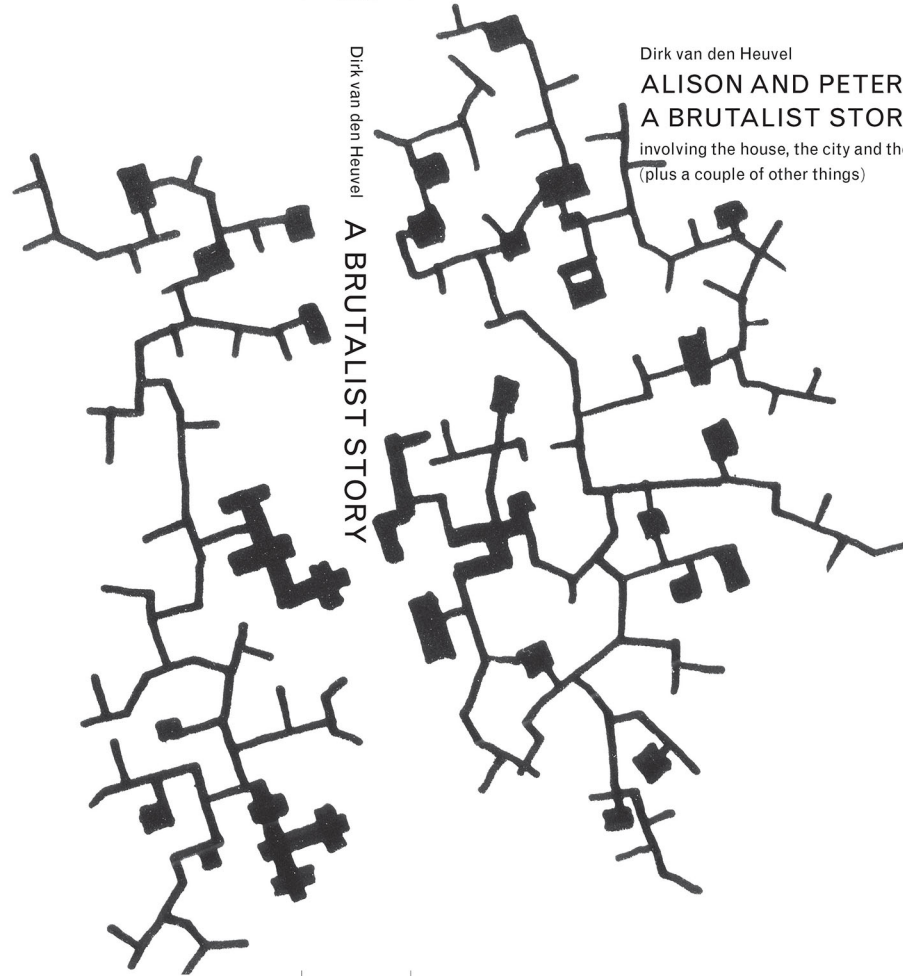


The many images of the New Brutalism



Dirk van den Heuvel
A BRUTALIST STORY

Dirk van den Heuvel
ALISON AND PETER SMITHSON
A BRUTALIST STORY
involving the house, the city and the everyday
(plus a couple of other things)





Revivals of the New Brutalism



- ABOUT
- BLOG
- ARCHITECTURE +
- MUSIC +
- NEWS +
- OTHER +
- PRESS +
- SIGHTINGS +
- STOCKIST +
- TRAVEL +
- PRESS
- SHOP
- SOCIAL
- STOCKIST
- CONTACT

GO BACK -

BRUTALISM



This is an

Interesting example of Brutalism – a term suggesting buildings which are ugly and unfriendly. Brutalism was a movement in architecture which flourished in the 1960s and 1970's. Pioneered in continental Europe by Le Corbusier, its main protagonist in the UK were the husband and wife team of Peter and Alison Smithson. Does anyone know where this particular structure is?



Related Stuff

POP UP MUSIC PLAYER
© 2012 CASSIUS EYEWEAR LTD
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Like DISQUS

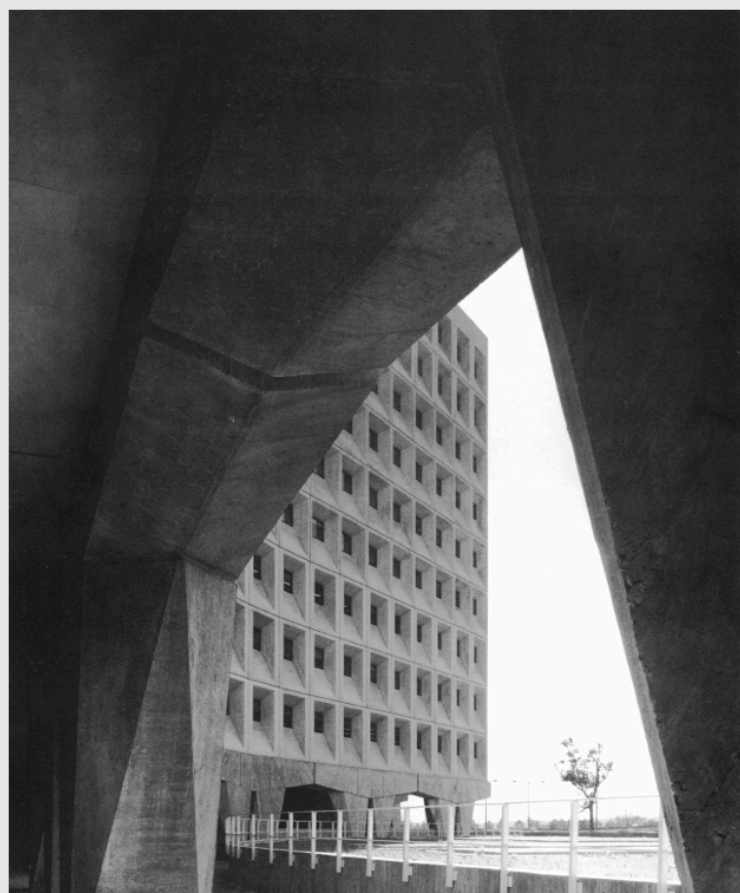
Add New Comment

Login

[archive](#) / [random](#) / [rss](#)

FUCK YEAH BRUTALISM

20 Oct 2012
155 Notes
Short URL





JULY 2012

31 POSTS



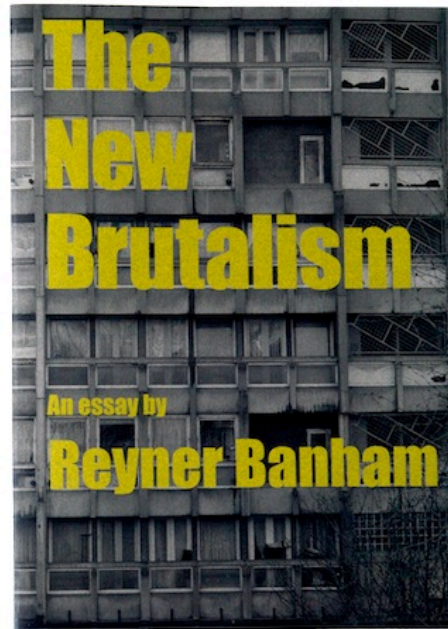
JUNE 2012

29 POSTS



Mikio Oba

Photography

[Books](#) [Photography](#) [Contact](#)
[Books](#) > [The New Brutalism](#)

[«Prev](#) | [1/9](#) | [Next»](#)

The New Brutalism

A3 size handmade publication / 12 pages

I started my research on the Barbican estate in London in order to explore its structure because I had a strong interest in the form of the buildings and the idea behind them. As I advanced through secondary research around Barbican, I learnt that these buildings had been labelled as 'Brutalist' architecture, and a number of other examples of such Brutalism still existed in London, including the Southbank Centre, Trellick Tower, Hyde Park Barracks and Robin Hood Gardens. Therefore, I decided to explore Brutalist architecture in London further as the subject focus of my publication.

amazon

FREE Two-Day Shipping

LOOK INSIDE!

