

Challenging interpretations that identify James Stirling's early work as European late modernism, this article repositions it within the theory and practice of American neo-avant-garde pop art.

## James Stirling's post-avant-garde collage: the flatbed picture plane & the pursuit of virtuality

Francesco Proto

### Resurrecting Stirling: renaissance and reburial

The second decade of the twenty-first century has been distinguished by a renewed interest in James Stirling and his architectural heritage – a sort of 'James Stirling Renaissance' – with many authors characterising Stirling predominantly as a late modernist architect.<sup>1</sup> This is a misunderstanding in architectural criticism, which this article aims to challenge by emphasising the divergence between Italian and Anglo-American literature on Stirling's accomplishments. Although it will be impossible to accommodate a fully nuanced and substantiated assessment of Stirling's endeavours in this article, the discrepancy highlighted is supported by evidence that might be adequate to shed new light on the architect's achievements and unexplored impact on both contemporary and future architectural practice. By repositioning the site of debate to the arena of the artistic Neo-Avant-Garde, as proto-typically charted by Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984), the article will argue that Stirling's originality in the initial phase of his career, typically linked with the London-based Independent Group and the emergence of British pop art, subsumes and transcends the American neo-avant-garde, with which it shows an even greater affinity. Partly ascribable to the architect's well-known loss of faith in modernist principles, Stirling's innovative approach is ultimately contingent upon the challenges posed by the unstoppable ascent of consumerism.

Writing in 2007, Zimmermann interrogated a question that for many years was on the architectural agenda: why was Stirling's work virtually ignored after his premature death in 1993? Was it due to his 'regular habit of saying and doing things people did not particularly want to hear or see'? Or rather the inability of critics to correctly place Stirling's architecture in context, so that a new generation of architects and scholars are now called upon to reconsider his work 'within the heterogeneous context in which it was executed'?<sup>2</sup> Addressing the same question, Troiani cites the architect's often misunderstood commitment to a modernist aesthetic along with clients' complaints

about technical shortcomings in, for example, Oxford's Florey Building or Cambridge's History Faculty, for his negative status in Britain and ostracism from many major commissions.<sup>3</sup> Detrimental for Stirling's reputation and a threat to the buildings themselves, such criticism demonstrates that the architect's heritage is still open to interpretation, and that criteria framing his work are insufficiently understood and in need of revision.

In 2010 various authors attempted this reassessment in a number of far-reaching publications, yet few failed to disrupt the polarised Stirling historiography that emphasises the late modernism of his early projects in comparison with the postmodern classicism of his later buildings. So, for example, if Baker stresses that Stirling never abandons modernism entirely while incorporating and reconfiguring a wider range of references, Vidler argues that despite a gradual shift towards postmodern eclecticism, the architect always preserved the 'spirit' of modernism.<sup>4</sup> This is much the same argument developed by Reeser-Lawrence, where not only any postmodern turn in Stirling's career is denied, but the collective notion that 'Stirling remained unequivocally and undeniably modern throughout his career' is confirmed and expanded. Reduced to an eclectic collection of historical references, the architect's highly complex architectural praxis is eventually assessed against the notion that modernism itself 'had always been reliant on history'.<sup>5</sup>

Mark Crinson offers a slightly different interpretation in *James Stirling: Early Unpublished Writings* and the subsequent *Stirling and Gowan: Architecture from Austerity to Affluence* by finally acknowledging that 'Stirling was clearly drawn to work that seemed inconsistent, puzzling and even disruptive in relation to modernism', and further reflecting that '[...] it might justly be claimed without too much anachronism, that this was a Post-Modern architecture, if not yet Post-Modernist'.<sup>6</sup> A prevalent theme in Crinson's second book is Stirling's revision of modernism and his desire to find new ways of reinterpreting a wider

range of precedents into an unrestricted and responsive architectural ‘bricolage’ of often mundane and slightly repellent elements. But he agrees with other authors that the Stirling/Gowan partnership’s architectural productions ‘cannot be reduced to a precursory state of postmodernism [...] This is modernism recast as an open-ended or receptive project, recuperating the ugly and the ordinary as much as the durable and grand.’<sup>7</sup>

There is much to be admired in the meticulous work of these authors, especially Crinson’s acknowledgement of the creative possibilities that postwar, postindustrial Britain offered Stirling and Gowan, and the problematisation by others of the modern/postmodern dichotomy. Yet, there is little to be gained at present by continuing the modernist/postmodernist debate that has engaged previous authors in relation to Stirling. As a result, this study adopts a broader interpretive frame and cross-boundary approach providing space for alternative critical voices in what appears to be a consolidated field of analysis. By bringing into play the work of Italian architectural critics and theorists, and for the first time highlighting the discrepancy between their views and Anglo-American appraisals, this article stresses the alignment of Stirling’s commodity-based form of architecture with the contemporary cultural phenomenon of American pop art.

The American artistic neo-avant-garde, which first explored the hyper-mediatisation of solid forms into the impalpable realm of mental apperception, becomes both the benchmark and the starting point for an innovative investigation proceeding via a comparative analysis between Stirling’s architecture and pop art approaches to collage and silkscreen. Robert Rauschenberg’s ‘combine’ paintings, where contemporary psychic processing of the kaleidoscopic imagery introduced by advanced commodity capitalism, as well as Andy Warhol’s silkscreens, where the fast consumption of well-worn images of accidents and celebrities are addressed in terms of ‘visual obsolescence’, are deployed to highlight Stirling’s originality through the retrospective theorisation of the American art critic Leo Steinberg. Given the stress on pop art’s ability to dematerialise the elements of a composition, the point is made that not only did Stirling’s architecture complement this phenomenon, but actually exceeded it.

Thus, from the viewpoint of Italian authors, Stirling is *Pop* for Achille Michelizzi, who acknowledges a process of decontextualisation and reassemblage of architectural elements that are typical of pop art; for Gubitosi, Izzo, and Angrisani, who recognise ‘the re-capture in a pop style’ of the small, ancient façade of the Derby Assembly Hall obliquely tilted by forty-five degrees on the main square of the 1970 Derby Civic Centre; and for Pier Angelo Cetica, according to whom Stirling’s early work is undeniably *hyperrealist*.<sup>8</sup> Since hyperrealism was the latest and most extreme expression of American pop art, the epithet of either modernist or late modernist to describe Stirling’s early work looks

either debatable or old-fashioned.

Furthermore, specific characteristics of pop art creations from some of the most prominent representatives of the American neo-avant-garde, who notoriously transformed every-day, banal, mass-produced and sometimes discarded items, functional elements and/or vernacular imagery into familiar, evocative, and aesthetically refunctionalised symbols of consumption, can easily be tracked down in Stirling’s *oeuvre*. *Found objects* and *ready-mades* alike – the thread that unquestionably links the historical with the neo-avant-garde – are offered to the viewer in a regime of visual *expendability* reminiscent of Jasper Johns’ *Flag* (1954), Robert Rauschenberg’s *Coca Cola Plan* (1958), Andy Warhol’s *Campbell Soup Can* (1962) and Claes Oldenburg’s *Lipstick (Ascending) On A Caterpillar Track* (1969). Visual obsolescence, totemic isolation, iconic monumentality, linguistic manipulation, geometrical graphics, and/or unnatural over-scaling become shared characteristics between American neo-avant-garde artists and Stirling.<sup>9</sup> Inspiring but largely unsubstantiated, these claims not only highlight the astonishing discrepancy of interpretation between Italian and Anglo-American scholars, but also reveal the lack of both a conceptual and technical framework that might help to explain in what way the correlation in Stirling’s work actually occurs.

