians had never created a painted interior to compare with those of Continentantal Europe. Even the more relaxed, better informed and adventurous 19C had failed to make anything iconically serious of 'surface-scripting'. Poor Christopher Dresser had even tried to determine the 'species' of the gilded flower at the centre of the Classical Ceiling Coffin! My Neo-Classicians protected themselves by placing a taboo on any 'modern' graphical techniques. I knew of much cheaper alternatives, but I worked with Inigo Rose, a young Buon-Fresco painter, to design and paint the ceiling.*

They REMARKED that my 26M-high columns "had no entasis".

I replied that "surely they did not imagine that Ictinus would ever have used bulging, solid stone, columns if he could have filled them with machines?". "Think of Philo's automatic temple-doors", I suggested, "that opened when the sacrificial fire was lit".

## Bulging a column was only done to make it look 'alive'.

It was the same reason why Ictinus stained, painted and mirror-polished the whole flying-around Acropolis-Athena-Hotel. The received theory that the geometric distortions of the Parthenon were installed so as to make everything look regular and straight was on a par with the trivial idea that the purpose of Doric Architecture was to illustrate the way it was originally built out of wood. But this is what English Neo-Classacists believed in the 18C, and it is what they believe today.

**A 'Sixth Order' was altogether too much for them. They were not interested in anything an outsider would call 'victory'.**

*They hated 'Modernism' so much, and (proudly) knew so very little about it that the idea that they might have to lead the real world towards some sort of 'historically-situated' goal filled them with a very well-deserved apprehension. It became clear to me that they preferred to remain apart from the World, ignored and useless to it, in their thriving little circle of preservationists and country-house builders.*

Yet, in the present Age of Ignorance, one remains grateful for their existence. Even though they had become, themselves, part of the 'Fiat Nihil'.

*I understood that my work had fallen into one of those discontinuities which Anthony Sampson described in his 'Anatomy of Britain'. The British are free to entertain almost any idea that they please. It is why the culture remains so inventive. This freedom is protected by a rigorous cult of Privacy. This is the oil that enables all these wildly disparate thoughts to rotate against each other without ever meshing and turning into some larger engine. One such Architectural Engine is the Preservation-oriented, Neo-Classical (but also Neo-gothic and Neo-anything-one-likes) tendency. It has a past but denies a Future (if it is different to the past, that is). Another such Engine is that of the Radical Modernists who believe that 'the past' is an infection which, once acquired, is fatal to creative invention. Cultural building projects in contemporary Britain will appoint an Architect from each camp. They meet, typically, at a boundary crossed by stainless steel arms mounted on neoprene rubber bases. These isolate their very different physiognomies.*

**THIS 'PSEUDO-MATING' INSULATES THE PAST FROM INFECTION BY THE FUTURE, AND THE FUTURE FROM INFECTION BY THE PAST.**

**By this means one ensures that the Present, in which we all live, will remain securely DEAD.**

I realised that the one thing that this culture regarded with absolute repugnance and horror was that the past and the future should mate, copulate and give birth to something as NEW AS IT WAS OLD - a living child of both. As for myself and my 'innocent' project from the 1950's, to invent a 'linguistically' universal Ur-Architecture so that a culture (any culture) could write its self-image on its own vital and urbane body - I had tried, time after time, for twenty years, to persuade a Client to understand that what was needed to bring Architecture into the service of an Urbanity that was being everywhere destroyed. I had brought to every sort of perfection a strange tool that Maxwell had asserted was a New (Sixth) Order. Now, finally, in Cambridge of all places, I had built it in a technically capable form. Everything was prepared for the final victory. I had even taught myself (a mere Architect) how to generate the surface-scripting that was necessary to make 'real' the truths of our time. I had not avoided recognising these as the 'positive' phenomenologies of the human phylogeny and ontogeny which authenticate 'Modernity'. I had used easily recognisable elements of the natural world as metaphors to this end. Now, with this very public 'fiat nihil',

**I knew, after thirty years of trying, that it was all over.**

## ***AFTERWORD for the TWENTY-FIFTH LECTURE: 'FIAT NIHIL!'.***

*I did not know it at the time, but JOA's (long-delayed, and only just begun) career as a major Architect in our own country was finished. We were never given a project by an institutional Client, that is a non-commercial Client, ever again. More than one British Architect has made the greater part of his career abroad. Rogers's most famous project was in Paris, Foster's in his early days, in Hong Kong. Stirling's last and most highly-regarded projects all in Germany. All of them had survived major claims against technical defects on important British buildings, sometimes running into millions of pounds. These were due to the failures of parts of the external surface whose invention was clearly essential to the 'look' of the 'Architecture'. Not that the Architect's part was, necessarily, the major fault. But mud always sticks. JOA, in the thirty-five years of its existence has never even had to fight a claim for defects, let alone lose one and cause our insurers any expense. It has all been pure profit for our professional liability insurer!*

*My 'crime' was of a different nature. It was one that could not be allowed to go unpunished. Bob Maxwell had not registered the half of the "taboo" that the Judge Gallery Interior had "broken". By trying to fold the Future and the Past into an heroic and brilliant Present (and almost succeeding) I had devalued both the mostly rather minor ruins of "our island heritage" as well as the glorious Future that British Technology, led by High-Tech, would soon usher-in.*

*The British lifespace had always been characterised by variety, difference, and the 'picturesque'. The 80'0"-high 5'0"-diameter columns of the Judge, with their glossy black capitals as curvaceously shiny as outer space and as opaque as thought itself, carried a dense cargo of 'Classicism' ordered into a map which superimposed the phenomenology of Sociation onto that of the topography of the ancient City-State - something of a 'lost' ideal. It was all too heroic, grand and, worst of all, artificial. Where was the allowance for local history, and where for what the Continental cultures called muddles, errors and mistakes but that we called serendipity? At this rate one could easily plan a great city with boulevards flanked by giant arcades, etc, etc. The Judge was Architecture for the great empire into which I had been born.*

*Britain now much preferred to fantasise about her 'great past'. There was also, so as to preserve its rather meagre evidences, a parallel licence to fantasise about a future that would, by preference, remain safely in the very far distance. This was High-Tech, shiny and rounded according to Edmund Burke's nympho-philiac diagnosis.*

*What was not to be tolerated was to breed the Future into the Past so as to birth a Present that gave a good 'view' into both dimensions. Were that to happen, the Present would acquire 'dignity'. Who knows what might happen then?*