Kindle Book

Print Book

Zoom - Zoom +

Feedback | Help | Expanded View | Close

Brutalism: Post-War British Architecture (Hardcover)
by Alexander Clement

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (1)
Hardcover **\$25.69**

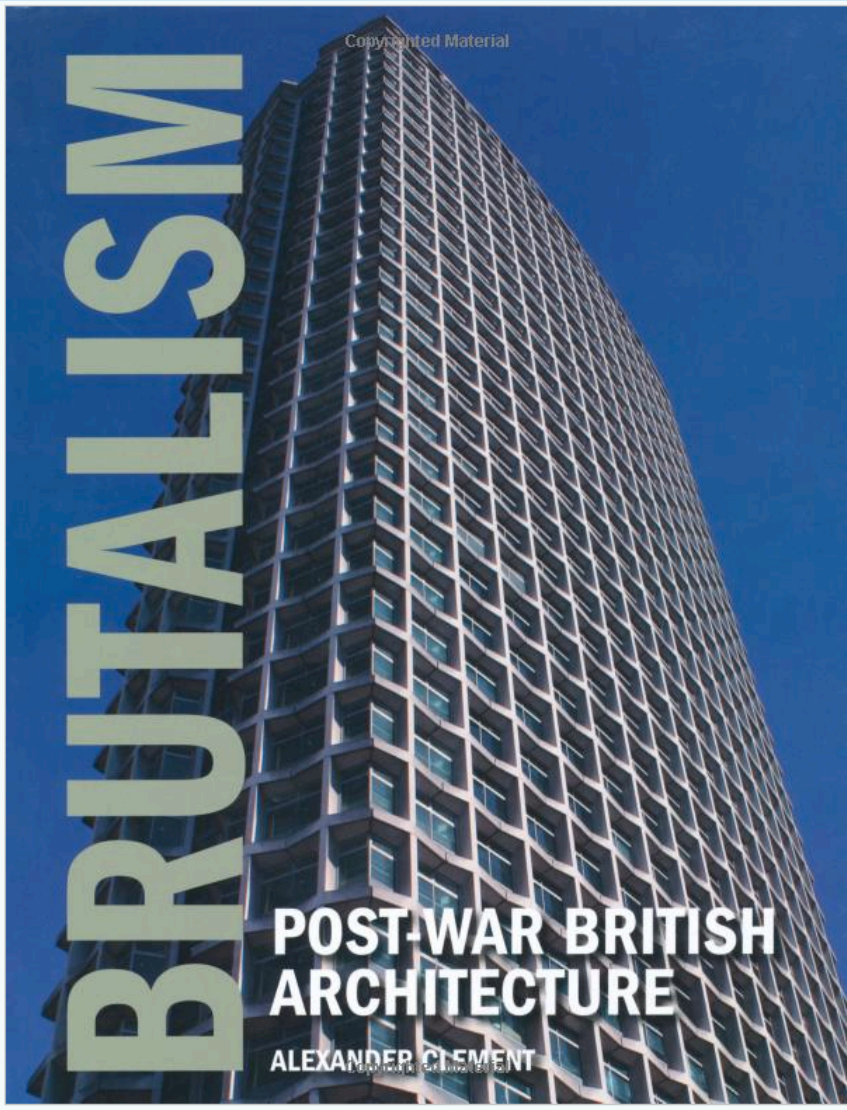
Add to Cart

20 used & new from **\$21.69**

Book sections

- Front Cover**
- Copyright
 - Table of Contents
 - First Pages
 - Index
 - Back Cover
 - Surprise Me!

Search Inside This Book

 GO


This is a preview. The number of pages displayed is limited.

Your Browsing History

You have no books in your browsing history

[Edit your book history](#)

Customers Also Bought

Page 1 of 1

Militant Modernism...
by Owen Hatherley
\$14.61

Look Inside This Book

Hide These Books

Bo
Publ
Cu



Search bar

New Brutalism [Fly On The Wall/ Wheelchair Epidemic]

BryanOblivion + Abonneren 505 video's



Leuk, Toevoegen aan, Delen

147 aantal keren bekeken

Geüpload door BryanOblivion op 29 jul 2011
Geen beschrijving beschikbaar.

1 keer gemarkeerd als leuk, 0 keer gemarkeerd als niet leuk

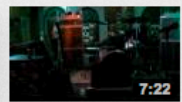
Meer weergeven

Een opmerking over deze video in je afspeellijst toevoegen: new brutality

1 / 29

new brutality bunkdirk

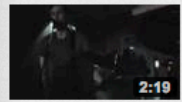
Opties



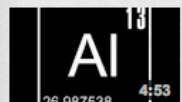
New Brutalism - 058 & 069 (I Want Money)
door sayerjune
1704 weergaven



New Brutalism - 058
door bl4ckm4rk3r
821 weergaven



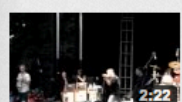
New Brutalism @ The Pilot Light
door nopartybrian
2337 weergaven



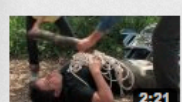
New Brutalism - 053
door bl4ckm4rk3r
555 weergaven



New Brutalism - 051
door sayerjune
710 weergaven



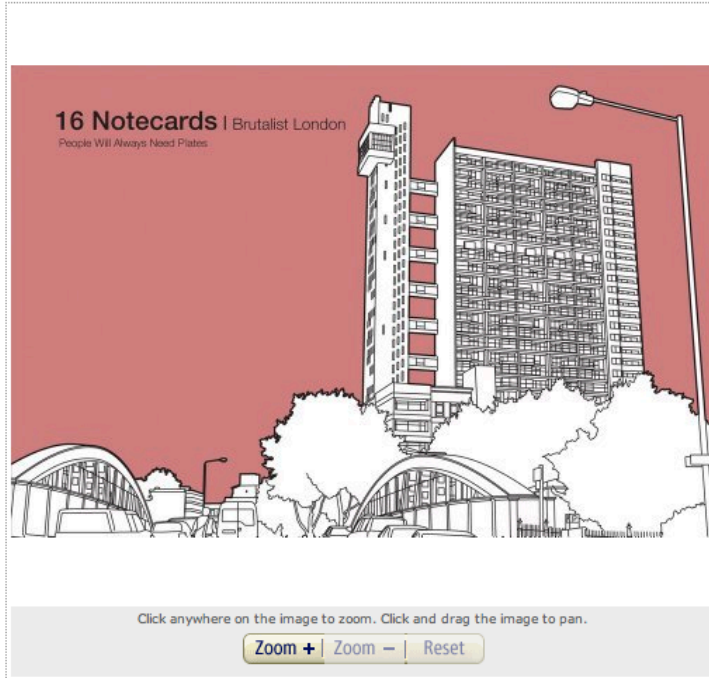
Pitchfork 2009 - The Jesus Lizard -
door jayespy
237 weergaven



Wheelchair Epidemic
door TheRossEverett
3333 weergaven

Horizontal playlist bar with 5 items: 1. New Brutalism [Fly On The Wall/ Wheelchair, 2. AI, 3. Soldat Brut - Hunstanton, 4. Kassem Mosse - We Speak To Those (NonPlus), 5. Iannis Xenakis - Metastasis, 6. Edgar Varèse: Poème électronique (1)

Brutalist London: 16 Notecards


[Close Window](#)

A stylish box of 16 notecards and envelopes with four stunning designs, depicting famous Brutalist buildings in London

These outstanding graphic illustrations of London buildings with their clean lines and bold blocks of color have been used by influential ceramics company People Will Always Need Plates on a successful range of plates, mugs, and other objects. Now they are available in chic greeting cards.