In making clear how Stirling’s work may conclusively be defined as Pop according to the definition provided in *Pop Art and the Origins of Post-Modernism* – that is, both neo-avant-garde and postmodern – the article will highlight the originality of the architect’s absorption and advancement of the neo-avant-garde’s reconceptualisation of collage.<sup>10</sup> Reframed within the theoretical discourse informing the pop art concept of the *flatbed picture plane*, and the way it is unexpectedly disclosed by Stirling’s projects, collage will be addressed as the artistic technique whose ability to generate a visual shock best applies to the architect’s most innovative contribution to architectural composition.<sup>11</sup> Typically defined as the ‘pasting on a single surface [of] various material not normally associated with one another’, collage is the medium that more than any other suits Stirling’s ability to turn the beholder into an archaeologist of sense and meaning.<sup>12</sup>

In the light of Bürger’s seminal division between the historical- and neo-avant-garde, this article’s intention to explore the *flatbed picture plane* as a framing concept to re-assess Stirling’s processing of the neo-avant-garde collage thus arises from the necessity to address a series of innovative compositional techniques that appropriates methods of mass-produced design. Imported into the architectural realm from other disciplines (poetry, music, performance, painting), the term *post-avant-garde* is subsequently deployed in order to describe the coexistence of the three conditions identified in Stirling’s iconoclasm – image, object, and sign – as undergoing an unparalleled practice of ‘ironing out’ of the different collage fragments. The result, a meta-



1 James Stirling and James Gowan, Engineering Building, Leicester University (Leicester), 1963. In the first of the so-called red brick trilogy, the collagist approach in the

Leicester Engineering Building is reminiscent of the juxtaposition of elements adopted by Edoardo Paolozzi in his *ante-litteram* pop series of consumerist collages, *Bunki*.

critical outlook exceeding by far the juxtaposition characterising both historical- and neo-avant-garde redeployments of collage, is reflected in the virtualisation of the architectural artefact.

To achieve these aims the article will first investigate the trajectory of collage forms in the shift from their original formulation by the historical avant-garde to the reformulation initiated by the neo-avant-garde, and next highlight Stirling's links with the London-based Independent Group, whose theorisation and implementation of the concepts of *as found* and *expendability* during the 1950s were indispensable in achieving this transformation. Additionally, it will outline the further shift of collage practice from a neo-avant-garde artistic approach to a pop sensibility as eventually reported by Leo Steinberg. The Leicester University Engineering Building, the Florey Building, and the Olivetti Training School will be used to add weight to the argument that Stirling's early projects anticipate both aesthetic and conceptual accomplishments unfamiliar in Europe at the time when they were first conceived by the American neo-avant-garde. The Florey building, the primary case study in this investigation, will be examined as the highlight in Stirling's early career production that harmonises, all at once, the *as found*, the object and the

dematerialisation haunting present-day commodities as emphasised and eventually advanced by American pop art. The retrospective reading of this building via the principles embedded within the *flatbed picture plan* will further articulate the points at issue.

#### The neo-avant-garde and the Independent Group

As Hubert Van Den Berg makes clear, '[w]hen aesthetic avant-garde movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are discussed in literary and art historical studies, it has become common practice [...] to distinguish between so-called "historical" and so-called "neo-avant-garde" movements', as originally theorised by Peter Bürger in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.<sup>13</sup> The hiatus splitting the two is what makes scholars interrogate the validity of the neo-avant-garde's resuscitation of artistic practices that emerge as either inauthentic or 'commercialised'.<sup>14</sup> The failure with which Bürger charges the historical avant-garde is not only projected as a stigma onto the neo-avant-garde, but in so doing also prevents the latter from being perceived as proactively contributing to both subverting art into life and destroying the institution of art. By casting a shadow of 'plagiarism' on any so-called 'Neo-ism' in art after the Second World War, this standpoint reduces the entire genealogical development of the avant-garde movement to the one and only invariant that links them all: 'the theme of originality'.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, while collages, montages, and assemblages represent common denominators between the two avant-gardes, a shift in terms of artistic techniques, conceptual fallouts, and aesthetic outcomes can be detected in the transition of such expressive means from the historical avant-garde to the neo-avant-garde. This transition, which members of the Independent

Group were instrumental in achieving, also shifted the focus of art production towards mass consumerism and mass media, and resulted ultimately in the recognition of their role as precursors of pop art. The resultant celebration of the contemporary consumer as a 'sophisticated reader of complex imagery' is thus key to appreciating Stirling's originality in the light of the audience he addressed in his innovative approach to architecture.<sup>16</sup>

James Stirling arrived in London shortly before the Independent Group was established within the

Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in 1952 and became acquainted with Group members.<sup>17</sup> He was friends with Edoardo Paolozzi, whose lost wax reliefs Stirling was exposed to during his visit to the artist's cottage in Essex; and he joined forces with the sculptors Michael Pine and Richard Matthews in the exhibition, 'This is Tomorrow' (1956), at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, for which a papier-mâché object/sculpture of soap bubbles was developed as a three-dimensional transposition of a photographic study emblematic of the so-called 'Detergent Decade'



2 Edoardo Paolozzi, *BUNK! Evadne in Green Dimension*, 1952. Neo-avant-garde because composed of as

found ready-mades extracted from American magazines, Paolozzi's collages preserve the

typical modernist juxtaposition of elements and the evident depth of the original cutting.

in the 1950s.<sup>18</sup> Given that characteristics now associated with Stirling's architecture 'are all surely ideas which the Independent Group conceived collaboratively', Massey claims it is misleading 'to try and present separate members as creating these approaches in a vacuum, without context or contest'.<sup>19</sup>

A prime focus of the Group, the new consumer society, was both the catalyst and the incubator for the rising phenomenon of pop art, where technological imagery, car styling, advertisements of all kinds, and a pop sensibility in industrial design emerged as fields of enquiry stressing the 'inspiration' brought about by what the Smithsons called the 'throwaway object and the pop-package'.<sup>20</sup> In a world where no 'universal acceptance of architecture as the universal analogy of design' exists, *expendability* and the *as found* became the two major conceptual and artistic accomplishments meant to update architectural production. In a pop world, Banham declared, the only way for architecture to 'remain relevant' was to 'go pop'.<sup>21</sup> Erroneously branding Stirling as a representative of the old school, Banham subsequently identified in Archigram the new champions of popular culture, therefore both encouraging and praising the latter's embrace of futuristic imagery.