Editorial Reviews

About the Author

Robin Farquhar has a background in industrial and exhibition design, and he is also a ceramicist. **Hannah Dipper** are founding members of the cult ceramics company People Will Always Need Plates.

Product Details

Game: 16 pages

Publisher: Anova Books; Crds edition (October 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1840656182

ISBN-13: 978-1840656183

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 4.2 x 1.3 inches

FREE Two-Day Shipping
Join Amazon Prime Today

Go

Hello, Dirk
Your Account

0 Cart

Wish
List

Textbooks Sell Your Books

Buy New

\$12.95

Quantity: 1

Add to Cart

or

Sign in to turn on 1-Click ordering

Add to Wish List

More Buying Choices

24 used & new from \$7.68

Have one to sell? Sell on Amazon

Share





**‘Brutalism was not what Banham
was talking about’**

The Atavism of the Short-Distance Mini-cyclist

by Reyner Banham

July 63
Beaker Twist
+ Short

Dr Banham's polemical and very personal text is a transcription of his Terry Hamilton Memorial Lecture, given at the ICA last autumn.

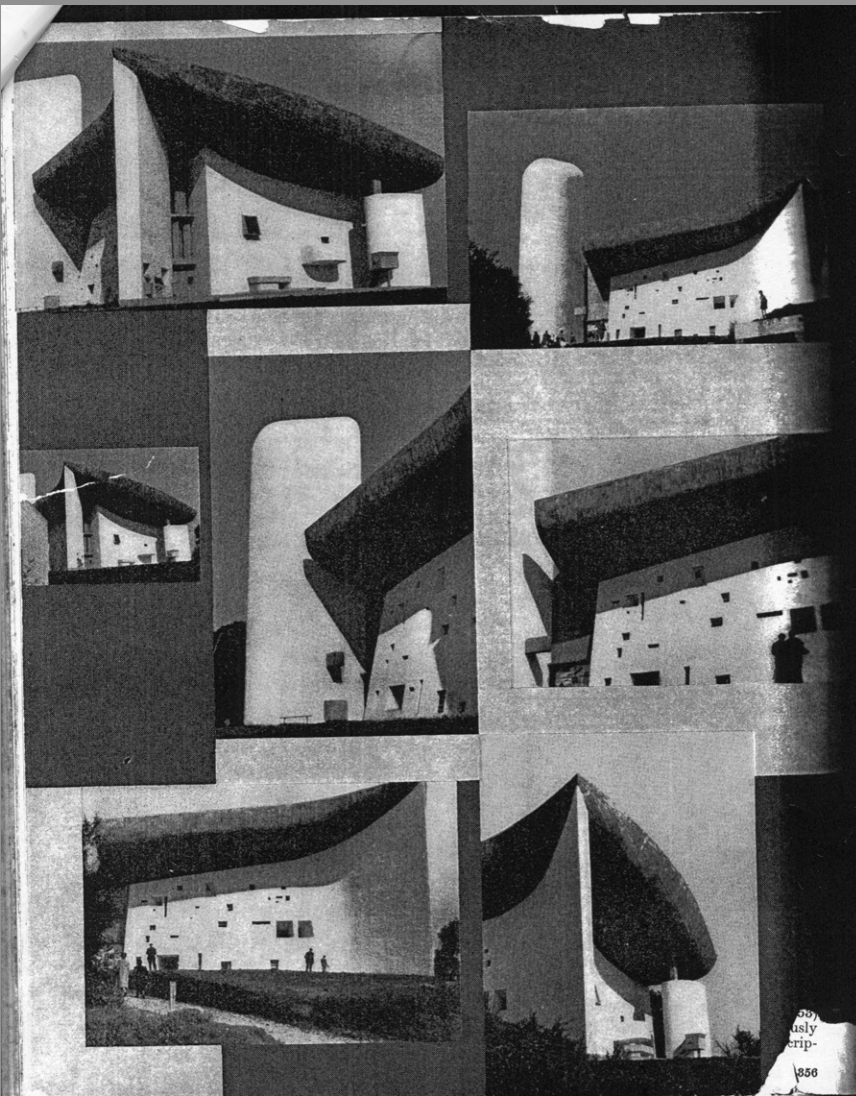
Nov. 1963

Those who are familiar with the recent professional literature will know that I now ride a mini-cycle. The most illuminating comment on this came from that south-of-the-Thames social critic, R. R. Langford, who said to me when he heard the news, 'that is your bike outside I take it?' And I said 'yes'. He looked at me and said, 'cycling, that's a bit atavistic isn't it?' The point went home because I have had one or two accusations of atavism recently. I've had for what I thought the best reasons in the world to describe myself in print as a 'scholarship boy', to define my position for people who don't know the English social scene, but this is regarded by my wife as both atavism and (apparently) showing off. But the thing remains true, the working class is where I come from. I come from a cycling community. Anybody who knows Norwich knows that the cyclist is still the king of the road there, and all other traffic has to stand aside when the cyclists get loose.

I don't know that I'm particularly proud of this working class, cloth-cap bit in my background, but I think it gives me a right to speak on certain subjects. It's a funny thing being back on a bike after twelve years. The reflexes don't disappear; you put your leg over it and sit on the saddle and you make off straight away, and everything you learned with such great pain, more or less at your father's knee, comes back absolutely instantaneously, it's there, bred in the bone and blood. It's got to be a really weird bike, much weirder than the mini, before you come on a situation where you can't just sit on it and pedal off. And similar reflexes work also at the cultural level, for other things that take you back to where you came in.

It gives those of us who come from that part of the world a certain right to speak on subjects like pop. We are not, as Basil Taylor said at the time of 'This is Tomorrow', 'sophisticated people meddling in unsophisticated matters'. I would in any case dispute that pop art is an unsophisticated matter, or that any other part of pop culture is particularly unsophisticated. We were very much at home with this material, it was return-of-the-native stuff, we were in our own culture, sub-culture, or whatever you like to call it. We were natives back home again.





In the chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, Le Corbusier is generally felt to have achieved one of the most personal and surprising buildings of his career. In the first flurry of excitement at its unexpected forms, consternation has been expressed at the way a master of logical structure has set his great curving roof apparently afloat above the apices of the massive and perforated walls—the narrow glazed gap between roof and walls can be seen in the exterior views opposite. *How far the consideration will be able to evaluate the success of the plastic effect justifies such anti-structural usages and, as a step toward such evaluation, James Strirling will contribute an appreciation of Notre Dame du Haut in the new year.*



Beyner Banham

THE NEW BRUTALISM

'L'Architecture, c'est, avec des matériaux bruts, établir des rapports étonnants.' Le Corbusier: Vers une Architecture.

Introduce an observer into any field of forces, influences or communications and that field becomes distorted. It is common opinion that *Das Kapital* has played old harr with capitalism, so that Marxists can hardly recognize it when they see it, and the wide-spread diffusion of Freud's ideas has wrought such havoc with clinical psychology that any intelligent patient can make a nervous wreck of his analyst. What has been the influence of contemporary architectural historians on the history of contemporary architecture?

They have created the idea of a Modern Movement—this was known even before Basil Taylor took up arms against false historicism—and beyond that they have offered a rough classification of the 'isms' which are the thumb-print of Modernity into two main types: One, like *Cubism*, is a label, a recognition tag, applied by critics and historians to a body of work which appears to have certain consistent principles running through it, whatever the relationship of the artists; the other, like *Futurism*, is a banner, a slogan, a policy consciously adopted by a group of artists, whatever the apparent similarity or dissimilarity of their products. And it is entirely characteristic of the New Brutalism—our first native art-movement since the New Art-History arrived here—that it should confound these categories and belong to both at once.

Is Art-History to blame for this? Not in any obvious way, but in practically every other way. One cannot begin to study the New Brutalism without realizing how deeply the New Art-History has bitten into progressive English architectural thought, into teaching methods, into the common language of communication between architects and between architectural critics. What is interesting about R. Furneaux Jordan's parthian

355

...hass o
...usly
...crip-
856

857

footnote on the New Brutalism—'. . . Lubetkin talks across time to the great masters, the Smithsons talk only to each other—is not the fact that it is nearly true, and thus ruins his argument, but that its terms of valuation are historical. The New Brutalism has to be seen against the background of the recent history of history, and, in particular, the growing sense of the inner history of the Modern Movement itself.

The history of the phrase itself is revealing. Its form is clearly derived from the ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW's post-war *trouaille* 'The New Empiricism,' a term which was intended to describe visible tendencies in Scandinavian architecture to diverge from another historical concept 'The International Style.' This usage, like any involving the word *new*, opens up a historical perspective. It postulates that an old empiricism can be identified by the historian, and that the new one can be distinguished from it by methods of historical comparison, which will also distinguish it from a mere 'Empirical Revival.' The ability to deal with such fine shades of historical meaning is in itself a measure of our handiness with the historical method today, and the use of phrases of the form 'The New X-ism'—where X equals any adjectival root—became commonplace in the early nineteen-fifties in fourth-year studios and other places where architecture is discussed, rather than practised.

The passion of such discussion has been greatly enhanced by the clarity of its polarization—Communists versus the Rest—and it was somewhere in this vigorous polemic that the term 'The New Brutalism' was first coined. It was, in the beginning, a term of Communist abuse, and it was intended to signify the normal vocabulary of Modern Architecture—flat roofs, glass, exposed structure—considered as morally reprehensible deviations from 'The New Humanism,' a phrase which means something different in Marxist hands to the meaning which might be expected. The New Humanism meant in architecture at that time, brickwork, segmental arches, pitched roofs, small windows (or small panes at any rate)—picturesque detailing without picturesque planning. It was, in fact, the so-called 'William Morris Revival,' now happily defunct, since Khrushchev's reversal of the Party's architectural line, though this reversal has, of course, taken the guts out of subsequent polemics. But it will be observed that The New Humanism was again a quasi-historical concept, oriented, however spuriously, toward that mid-nineteenth century epoch which was Marxism's Golden Age, when you could recognize a capitalist when you met him.

However, London architectural circles are a small field in which to conduct a polemic of any kind, and abuse must be directed at specific persons, rather than classes of persons, since there was rarely enough unanimity (except among Marxists) to allow a class to coalesce. The New Brutalists at whom Marxist spite was directed could be named and recognized—

¹ There is a persistent belief that the word *Brutalism* (or something like it) had appeared in the English Summaries in an issue of *Dygg-Mästaren* published late in 1950. The reference cannot now be traced, and the story must be relegated to that limbo of Modern Movement demology where Swedes, Communists and the Town and Country Planning Association are bracketed together as different isotopes of the common 'Adversary.'

and so could their friends in other arts. The term had no sooner got into public circulation than its meaning began to narrow. Among the non-Marxist grouping there was no particular unity of programme or intention, but there was a certain community of interests, a tendency to look toward Le Corbusier, and to be aware of something called *le beton brut*, to know the quotation which appears at the head of this article and, in the case of the more sophisticated and aesthetically literate, to know of the *Art Brut* of Jean Dubuffet and his connection in Paris. Words and ideas, personalities and discontents chimed together and in a matter of weeks—long before the Third Programme and the monthlies had got hold of the phrase—it had been appropriated as their own, by their own desire and public consent, by two young architects, Alison and Peter Smithson.

The phrase had thus changed both its meaning and its usage. Adopted as something between a slogan and a brick-bat flung in the public's face, The New Brutalism ceased to be a label descriptive of a tendency common to most modern architecture, and became instead a programme, a banner, while retaining some—rather restricted—sense as a descriptive label. It is because it is both kinds of -ism at once that The New Brutalism eludes precise description, while remaining a living force in contemporary British architecture.

As a descriptive label it has two overlapping, but not identical, senses. Non-architecturally it describes the art of Dubuffet, some aspects of Jackson Pollock and of Appel, and the burlap paintings of Alberto Burri—among foreign artists—and, say, Magda Cordell or Edouardo Paolozzi and Nigel Henderson among English artists. With these last two, the Smithsons collected and hung the I.C.A. exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art*, which, though it probably preceded the coining of the phrase, is nevertheless regarded as a *locus classicus* of the movement. The more instructive aspects of this exhibition will be considered later: for the moment let us observe that many critics (and students at the Architectural Association) complained of the deliberate flouting of the traditional concepts of photographic beauty, of a cult of ugliness, and 'denying the spiritual in Man.' The tone of response to The New Brutalism existed even before hostile critics knew what to call it, and there was an awareness that the Smithsons were headed in a different direction to most other younger architects in London.

Alison Smithson first claimed the words in public as her own in a description of a project for a small house in Soho (*Architectural Design*, November, 1953), designed before the phrase existed, and previously tagged 'The warehouse aesthetic'—a very fair descrip-

tion of what The New Brutalism stood for in its first phase. Of this house, she wrote: '... had this been built, it would have been the first exponent of the New Brutalism in England, as the preamble to the specification shows.' It is our intention in this building to have the structure exposed entirely, without interior finishes wherever practicable. The contractor should aim at a high standard of basic construction, as in a small warehouse'. The publication of this project led to an extensive and often hilarious correspondence in various periodicals through the summer of 1954, a correspondence which wandered further and further from its original point because most writers were in fact discussing either the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art*, or the (as yet) unpublished school at Hunstanton. When this was finally published (AR, September, 1954) the discussion took a sharper and less humorous tone, for here in three-dimensional and photographic reality, and in the classic Modern Movement materials of concrete, steel and glass, was the Smithsons' only completed building. The phrase The New Brutalism was immediately applied to it, though it had been designed in the spring of 1950, long before even the house in Soho, but the Brutalists themselves have accepted this appellation, and it has become the tag for Hunstanton wherever the building has been discussed.

Hunstanton, and the house in Soho, can serve as the points of architectural reference by which The New Brutalism in architecture may be defined. What are the visible and identifiable characteristics of these two structures? Both have formal, axial plans—Hunstanton, in fact, has something like true bi-axial symmetry, and the small Gymnasium block alongside the school is a kind of exemplar in little of just how formal the complete scheme was to have been—and this formality is immediately legible from without. Both exhibit their basic structure, and both make a point of exhibiting their materials—in fact, this emphasis on basic structure is so obsessive that many superficial critics have taken this to be the whole of New Brutalist Architecture. Admittedly, this emphasis on basic structure is important, even if it is not the whole story, and what has caused Hunstanton to lodge in the public's gullet is the fact that it is almost unique among modern buildings in being made of what it appears to be made of. Whatever has been said about honest use of materials, most modern buildings appear to be made of whitewash or patent glazing, even when they are made of concrete or steel. Hunstanton appears to be made of glass, brick, steel and concrete, and is in fact made of glass, brick, steel and concrete. Water and electricity do not come out of unexplained holes in the wall, but are delivered to the point of use by visible pipes and manifest conduits. One can see what Hunstanton is made of, and how it works, and there is not another thing to see except the play of spaces.