The Expendable Aesthetic was first articulated by the Independent Group when American advertisements and technological advancements were used in an attempt to overcome social divisions in the context of postwar Britain, an example being Paolozzi's series of collages, *Bunk!*.<sup>22</sup> The expression *expendable ikon*, which Group member John McHale coined to underscore the new relevance given to imagery as a component of a larger, interlinked network of representations, was thus exploited by the rest of the Group to address the 'anthropocentric' dimension acquired by photographs in the newly established, media-driven consumeristic society ('what people choose as a product is nearly always the *image* rather than the reality' McHale claimed). Charged with the task of 'locating the modern man in the world' by virtue of the 'rapid turnover in [sic] ikonography', *expendability* eventually surfaced in Stirling's redefinition of the *as found* and his broader reconceptualisation of collage.<sup>23</sup>

By showing an approach to architectural composition in which the building 'is made of what it appears to be made of', the *as found* was distinguished from the historical avant-garde concept of *found object* in a way that privileged the conceptual background of the sources arrayed (aka *expendability*) rather than the type of forms assembled in order to stress the arresting impact provoked by pictures 'taken "as found" from the mass media'.<sup>24</sup> Incorporated into one of the three points constituting 'imageability' – 'a material configuration that is immediately striking for the "raw" visual qualities that are not reducible to formal logic' – the *as found* was embraced by Reyner Banham to describe aspects of the image in the new brutalist aesthetic. As Banham himself clarified in his 'The New Brutalism' article of 1955, '1, Memorability

as Image; 2, Clear Exhibition of Structure; and 3, Valuation of Material "as found" were eventually the categories characterising architecture as impacted by the consumerist culture of the time.<sup>25</sup>

Universally recognised as an absolute innovation in the history of art and the thread between the two avant-gardes, collage was immediately identified by the Independent Group as an essential aspect of imageability captured by the *as found*.<sup>26</sup> Crowded as they are with coded allusions, and for this very reason acting as *charades*, collage seemingly evolves from Picasso's pioneering format, the dadaist collage of high and low facsimiles and the surrealist collage of found images.<sup>27</sup> By the time it is transmuted into the brutalist collage, consumer culture and postwar austerity have turned Picasso's original fragments of reality into 'intermediaries between images and concepts'. The *as found* was born, a 'realism against the simulacral aspect of an emergent culture of advertising and marketing, of the becoming-image of things', that might help in ordering an increasingly mediated postwar universe through grouping. Originally meant to translate into brutalist realism, the *as found* ultimately supported the Independent Group in advancing an innovative and more personal version of image-making.<sup>28</sup>

Believed to be 'too closely linked to Banham's writings on the Smithsons for the term to be used extensively', in either his speeches or writings, the *as found* was nonetheless implemented by Stirling with the *ready-available* in terms of the 'exploitation of local material and methods', and the *ready-made* in terms of the 'playful use of materials and components manufactured for other industries',<sup>29</sup> thus acquiring characteristics that will only become intelligible with the writings of Jean Baudrillard on hyperrealism (1982) and Charles Jencks on the *floating signifier* in architecture (2003).<sup>30</sup> Emancipated from a 'superordinate whole', Stirling's advancement of the conceptual implications of the *as found* can be seen as exceeding the scope and ambition of the stylistic approach adopted by the Independent Group, for which the newly formed image was always part of an overarching continuum.<sup>31</sup>

Be it a building, a picture, or an object, the Smithsons claimed, 'the image was discovered within the process of making the work'.<sup>32</sup> Yet it is with Stirling, and Stirling only, that the *as found* became the postmodern feature *par excellence* in a way that progressed even beyond the American *Popists*. Neither the free associations evoked by Stirling nor the collage techniques exemplifying his early work can in this regard be ascribed to the modernist or late modernist attitudes that typified the Independent Group.

### Neo-avant-garde collage and James Stirling's early work

Stirling first enjoyed international success when he and his partner, James Gowan, began construction on the University of Leicester Engineering Building [1]. As Mark Girouard detected, freely assembled shapes, styles, and types gave life to a construction that, from proto-industrial silos to constructivist



3 Exterior view of James Stirling's Florey Building, Queen's College, University of Oxford (Oxford) between 1966 and 1971, gelatin silver print, 25.4 x 20.3 cm. Ironically placed on a functional 'pedestal', the kitchen fan alludes to the founder's bust

traditionally located in the courtyards of Oxford colleges. This is thanks to the increasing use of semiological tropes (metonymy, symbol, index, icon, denotative inversion, floating signifier, etc.) populating both neo-avant-garde architecture and fine art.

suggestions, and from modernist influences to ships, decks, viaducts, and rockets, drove contemporary critics to a frantic pursuit of the most erudite citations. The 'heresy' that Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co refer to in their history of modern architecture is henceforth the newly acquired ability of the 'modern tradition' to be infinitely manipulated. As a consequence, '[t]he grammar and syntax that coordinate the architectural signs prove to be renewable to infinity.'<sup>33</sup>

Designed for two-hundred-and-fifty engineering students and including educational workshops, research laboratories, lecture theatres, staff rooms and offices – alongside a thirty-metre water tank, stair blocks, and a cantilevered lecture theatre – the building was reminiscent of both Amédée Ozenfant's *Foundations of Modern Art*, which displayed an unusual correlation among traditional objects and shapes, and Paolozzi's *Bunk!* [2], an experimental portfolio of *as found* images that first brought to the fore the chaotic imagery of Western postwar society.<sup>34</sup> More than an exercise in style, this innovative architectural transition from the modernist *found-object* to the postmodernist *as found* was further exemplified by Stirling's speech at the Second International Iranian Congress of Architecture

(1974), where the visual continuum established between familiar and historical imagery was discussed:

*The collection (in a building) of forms and shapes which the everyday public can associate with, be familiar with – and identify with – seems to me essential. These forms may derive from staircases, windows, corridors, rooms, entrances, etc. and the total building could be thought of as an assemblage of everyday elements recognizable to a normal man and not only to an architect [...] In this way we hoped that students and public would not be dis-associated from their cultural past.*<sup>35</sup>

Borrowed from Paolozzi's bronze lost wax sculptures, where the 'metamorphosis of matter' translated into the 'ghosts of forms that still haunt the bronze', this compilation of collagist forms, whose primary references vanish in the process of bringing them together, is most evident in the Florey Building (Oxford, 1966–71), a university residence designed by Stirling after dissolving his partnership with Gowan.<sup>36</sup> The boundlessness characterised in terms of the life/fine art continuum, which Stirling accomplishes by placing the kitchen ventilation fan right at the centre of the complex's courtyard, is similarly reflected in the homogeneity typifying the assemblage of both historical and local environmental forms whose original sources only remain as a mnemonic footprint for the viewer [3].

A process of *architectural objectification* is, in other words, pursued and purposely intensified not just by raising on a pedestal (a flight of steps), and in a vertical relationship with the basement, a device that is at one and the same time symbolic (representing the statue of the founder), artistic (representing a Duchampian ready-made) and functional (the fan actually works as the kitchen's ventilator), but also by detaching the building from both the ground and the surrounding environment in a way that resembles Andy Warhol's iconisation of soup cans. The formulation of the *as found*, which for the Independent Group already incorporated the historical avant-garde notions of *ready-made* (dadaism) and *objet trouvé* (surrealism), is thus stretched by Stirling to the point of acquiring metalinguistic connotations.

More importantly, it is the issue of contiguity still haunting the American and British neo-avant-garde that is of particular relevance for this study. For while in Paolozzi's *Bunk!*, Rauschenberg's assemblages and Hamilton's collages (*Homage à Chrysler Corp*, of 1957 and *She*, of 1961) the raw juxtaposition of the original sources on the paper is either emphasised (Paolozzi), camouflaged (Rauschenberg) or transfigured (Hamilton), the continuity achieved by Stirling among the *as found* episodes composing the building is unparalleled. The notion of the *flatbed picture plane*, with which the American art critic Leo Steinberg announced a perceptual reorientation of the visible, is pivotal for the appreciation of the ascent of the most advanced model of commodity-sign in architecture at the time.



4 Robert Rauschenberg, 22 *The Lily White*, c. 1950. Oil and graphite on canvas, 39 1/2 x 23 3/4 inches (100.3 x 60.3 cm). The brushstrokes produced by the oil painting, 22 *The Lily White*, could not provide the sort of physical flattening of the original source that Rauschenberg was looking for. As opposed to the fragments utilised in UK neo-avant-garde collages (such as those by Hamilton or Paolozzi), his later so-called combine paintings are the result of collaged elements whose depth remains undetectable thanks to the deployment of a silkscreen technique that merges together colour and canvas.

4

**Flatten this: Leo Steinberg and the ‘flatbed picture plane’**

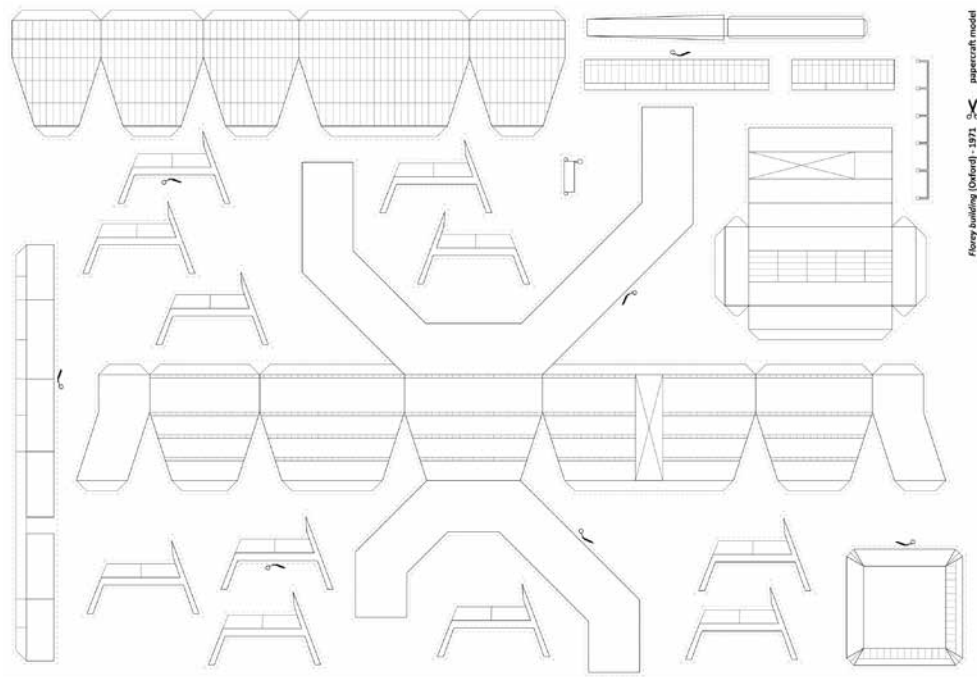
Derived from the *flatbed printing press* and the corresponding horizontal printing surface characterising neo-avant-garde collages, the *flatbed picture plane* signalled, according to Leo Steinberg, the new angulation that the pictorial surface was taking with regard to a human posture dealing with *flat*, second-hand surfaces. The ben-day printing process applied by Roy Lichtenstein to banal drawings as well

as the deteriorated, arbitrarily coloured images presented as ‘nearly obliterated’ by Andy Warhol in his silkscreens were therefore part of a process of transformation of familiar images that the poet, critic, and artist David Abram Antin called a ‘ghastly embarrassment’.<sup>37</sup>

Although writing in 1972, Steinberg’s observations were ignited by Rauschenberg’s earlier work, such as 22 *The Lily White* (c. 1950), which made unequivocally clear that modernist heterogeneity was ultimately

5 Francesco Proto,  
Papercraft Toy  
Model of the Florey  
Building, 2021.

Similar to Roy Liechtenstein and Andy Warhol, who extracted as *found* sources from the packaging of popular goods such as chewing gum or canned food. So the *Florey Building* is also as *found* and appears to be the equivalent of sources elicited from games printed on the back of breakfast cereal boxes of the time.



Florey building (Oxford) - 1971. papercraft model

5

overridden by postmodern flatness [4]. 'Flatness', 'the psychic address of an image', and 'the shift from nature to culture' thus became three of the major conceptual variations in the history of art that, grouped under the epithet of the *flatbed picture plane*, are expounded in this article to address the overcoming of the incongruity of collaged surfaces in Stirling's early phase.

First of all, there is flatness: as opposed to the works of old and modern masters and their reliance on adjacency, the *flatbed picture plane* 'no longer simulates vertical fields, but opaque flatbed horizontals [...] on which information may be received, printed, impressed'. By 'suggesting the ceaseless inflow of urban messages, stimulus and impediment' (for example, via the introduction of letters and numbers, which are depthless and impalpable by definition, on the pictorial surface, or the smudging of images to simulate the ideal of continuity), 'a surface on which anything reachable-thinkable would adhere' is created.<sup>38</sup>

Stirling's interest in experimenting with the flattening of perception, and particularly the visual automatism induced by an increasingly expanding mediated environment, is evident in the massive deployment of both forty-five and ninety-degree angles in the Leicester Engineering Building, where viewers are drawn into the indisputable analogy harmonising the real building with its 2D axonometric representation. And even more so in the razor-sharp, knife-edged outline of the Florey Building in Oxford – as hard, sharp, and clean-cut as if the building is an origami or a folded papercraft model extracted from the cellophane wrappings of hard candy or cornflakes cardboard packaging that provided Warhol, Lichtenstein, and others with inspiration [5]. Compressed against the flat surface of the sheet by the adoption of a worm's-eye view axonometric, such edges are downsized first, and

eventually reduced to the actual marks that the building's intersection with the sheet of paper engenders. The equivalent of a new form of coded visual language, a sort of Braille or Morse optical message, such intersections are the indexical footprints that the worm's-eye view has produced on the *flatbed picture plane* of the oblique projection [6a, b].

Opposed to the bird's eye view of the modernist tradition, which mainly acts as a retrospective remark on the unlimited expansion of the renaissance grid outside of the limited surface of the perspective window, the worm's eye view at play in Stirling's axonometry is above all a manifesto about the ongoing paradigm shift affecting contemporary visual culture. Recorded, implemented, echoed, and further fostered by architecture, the axonometric drawing exceeds the status of a technical delineation to become the *real thing*; that is, the outcome of a process of vaporisation of architecture into a higher degree of visual reconfiguration of reality wrought by advanced capitalism. The physical realisation of the drawing 'out there' – that is, outside of the construction template – becomes nothing more than a redundant, nostalgic, and superfluous *reality effect*.