This ruthless adherence to one of the basic moral imperatives of the Modern Movement—honesty in structure and material—has precipitated a situation to which only the pen of Ibsen could do justice. The mass of moderate architects, *hommes moyens sensuels*, have, for their accepted practices for waiving the

requirements of the conscience-code suddenly called in question; they have been put rudely on the spot, and they have not liked the experience. Of course, it is not just the building itself which has precipitated this situation, it is the things the Brutalists have said and done as well, but, as with the infected Spa in *An Enemy of the People*, the play of personalities focuses around a physical object.

The qualities of that object may be summarized as follows: 1, Formal legibility of plan; 2, clear exhibition of structure, and 3, valuation of materials for their inherent qualities 'as found.' This summary can be used to answer the question: Are there other New Brutalist buildings besides Hunstanton? It is interesting to note that such a summary of qualities could be made to describe Marseilles, Promontory and Lake-shore apartments, General Motors Technical Centre, much recent Dutch work and several projects by younger English architects affiliated to CIAM. But, with the possible exception of Marseilles, the Brutalists would probably reject most of these buildings from the canon, and so must we, for all of these structures exhibit an excess of *suaviter in modo*, even if there is plenty of *fortiter in re* about them. In the last resort what characterizes the New Brutalism in architecture as in painting is precisely its brutality, its *je-m'en-foutisme*, its bloody-mindedness. Only one other building conspicuously carries these qualities in the way that Hunstanton does, and that is Louis Kahn's Yale Art Centre. Here is a building which is uncompromisingly frank about its materials, which is inconceivable apart from its boldly exhibited structural method which—being a concrete-space-frame—is as revolutionary and unconventional as the use of the Plastic Theory in stressing Hunstanton's steel H-frames. Furthermore, the plan is very formal in the disposition of its main elements, and makes a kind of symmetry about two clearly defined axes at right angles to one another. And this is a building which some Brutalists can apparently accept as a constituent New Brutalist structure.

But, with all due diffidence, the present author submits that it still does not quite answer to the standard set by Hunstanton. For one thing, the Smithsons' work is characterized by an abstemious under-designing of the details, and much of the impact of the building comes from the ineloquence, but absolute consistency, of such components as the stairs and handrails. By comparison, Kahn's detailing is arty, and the stair-rail and balustrading (if that is the word for stainless netting) is jarringly out of key with the rough-shuttered concrete of the main structure. This may be 'only a matter of detailing' but there is another short-fall about Yale Art Centre which could not be brushed off so easily. Every Smithson design has been, obviously or subtly, a coherent and apprehensible visual entity, but this Louis Kahn's design narrowly fails to be. The internal spaces will be cluttered with display screens which, in the nature of his programme and his solution of it, must be susceptible of being moved, so that formal clarity is always threatened. But beyond this the relation of interior to exterior fails to validate the axes which govern the plan. Available viewpoints, the placing of the entrances, the handling of the exterior

walls—all tend to lose or play down the presence of planning axes. No doubt there are excellent functional reasons for the doors being where they are, and excellent structural reasons for the walls being treated in the way they are—but if these reasons were so compelling, why bother with an axial plan anyhow?

This is a hard thing to have to say about a seriously considered building by a reputable architect of some standing, but contact with Brutalist architecture tends to drive one to the ruthless logic more than anything else upon—or perhaps it is the fact that this logic is worn on the sleeve. One of the reasons for this obtrusive logic is that it contributes to the apprehensibility and coherence of the building as a visual entity, because it contributes to the building as 'an image.'

An *Image*—with the utterance of these two words we bridge the gap between the possible use of The New Brutalism as a descriptive label covering, varying degrees of accuracy, two or more buildings, and The New Brutalism as a slogan, and we also go some way to bridge the gap between the meaning of the term as applied to architecture and its meaning as applied to painting and sculpture. The word *image* in this sense is one of the most intractable and the most useful terms in contemporary aesthetics, and some attempt to explain it must be made.

A great many things have been called 'an image'—S. M. della Consolazione at Todi, a painting by Jackson Pollock, the Lever Building, the 1954 Cadillac convertible, the roofscape of the *Unité* at Marseilles, any of the hundred photographs in *Parallels of Life and Art*. 'Image' seems to be a word that describes anything or nothing. Ultimately, however, it means something which is visually valuable, but not necessarily by the standards of classical aesthetics. Where Thomas Aquinas supposed beauty to be *quod dicitur placet* (that which seen, pleases),² image may be defined as *quod visum perturbat*—that which seen, affects the emotions, a situation which could subsume the pleasure caused by beauty, but is not normally taken to do so, for the New Brutalists' interests in image are commonly regarded, as being anti-art, or at any rate as well as their critics, as the aesthetic sense of the word. But what is equally as important as the specific kind of response, is the nature of its cause. What pleased St. Thomas was an abstract quality, beauty—what moves a New Brutalist is the thing itself, in its totality, and with all its overtones of human association. These ideas of course lie close to the general body of anti-Academic aesthetics currently in circulation, though they are not to be identified exactly with Michel Tapié's concept of *un Art Autre*,³ even though that concept covers many Continental Brutal-

ists as well as Edouardo Paolozzi.

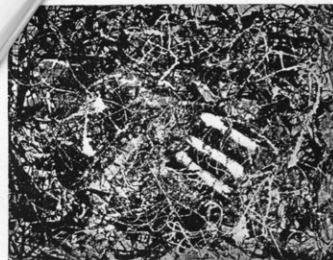
Nevertheless this concept of *Image* is common to all aspects of The New Brutalism in England, but the manner in which it works out in architectural practice has some surprising twists to it. Basically, it requires that the building should be an immediately apprehensible visual entity, and that the form grasped by the eye should be confirmed by experience of the building in use. Further, that this form should be entirely proper to the functions and materials of the building, in their entirety. Such a relationship between structure, function and form is the basic commonplace of all good building of course, the demand that this form should be apprehensible and memorable is the apical uncommonplace which makes good this building into great architecture. The fact that this form-giving obligation has been so far forgotten that a great deal of good building can be spoken of as if it were architecture, is a mark of a seriously decayed condition in English architectural standards. It has become too easy to get away with the assumption that if structure and function are served then the result must be architecture—so easy that the meaningless phrase 'the conceptual building' has been coined to defend the substandard architectural practices of the routine-functionalists, as if 'conceptual buildings' were something new, and something faintly reprehensible in modern architecture.

All great architecture has been 'conceptual,' has been image-making—and the idea that any great buildings, such as the Gothic Cathedrals, grew unconsciously through anonymous collaborative attention to structure and function is one of the most insidious myths with which the Modern Movement is saddled. Every great building of the Modern Movement has been a conceptual design, especially those like the Bauhaus, which go out of their way to look as if they were the products of 'pure' functionalism, whose aformal compositions are commonly advanced by routine-functionalists in defence of their own abdication of architectural responsibility. But a conceptual building is as likely to be aformal as it is to be formal, as a study of the Smithsons' post-Hunstanton projects will show.