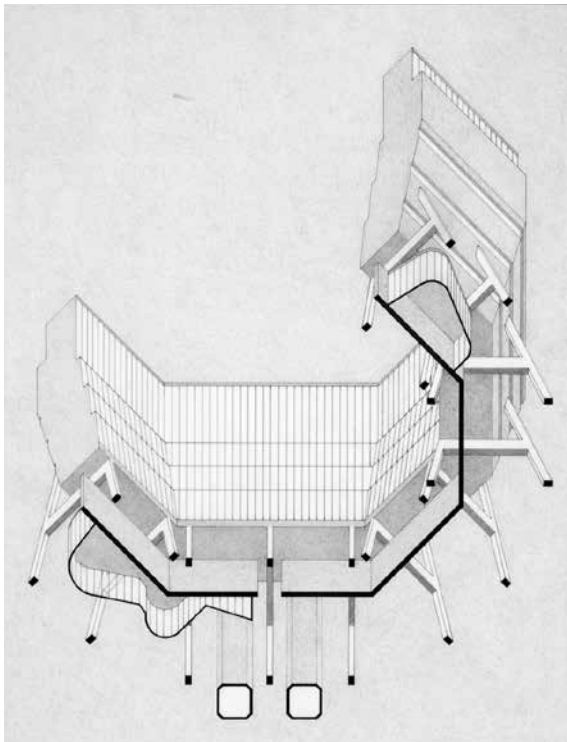
The second conceptual variation, 'the psychic address of an image', involves a special attitude towards imagination according to which the *flatbed picture plane* is neither derivative of the renaissance projection plane, nor the modernist cinematic montage, but rather of 'any flat documentary surface that tabulates information'. No longer signifying a view of a world, as was the case with the perspective window, but rather the 'outward symbol of the mind as running transformer of the external world', the *flatbed picture plane* is 'constantly ingesting incoming unprocessed data

to be mapped in an overcharged field'.<sup>39</sup> As such it certainly acts as reality's metonymic counterpart.<sup>40</sup>

Visual footprints of the kind impressed in the *fundus oculi* by optical occurrences, the *as found* episodes, which Stirling used extensively in his

so-called red-brick trilogy, are optical stimuli reminiscent of Andy Warhol's silkscreens, where visual obsolescence is materialised, or of Rauschenberg's 'combines', where the obliteration of three-dimensional objects (for example, by means of strategically placed translucent paper) conveys the idea of fading retinal after-effects. Indexical of a sort of physical abrasion produced by the visual consumption of the viewers, the fading-out affecting popular images in Warhol's Campbell Soup Can (1962), *Double Presley* (1963), and *Electric Chair* (1967) – actually the result of the imprecision of the silkscreen blueprint – becomes in Stirling the outcome of a process impacting imageability itself.

Stirling may have been exposed to Rauschenberg's 'combine' paintings at the Leo Castelli Gallery (New York City) when he took up his first teaching post at Yale University in 1959.<sup>41</sup> Later, Cesare De' Seta was quick to draw parallels between Stirling's 'quotations' and Rauschenberg's when he wrote that 'references are equivalent to silkscreened photographs appearing in some of Rauschenberg's

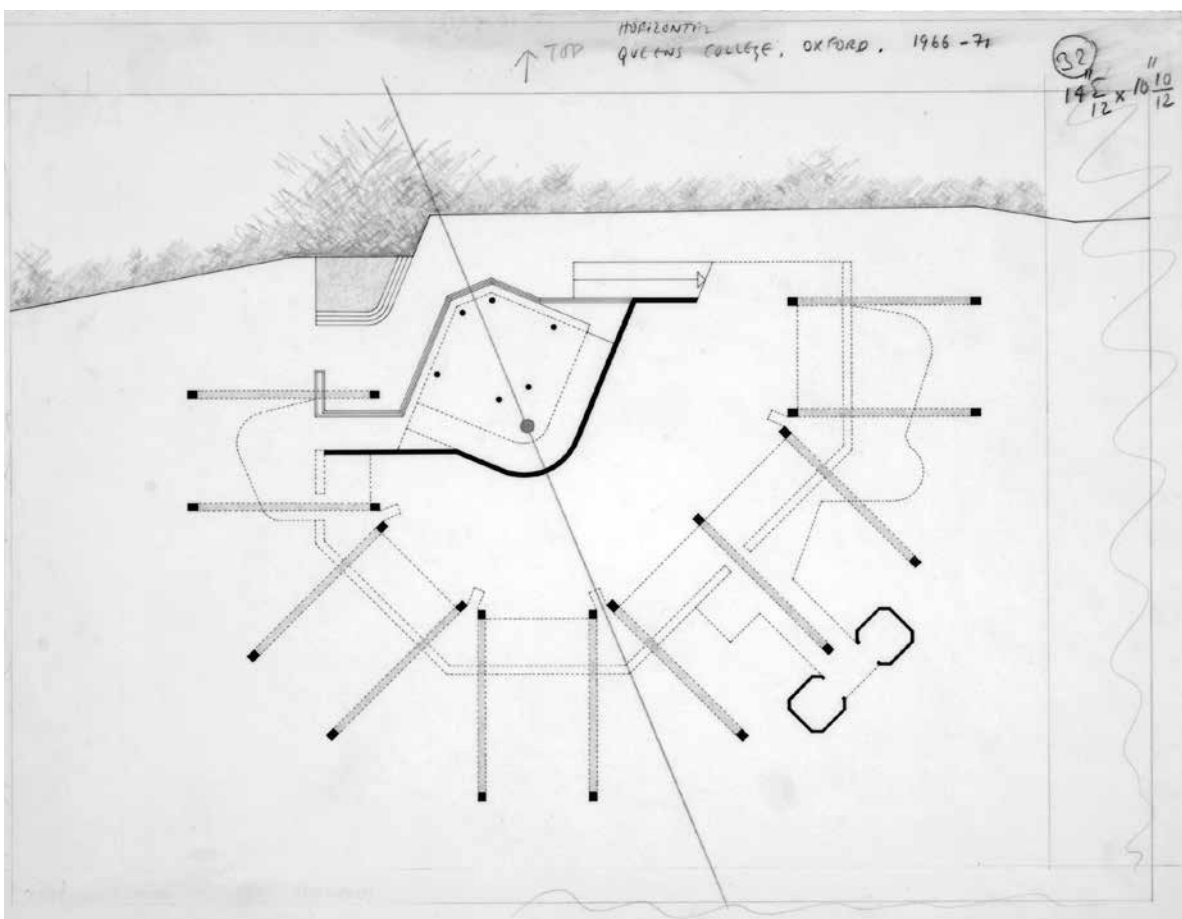


6a

6a James Stirling. Axonometric for Florey Building, Queen's College, University of Oxford (Oxford), between 1970 and 1975. Ink, graphite, and coloured crayon on tracing paper, 44.7 x 33.6 cm. The section of the

building's worm's eye axonometric view resembles Rauschenberg's numbers: flat, artificial, horizontal and purely conceptual components embedded within a depthless surface – the sheet of paper containing them.

6b James Stirling. Plan for Florey Building, Queen's College, University of Oxford (Oxford) between 1966 and 1971. Ink and coloured pencil on paper, 34.6 x 42.3 cm.



6b

pop works, such as Titian's *Venus*'.<sup>42</sup> Upon returning to the UK, Stirling's input into the Leicester Engineering Building, for which Gowan had prepared preliminary drawings in Stirling's absence, was conceivably shaped by things he had seen in the US.<sup>43</sup> In fact, an *Architectural Review* article on the building noted the American architectural parallels, citing Wright, Kahn, and even Paul Rudolph's Yale Art and Architecture Building (previously known as Yale Art Centre) as comparable references.<sup>44</sup>

If Stirling selects, reassembles, and translates the signs and symbols of the urban environment originally located along the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes of history and geography, this is in order to make sense of the voracious *expendability* of signifiers deeply rooted in collective memory to a point where signs are not simply amassed and juxtaposed, but inextricably merged with one another. No longer dadaist, neo-dadaist, or combined, Stirling's collages become factual artefacts that anticipate emergent communication categories.

In a new era of information exchange, total aestheticisation and semiurgy, the 'continuous game of distortions and rotations, technological violence and an unscrupulous assembly of complex materials', which Tafuri and Dal Co pointed to in their *History of Modern Architecture*, can only result in the universalisation of the architectural language via consumerism and industrial design.<sup>45</sup> *Ready-mades*,

*found objects* and, ultimately, as *found* images from which every element of human intervention is carefully erased; in other words, all the signs that Stirling merges and coalesces are constructed in order for the 'maximal integration and minimal loss of information' to be taken into account. Sign-



7a

7a, b Mario Bellini (1972). Olivetti Divisumma 18 (electronic calculator). James Stirling, Michael Wilford (1977). Olivetti Training School, detail of the trainees' accommodation, Haslemere.

Ostensibly a mere transposition of a commercial product into a fully stereometric item that anticipates to some extent contemporary 3D printing, the Olivetti Training School inherits from newly stylised design objects the dematerialised aspects of contemporary consumerism, among which is the building's ability to signify in excess of the designer's intentions and thus become a floating signifier.



7b

exchange is emphasised in order for an ever-shifting 'equilibrium of a sign system' to triumph.<sup>46</sup>

The final conceptual variation, 'nature to culture', a focus on the 'man-made' rather than the natural or 'original optical event', allows familiar images to emerge. Associated with the equivalence, making = horizontality (just as renaissance art had been previously associated with the equivalence, seeing = verticality), the *flatbed picture plane* accommodates the reproduction of banal drawings to ensure that the image is now understood as a 'scrap of printed material'. Ghostly appearances of visual accumulation, their meaning and succession are 'nearly obliterated'.<sup>47</sup>

*Machine-like* in its ability to give up all the features previously characterising the history of architecture – to be explicit, that based on the primitive hut as originally theorised and applied to the whole history of architecture by Marc-Antoine Laugier (1755) *a posteriori*, the Florey Building originates such a smooth and continuous surface that the shift from nature to culture couldn't be more obvious. By leaving out any possible allusion to nature as previously characterising the ancient paradigm (base and pediment, decoration and infill, or later the zoomorphic shapes that personify modernist expressionism), the adjective cultural here exceeds the mere meaning of *man-made* to acquire that of *machine-made* – one from which every reference to any possible human intervention is erased.

First appearing in the Leicester Engineering Building, further implemented in the Cambridge History Faculty and ultimately perfected in the Florey Building, where the absence of 'relations of "adjacency"' among *as found* episodes causes the building to look like a pull-out papercraft architectural model as if extracted from an even layer, this shift is eventually consecrated in the Olivetti Training School (James Stirling, Michael Wilford, 1977) thanks to the original references being integrated with an industrial assemblage of 'hard and shiny' prefabricated components.<sup>49</sup> '[A]rchitecture or industrial design?' Stirling waxed ironic at an international congress about the calculator-inspired, machine-made effect of the final design outcome [7a, b].<sup>50</sup>

Retrospectively, we can see with clarity what the entire red-brick trilogy is all about; and especially the Florey Building, where the minimal coverage of the construction offered by the worm's-eye axonometric view (ground floor and a few elevations at best), the near absence of a context that would clarify spatial relationships, and its perceived down-scaling suggest that the building can be scrutinised from the palm of one's hand. Like a toy that American snack companies of the 1960s included in their fancy packaging, and that Roy Lichtenstein scrutinised at the time in terms of the sentimental attachment that such low-brow objects aroused in consumers, the building reaches the highest degree of objectification and can similarly be regarded as a consumer product of which the hyper-functional, hyper-performing, and very much modernist *ready-made* templates (circulation spine, plan's imprint,

and volume's *raumplan*) act like *as found* clichés of the architectural repository. Hyper-realised and alienated from the surroundings thanks to knife-edged flying buttresses and mineral colours as much as the Olivetti Training School is by the slick surfaces and the alternating pistachio and raspberry bands characterising its prefabricated components, the Florey building stands like an unidentified flying object in the middle of Oxford's colleges.

A figure from outer space, and definitely outside of the orthodox and pragmatic tradition from which it had supposedly been generated, the Florey Building turns out to be the emblem of a process of architectural commodification very well addressed by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard when affirming that the 'theory of forms of beauty, aesthetics, has now actually become the theory of generalised compatibility among signs, of their internal coherence (signifier/signified), and of their syntax'.<sup>51</sup> A singular object releasing architecture from any 'duty to allude, to speak, to express', the Florey Building condemns architecture 'to meditate and reflect upon itself' in a way not dissimilar to most American pop art and especially Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*, which appear in the middle of an art exhibition more like epiphanies of a dream world than immanent yet impalpable materialisation of any residual utopia.<sup>52</sup> This reflection, which the Italian Semiotician Umberto Eco brilliantly summarised in his pivotal study, *The Open Work* (1962), predates by many years the game of self-reminiscent forms played out, for example, in Philip Johnson's AT&T building (1985), where the freedom of interpretation and meaning-making that the open play of signifiers allegedly allows collapses into postmodern corporate *iconism*.<sup>53</sup>

Basically, the buildings that Stirling produced up until his more accredited 'post-modern turn', exhibit neither the reorganisation (read: massing, montaging, inverting, aggregating, integrating, wrapping, and, eventually, disciplining) of prewar collages onto a single surface, nor the modernist/postmodernist divide, nor the 'poetic recycling of reality' – a new, more original narrative for architecture.<sup>54</sup> Rather, they inaugurate the new modalities of the apprehension of reality as activated by an ever-increasing hyper-commodified environment.

Five hundred years since the first paradigm shift informing the renaissance perspective window, and a few decades away from the episteme established by the second industrial revolution, architecture is now the outcome of the established equivalence between fiction and reality. In a world where not only do representation and materiality collapse, but the nature/culture divide eclipses once and for all any of the dogmas informing architecture so far, it is no longer a matter of image-making, but of reality-making *tout court*. Concepts such as space, function, typology, stereometry, tridimensionality, and gravity vanish only to survive, very much like Paolozzi's lost wax bronze sculptures, as 'ghosts' or pretexts of a 'truth' that is no longer viable in an ever-increasingly mediated environment.