Hunstanton's formality is unmistakably Miesian, as Philip Johnson pointed out, possibly because IIT was one of the few recent examples of conceptual, form-giving design to which a young architect could turn at the time of its conception, and the formality of their Coventry Cathedral competition entry is equally marked, but here one can safely posit the interference of historical studies again, for, though the exact priority of date as between the Smithsons' design and the publication of Professor Wittkower's *Architectural Principles of the Age of Humanism* is disputed (by the Smithsons) it cannot be denied that they were in touch with Wittkowerian studies at the time, and were as excited by them as anybody else.

The general impact of Professor Wittkower's book on a whole generation of post-war architectural students is one of the phenomena of our time. Its exposition of a body of architectural theory in which the function and form were significantly linked by the objective laws governing the Cosmos (as Alberti and Palladio understood them) suddenly discovered a

(continued) page 361

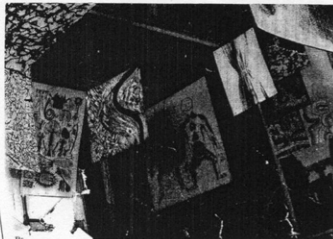


Painting, 1953—a formal composition in action.

henderson

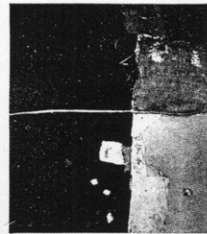


Spiglit on a Window (photograph)—image of human as well as formal value.



—exhibition of 100 Brutalist images.

burri



NEW BRUTALISM

Painting on burlap—typically Brutalist in its attitude to materials. Burri accords the burlap the same visual value as the paint it carries.

cordell

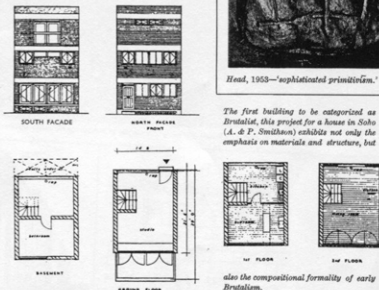


Figure, 1955—"anti-aesthetic" human image.

paolozzi

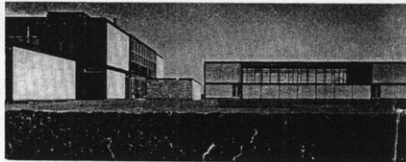


Head, 1955—"suphated primativum."



The first building to be categorized as Brutalist, this project for a house in Soto (A. & P. Smithson) exhibits not only the emphasis on materials and structure, but

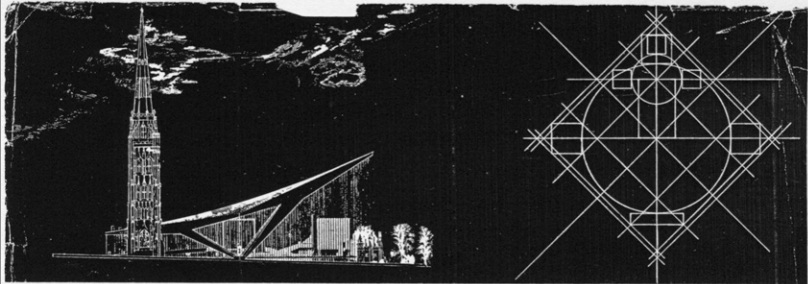
also the compositional formality of early Brutalism.



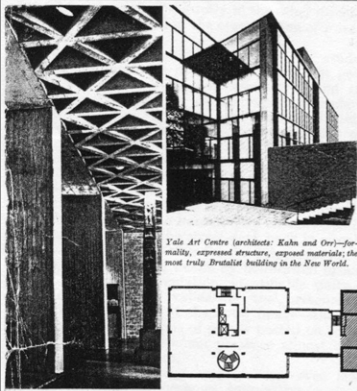
School at Hunstanton (A. & P. Smithson), first completed New Brutalist building, view toward gymnasium.

² Translating *Summa Theologiae* II (i) xxvii, I. The passage is normally rendered into English as "... but that those very apprehension pleases is called beautiful."

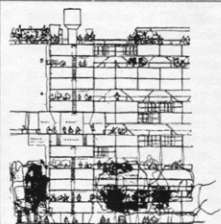
³ See his book of the same name, published in 1952. A closely analogous development is that of *musique concrète*, which uses "real sounds," manipulated in a manner which resembles the manipulation of some of the photographs in *Parallels*, and does not concern itself with harmony or melody in any recognizable way.



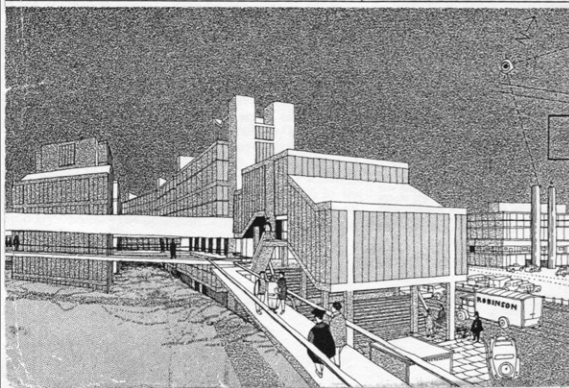
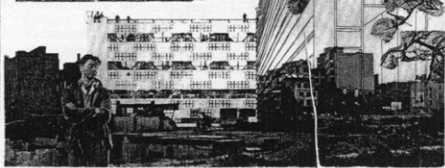
Coventry Cathedral competition entry (A. & P. Smithson) dramatic visual image created by spectacular structure, raised on a plan of Neo-Palladian symmetry—their last formal plan, 1951.



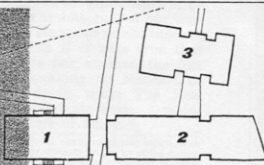
Yale Art Centre (architects: Kahn and Gray)—formally expressed structure, exposed materials; the most truly Brutalist building in the New World.



Golden Lane re-development project, shows Smithsons turning abstract geometry and formality, placing increased visual emphasis on site, circulation, habitation and human presence.



Sheffield University extensions (competition entry by A. & P. Smithson)—further development of New Brutalist architecture toward the completely a-formal, anti-geometric, yet systematic compositional methods exemplified in paintings by Pollock and Burri. Distinct walkways, one suspended beneath a box-deck for services, connect the main entrance, under 1, with the Arts Dept., 3, Senate House, 2, and other buildings on site.



continued from page 358]

way out of the doldrum of routine-functional abdications, and neo-Palladianism became the order of the day. The effect of *Architectural Principles* has made it by far the most important contribution—for evil as well as good—by any historian to English Architecture since *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, and it precipitated a nice disputation on the proper uses of history. The question became: Humanist principles to be followed? or Humanist principles as an example of the kind of principles to look for? Many students opted for the former alternative, and Routine-Palladians soon became as thick on the ground as Routine-Functionalists. The Brutalists, observing the inherent risk of a return to pure academicism—more pronounced at Liverpool than at the AA—sheered off abruptly in the other direction and were soon involved in the organization of *Parallel of Life and Art*.

In introducing this exhibition to an AA student debate Peter Smithson declared: 'We are not going to talk about proportion and symmetry' and this was his declaration of war on the inherent academicism of the neo-Palladians, and the anti-Brutalist section of the house made it clear how justified was this suspicion of crypto-academicism by taking their stand not only on Palladio and Alberti but also on Plato and the Absolute. The new direction in Brutalist architectural invention showed at once in the Smithsons' Golden Lane and Sheffield University competition entries. The former, only remembered for having put the idea of the street-deck back in circulation in England, is notable for its determination to create a coherent visual image by non-formal means, emphasizing visible circulation, identifiable units of habitation, and fully validating the presence of human beings as part of the total image—the perspectives had photographs of people pasted on to the drawings, so that the human presence almost overwhelmed the architecture.