Stirling himself claimed to have stopped believing in the ‘truth of architecture’ when he verified in person that columns at Villa La Rotunda in Vicenza (1592) were only a theatrical rendering of solid marble and, therefore, of function. By wrapping his buildings with a layer of ordinary, solid, and mineral-shaded red tiling, Stirling isn’t just inverting the process at play in Palladio’s buildings, where red bricks are nobilitated by a thin layer of plaster and paint; nor is he making an indirect remark about the end of modernist functionality. What he is doing, instead, is clarifying once and for all that the final referent of architectural ‘truth’ is neither natural (classicist) nor functional (modernist) as some may suggest, but rather virtual and post-avant-garde.<sup>55</sup> In this universe, which Guy Debord theorised as finally transmuted into ‘capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image’, the actual, material building only survives as a nostalgic, if archaeological, souvenir of a recently lost pioneering and heroic architectural phase.<sup>56</sup>

### Conclusion: solving the enigma

The aim of this investigation has been to overcome what I consider to be a glaring misunderstanding of Stirling’s place in architectural history and to assess his uniqueness beyond the boundaries within which it has been confined. The discrepancy between Italian and Anglo-American literature provided a starting point, while the steps I have taken aimed to shed a new light on his achievements. The methodology comprises delving into the literature from a different culture, refocusing the site of research onto art history, theory, and criticism, explaining Stirling’s close connection to the Independent Group and the consequent absorption and development of the neo-avant-garde pop art concept of *expendability*, *imageability*, and *as found* as framed and reinterpreted through the American pop art notion of the *flatbed picture plane*. Stirling’s ability to advance a concept that goes beyond pop art itself has been aligned with the notion of post-avant-garde for this reason.

By examining collage as the main artistic technique connecting the historical avant-garde to the neo-avant-garde, as well as the innovative techniques differentiating the latter from the former in terms of both use and conceptual vision, the article has addressed the broader context within which Stirling’s work stands out. Introducing the theoretical concept of the *flatbed picture plane*, and overcoming the dichotomy originally established by Peter Bürger with his theory of the avant-garde, according to which the neo-avant-garde is but a diminished replica of the historical avant-garde, allowed Stirling’s work to emerge as unprecedented. His successful integration of both British and American neo-avant-garde trends as a whole that by far exceeded the sum of its parts has shown that the definition used by Francesco Dal Co and Manfredo Tafuri to describe Stirling’s work as an *enigma* is not

sufficient to appraise his originality.<sup>57</sup> Nor is the attempt by other Italian critics to explain Stirling’s emerging style only in the light of the analogy established with American rather than British pop art, although this has contributed to stress his distinctive attainment.

In exposing the ways in which British neo-avant-garde collages differ from historical avant-garde collages of Picasso and Braque, and then again in differentiating the former from the postmodern American collages of Robert Rauschenberg, the article has made the point that Stirling both integrates and overcomes in his early projects outcomes that complement and advance Andy Warhol’s visual obsolescence, a fading effect typical of screen-printing. Always suspended in a double movement of introjection and projection of familiar aspects of reality, Warhol’s treatment of popular imagery thus emphasised Stirling’s approach to image-making.

By acquiring that impalpable characteristic of advanced capitalist commodities, which the French critical theorist Jean Baudrillard first delineated in *The System of Objects* (1968), James Stirling’s buildings abandon their original collaged status to become self-referential.<sup>58</sup> Extracted, repackaged, and offered to the viewer for the sake of an optical short-circuiting, the synthesis of the components turns the architectural artefact into an evanescent perceptual phenomenon better illustrated via the American pop concept of the *flatbed picture plane*. Hence, Stirling’s ability to flirt with an emerging consumer culture at the time when the latter was rapidly dematerialising design.

A further step towards the virtualisation of the built environment, the Florey Building does not simply anticipate architectural objects *a la* Rem Koolhaas in OMA/LMN’s *Seattle Library* (2004), resembling a horizontal bar graph, or Zaha Hadid’s *Maxxi* in Rome (2010), inspired by a flow chart; but also typifies one of the most perfect embodiments of the ascent of the commodity-sign in architecture, something that in its turn demands a complete re-reading of the whole history of postmodern architecture, past and present. Unacknowledged, it would warrant the shift of architecture from a building to an object, from an object to an image, from an image to a sign, and from a sign to a floating signifier where all original sources are finally ‘equivalent’. Communicating ‘in the abstract [...] according to the economy of a model’ that has now become universal, it also signals the shift towards a world no longer inhabited by those categories that the Smithsons unsuccessfully tried to ground into the forms and functions of British brutalism.<sup>59</sup> Heavily subjected to the disenfranchisement and redefinition of our perceptive apparatus, it is best described via pop art theory and the practice of industrial design.<sup>60</sup>

‘The volume has to go’ Stirling claimed at the launch of *This is Tomorrow* in 1956.<sup>61</sup> In just a few years, and in a style by far bypassing cubist, dadaist, surrealist, late modernist and neo-modernist collages, so did the rest – hastily.