But the Sheffield design went further even than this—and a formalism becomes as positive a force in its composition as it does in a painting by Burri or Pollock. Composition might seem pretty strong language for so apparently casual a layout, but this is clearly not an 'unconceptual' design, and on examination it can be shown to have a composition, but based not on the elementary rule-and-compass geometry which underlies most architectural composition, so much as an intuitive sense of topology. As a discipline of architecture topology has always been present in a subordinate and unrecognized way—qualities of penetration, circulation, inside and out, have always been important, but elementary Platonic geometry has been the master discipline. Now, in the Smithsons' Sheffield project the roles are reversed, topology becomes the dominant and geometry becomes

the subordinate discipline. The 'connectivity' of the circulation routes is flourished on the exterior and no attempt is made to give a geometrical form to the total scheme; large blocks of topologically similar spaces stand about the site with the same graceless memorability as martello towers or pit-head gear.

Such a dominance accorded to topology—in whose classifications a brick is the same 'shape' as a billiard ball (unpenetrated solid) and a teacup is the same 'shape' as a gramophone record (continuous surface with one hole) is clearly analogous to the displacement of Tomistic 'beauty' by Brutalist 'Image,' and Sheffield remains the most consistent and extreme point reached by any Brutalists in their search for *Une Architecture Aigre*. It is not likely to displace Hunstanton in architectural discussions as the prime exemplar of The New Brutalism, but it is the only building-design which fully matches up to the threat and promise of *Parallel of Life and Art*.

And it shows that the formal axiomatic of Hunstanton is not integral to New Brutalist architecture. Miesian or Wittkowerian geometry was only an *ad hoc* device for the realization of 'Images,' and when *Parallel of Life and Art* had enabled Brutalists to define their relationship to the visual world in terms of something other than geometry, then formality was discarded. The definition of a New Brutalist building derived from Hunstanton and Yale Art Centre, above, must be modified so as to exclude formality as a basic quality if it is to cover future developments and should more properly read: 1, Memorability as an Image; 2, Clear exhibition of Structure; and 3, Valuation of Materials 'as found.' Remembering that in its fullest sense, is the relationship of parts, and that materials 'as found' are raw materials, we have worked our way back to the quotation which headed this article 'L'Architecture, c'est, avec des Matières Brutes, établir des rapports émovants,' but we have worked our way to this point through such an awareness of history and its uses that we see that The New Brutalism, if it is architecture in the grand sense of Le Corbusier's definition, is also architecture of our time and not of his, nor of Lubetkin's, nor of the times of the Masters of the past. Even if it were true that the Brutalists speak only to one another, the fact that they have stopped speaking to Mansart, to Palladio and to Alberti would make The New Brutalism, even in its more private sense, a major contribution to the architecture of today.

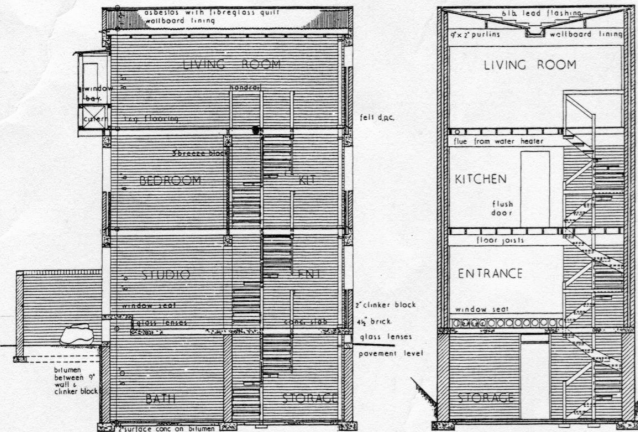
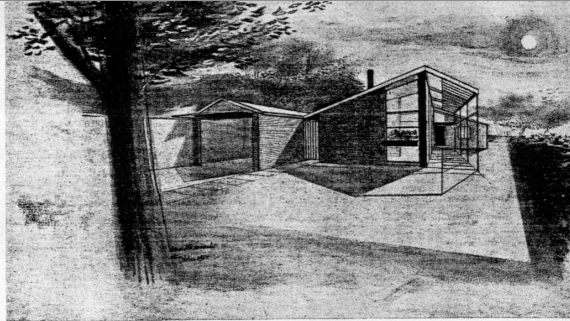
*This analogy could probably be rendered epistemologically strict—both beauty and geometry, hitherto regarded as ultimate properties of the cosmos, now appear as linguistically refined special cases of more generalized concepts reached only through immense sophistication. Once this state of sophistication has been achieved, and the new concept digested, it suddenly appears so back-entrance to topology without using the highly complex mathematics involved, the reader could not do better than acquire a copy of *Astounding Science Fiction* for July, 1954.

**From a reverence for materials
to town planning and back again**

owners themselves. Roof rafters at maximum spacings with asbestos sheet at 15 deg. (end and side laps of sheeting sealed because of low degree pitch). Asbestos sheeting laid on felt on fibreglass quilting. Underside of rafters covered with insulation board distempred. Floors thermo-plastic tiles. All wiring exposed with ceiling pull switches throughout (apart from power points) to avoid vertical drops as far as possible. Windows softwood painted.

A large automatic solid fuel boiler is to be installed in the beginning, and the layout of full central heating is to be planned to allow for its installation in the future. The boiler will provide hot water only at first. Immediate room heating will be provided by an open fire in the living room, and a slow combustion stove in the study.

Perspective view of house in north London by L. Manasseh & Partners.



Above: Sections (scale 16 ft. = 1 in.). Below: plans and elevations (Scale 24 ft. = 1 in.)

HOUSE IN SOHO, LONDON

Alison and Peter Smithson

'The attempt was made to build in Central London, and failed because of difficulty with adjoining owners. It seemed that a series of Trusts held the surrounding land (all bombed) but it turned out to be one man who intended to build kitchens to the left, W.C.'s to the right and restaurants to the rear—this contract was about to be signed after nine months' work.

On the normal city site costing between 15s. and 25s. per sq. ft. one can apparently do little different from the Georgian, but it was considered that a different internal order must be visualised. The air and sunlight of the attics in the daytime suggests that living quarters should be up top, with the bathroom in the cool of the dim basement.

It was decided to have no finishes at all internally—the building being a combination of shelter and environment.

Bare concrete, brickwork and wood. The difficulty of unceiled rooms was satisfactorily overcome by the disposition of rooms which were also placed high up or low down according to light-sunlight desired.

Brickwork may suggest a blue or double burnt or coloured pointing; but the arbitrary use of colour and texture was not conformed with, and common bricks with struck joints were intended. The bars and colour variation have some sort of natural tension when laid by a good bricklayer.

In fact, had this been built it would have been the first exponent of the "new brutalism" in England, as the preamble to the specification shows: "It is our intention in this building to have the structure exposed entirely, without internal finishes wherever practicable. The Contractor should aim at a high standard of basic construction as in a small warehouse." P.D.S.

Erratum: The four houses shown above were inadvertently incorrectly listed in the contents on the front cover of last month's issue of "A.D."













**What about the Banham
hypothesis?**

Although this article was published first in April 1965 in *Art in America*, and subsequently in a reworked version in *Clio*, it is central theme has not yet penetrated the thought processes of architects either in England or the rest of the world. We are therefore, with kind permission, re-publishing it; convinced that it will stir the theorists of architecture—already it has set off Martin Pawley who commented on it in *The Time House* (AD 806, p. 38), which in turn provoked Reynier Banham's reply (see AD 1186, p. AD3). Their controversy is more fully engaged in *Meaning in architecture*—to be published this month by Barrie and Rockliffe—in which both articles are reprinted.