## Notes

1. Amanda Reeser-Lawrence, 'The Stirling Turn', *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 14:3 (2010), 192-4 (p. 192).
2. Claire Zimmerman, 'James Stirling Reassembled', *AA Files* 56 (2007), 2-13 (pp. 3, 5, 11).
3. Igea Troiani, "'Stirling's Worth': Architectural Quality and the Florey Building, Oxford', *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 11:3/4 (2007), 291-9.
4. Geoffrey H. Baker, *The Architecture of James Stirling and his Partners James Gowan and Michael Wilford* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011); Anthony Vidler, *James Frazer Stirling: Notes from the Archive* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).
5. Amanda Reeser-Lawrence, *James Stirling: Revisionary Modernist* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Reeser-Lawrence, 'The Stirling Turn', pp. 193-4.
6. Mark Crinson, *James Stirling: Early Unpublished Writings on Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 8, 50.
7. Mark Crinson, *Stirling and Gowan: Architecture from Austerity to Affluence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 130-1.
8. Cetica wrote, 'si verifica per Stirling quello che Argan denuncia per gli iperrealisti: l'immagine è talmente precisa e circonstanziata che ogni processo di approfondimento e sviluppo è escluso [it happens for Stirling what, according to Giulio Carlo Argan, happens with hyperealism: the image is so sharp and self-referential that no further comprehension and speculation of/about the artwork is allowed]'. Pier Angelo Cetica, 'James Stirling: Tra Immagine e Tecnologia', in *James Stirling: L'ultimo Maestro?*, ed. by F. Brunetti, P. A. Cetica, A. Michelizzi (Padova: Cedam, 1978); Achille Michelizzi, 'James Stirling: analisi delle opere', in *James Stirling: L'ultimo Maestro?* ed. by Brunetti, Cetica, Michelizzi; Cesare De' Seta, 'La Storicità Dialettica di Stirling', in *James Stirling*, ed. by Camillo Gubitosi and Alberto Izzo (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 1974); Marcello Angrisani, 'James Stirling Visto dall'Italia', in *James Stirling*, ed. by Gubitosi and Izzo.
9. Michelizzi, 'James Stirling: analisi delle opere', pp. 45, 47, 51-2, 59, 68, 75, 77-86; Cetica, 'James Stirling: Tra Immagine e Tecnologia', pp. 135, 138-9; Gubitosi and Izzo, 'James Stirling', p. 13; Angrisani, 'James Stirling Visto dall'Italia', p. 16; De' Seta, 'La Storicità Dialettica di Stirling', p. 24.
10. Sylvia Harrison, *Pop Art and the Origins of Post-Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
11. Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).
12. Monica Kjellen-Chapin, 'Traces, Layers, Palimpsests: The Dialogics of Collage and Pastiche', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, 75:2 (2006), 89.
13. Herbert Van Den Berg, 'On the Historiographic Distinction Between Historical and Neo-Avant-Garde', in *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde*, ed. by Dietrich Scheunemann (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, Avant-Garde Critical Studies 17, 2005), p. 63; Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). The historical avant-garde took place roughly between 1910 and the 1930s, while the neo-avant-garde is associated with art produced between the 1950s and 1970s.
14. Van Den Berg, 'Historiographic Distinction', pp. 64, 69.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 71; Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), p. 157.
16. Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945-59* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 130.
17. Soon absorbed into the Group, an interacting 'bunch of friends' composed mainly of architects, painters, sculptors, 'some graphics people, some musical people, and historians', Stirling attended only a few of the 'official' meetings at the ICA. James Stirling, 'James Stirling in Tokyo Interviewed by Arata Isozaki', in *Stirling: Writings on Architecture*, ed. by Robert Maxwell (Milan: Skira, 1998), pp. 195-7; Mark Girouard, *Big Jim: The Life and Work of James Stirling* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), pp. 41, 72.
18. Crinson, *Stirling and Gowan*.
19. Anne Massey, *Out of the Ivory Tower: The Independent Group and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 28.
20. Mark Francis and Hal Foster, *Pop* (London: Phaidon, 2005), pp. 19-20.
21. Reyner Banham, in Francis and Foster, *Pop*, p. 21.
22. Paolozzi's collages symbolised 'a populist view of progress and consumption' in terms of the naïve belief that 'everyone could attain the social status to which they aspired'. Massey, *The Independent Group*, p. 90.
23. John McHale, *The Expendable Reader* (London: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 50-2.
24. The *as found* originally appeared in the Smithsonian's Hunstanton School and Richard Hamilton's early works. Alex Potts, 'Realism, Brutalism, Pop', in *British Art in the Cultural Field, 1936-69*, ed. by Lisa Tickner and David Peters Corbett (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 295.
25. Reyner Banham, 'The New Brutalism', *Architectural Review* (December 1955), 7, 16 <<http://www.architectural-review.com/archive/1955-december-the-new-brutalism-by-reyner-banham/8603840.article>> [accessed 2 September 2019]. See also Claire Zimmerman, 'James Stirling's "Real Function"', *The Architecture of James Stirling 1964-1992: A Non-Dogmatic Accumulation of Formal Knowledge*, OASE, 79 (2009), p. 138 <<https://www.oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/79>> [accessed 15 August 2019].
26. Steve Edwards, 'Cubist Collage', in *Art of the Avant-Gardes*, ed. by Steve Edwards and Paul Wood (London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 209.
27. Hal Foster, 'Savage Minds (A Note on Brutalist Bricolage)', *October*, 136 (spring 2011), pp. 184-5.
28. Foster, 'Savage Minds', pp. 186, 191.
29. Crinson, *Stirling and Gowan*, p. 110.
30. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, MI: 1994; repr. University of Michigan, 1981); Charles Jencks, *The Iconic Building* (London: Francis Lincoln Ltd, 2005).
31. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, p. 78.
32. Foster, 'Savage Minds', p. 183.
33. Mark Girouard, 'Florey Building', *Architectural Review* (November 1972), p. 266; Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture* (London: Academy, 1980), p. 400.
34. John-Paul Stonard, 'The "Bunk" collages of Eduardo Paolozzi', *The Burlington Magazine*, 40 (April 2008), pp. 238-49.
35. Stirling, 'Methods of Expression', in *Stirling: Writings on Architecture*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 126.
36. Crinson, *Stirling and Gowan*, pp. 123-4.
37. David Antin, in Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, p. 5.
38. Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, pp. 1-2.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

40. Maurizio Calvesi, *Le Due Avanguardie: Dal Futurismo alla Pop Art* (Bari: Laterza, 1998).
41. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, 'Solo and Two-Person Exhibitions', New York <<https://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/artist/exhibition-history>> [accessed 15 November 2020].
42. De' Seta, 'La Storicità Dialettica di Stirling', p. 23.
43. Mark Crinson, 'Picturesque and Intransigent: "Creative Tension" and Collaboration in the Early House Projects of Stirling and Gowan', *Architectural History*, 50 (2007), p. 288.
44. John Jacobus, 'Engineering Building at Leicester University, by Stirling and Gowan', *Architectural Review* (11 April 1963), 260.
45. Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, p. 368.
46. Jean Baudrillard, 'Design and Environment or the Inflationary Curve of Political Economy', in 'The Universitas Projects: Solutions for a Post-Technological Society', directed by Emilio Ambasz, MOMA, New York (8–9 January 1972), p. 52.
47. Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, p. 88.
48. Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture*, Classic Reprint Series (London: Forgotten Books, 2018).
49. Edwards, 'Cubist Collage', p. 185; Stirling, 'Methods of Expression', in Maxwell, *Stirling: Writings on Architecture*, p. 131.
50. Stirling, 'Methods of Expression', in Maxwell, *Stirling: Writings on Architecture*, p. 131.
51. Baudrillard, 'Design and Environment', p. 52.
52. Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, p. 368.
53. Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. by Anna Cancogni, with introduction by David Robey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
54. Zimmerman, 'James Stirling's "Real Function"', pp. 124, 132 and fn. 4.
55. A more precise definition of post-avant-garde can be partially inferred from Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The avant-garde at the end of the century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); *The Post-avant-garde: Painting in the Eighties*, ed. by Charles Jencks and Andreas Papadakis (London: Wiley-Academy, 1987); and Grzegorz Tyc, 'Post-avant-garde synthesis of architecture and art' in *Defining the architectural space: transmutations of concrete*, ed. by Anna Mielnik (Kraków: Cracow University of Technology, 2017), pp. 87–94.
56. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: 1967; repr. Zone Books, 1995), p. 24.
57. Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, p. 400.
58. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (1968; repr. London: Verso, 2005).
59. Baudrillard, 'Design and Environment', p. 55.
60. See Francesco Proto, 'Seducing God(s): Renaissance Ideal Cities as Mirror-images of Western Subjectivity', in *Architecture and the Unconscious*, ed. by John Shannon Hendrix and Lorens Eyan Holm (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2016).
61. Stirling in Crinson, *Stirling and Gowan*, p. 113.

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