A home is not a house

Reynier Banham

Illustrations: François Dallegre

When your house contains such a complex of piping, fuses, ducts, wires, lights, inlets, outlets, ovens, sinks, refuse disposers, TV, radio-steros, antennae, conduits, freezers, heaters—when it contains so many services that the hardware could stand up by itself without any assistance from the house, why have a house to hold it up? When the cost of all this tackle is half of the total outlay (or more, as it often is) what is the house doing except concealing your mechanical pueria from the stares of folk on the sidewalk? Once or twice recently there have been buildings where the public was genuinely confused about what was mechanical services, what was structure—many visitors to Philadelphia take quite a time to work out that the floors of Louis Kahn's laboratory towers are not supported by the flanking brick duct boxes, when they have worked it out, they are inclined to wonder if it was worth all the trouble of piping them an independent supporting structure.

No doubt about it, a great deal of the attention captured by those kids (often as show—and if, in the end, it fails to do so convincingly, the psychological importance of the gesture remains, at least in the eyes of his fellow architects. Services are a topic on which architectural practice has alternated despondently between the brazen and the coy—there was the grand old Leitch-angle period, when every ceiling was a mess of gaily painted entrails, as in the council chambers of the UK building, and there have been fits of publicity when even the most innocent anatomical details have been hurriedly veiled with a suspended ceiling.

Basically, there are two reasons for all this blowing hot and cold (if you will excuse the air conditioning industry's oldest working pun). The first is that mechanical services are too new to have been absorbed into the proverbial wisdom of the profession: none of the great signposts—Form Follows Function, accuse a structure, Firmness Commodity and Delight, Truth to Materials, *Wang im Mehr*—is much use in coping with the mechanical invasion. The nearest thing, in a significantly negative way, is Le Corbusier's *pour l'edoux, c'est un fait—pas de lube*, which seems to be gaining proverbial-type currency as the expression of a profound nostalgia for the golden age before piping set in.

The second reason is that the mechanical invasion is a fact, and architects—especially American architects—sense that it is a cultural threat to their position in the world. American architects are certainly right to feel this, because their professional speciality, the art of creating monumental spaces, has never been securely established. It remains a transplant from an older culture and architects in America are constantly harking back to that culture. The generation of Stanford White and Louis Sullivan were prone to behave like emigres from France, Frank Lloyd Wright was apt to take cover behind sentimental Teutonisms (the Leder Heister, the big boys of the Thirties and Forties came from Aachen and Berlin anyhow, the pacemakers of the Fifties and Sixties are men of international culture like Charles Eames and Philip Johnson, and so too, in many ways, are the coming men of today, like Norman Foster).

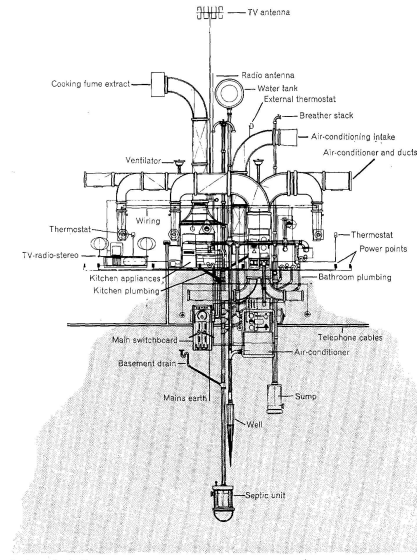
Left to their own devices, Americans do not monumentalise or make architecture. From the Cape Cod cottage, through the balloon frame to the perfection of permanently plated aluminium siding with embossed wood-graining, they have tended to build a brick chimney and lean a collection of shacks against it. When Geoff Conlin wrote (in *The Weather-Conditioned House*) that a house is nothing but a hollow shell... a shell is all a house or any structure in which human beings live and work, really is. And most shells in nature are extraordinarily inefficient barriers to cold and heat... he was expressing an extremely American view, backed by a long-established grass-roots tradition.

And since that tradition agrees with him that the American hollow shell is such an inefficient heat barrier, Americans have always been prepared to pump more heat, light and power into their shelters than have other peoples. America's monumental space is, I suppose, the great outdoors—the porch, the terrace, Whitman's rail-traced plains, Kerouac's infinite road, and now, the Great Up There. Even within the house, Americans rapidly learned to dispense with the partitions that Europeans need to keep space architectural and within bounds, and long before Wright began blundering through the walls that subdivided polite architecture into living room, games room, card room, gun room, etc., humbler Americans

had been slipping into a way of life adapted to informally planned interiors that were, effectively, large single spaces.

Now, large single volumes wrapped in filmy shells have to be lighted and heated in a manner quite different and more generous than the cubicular interiors of the European tradition around which the concept of domestic architecture first crystallized. Right from the start, from the Franklin stove and the kerosene lamp, the American interior has had to be better serviced if it was to support a civilized culture, and this is one of the reasons that the US has been the forcing ground of mechanical services in building—so if services are to be felt anywhere as a threat to architecture, it should be in America.

The plumber is the quartermaster of American culture, wrote Adolf Loos, father of all European platitudes about the superiority of US plumbing. He knew what he was talking about; his brief visit to the States in the Nineties convinced him that the outstanding virtue of the American way of life were its informally too neat to wear a top hat to call on local officials) and its cleanliness—which was bound to be noticed by a Viennese with as highly developed a sat



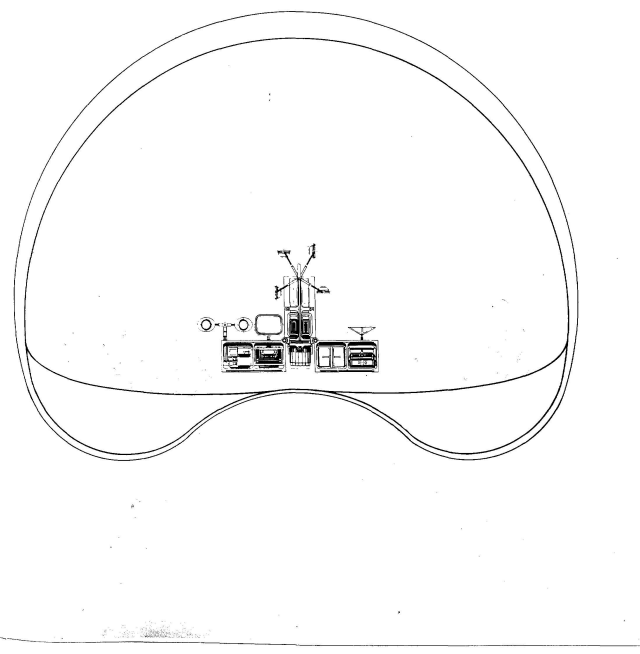
Anatomy of a dwelling
With very little exaggeration, this baroque ensemble of domestic gadgetry epitomizes the intricate complexity of gracious living—in other words, this is the junk

that keeps the pad swinging. The house itself has been snuffed from the drawing, but if mechanical services continue to accumulate at this rate it may in fact be possible to do away with houses.

pretending that the floor-heating does not make the whole area habitable, which it does and in any case, what does he mean by a controlled environment? It is not the same thing as a uniform environment; it is simply an environment suited to what you are going to do next, and whether you build a stone monument, move away from the floor or turn on the air-conditioning, is the same basic human gesture you are making.

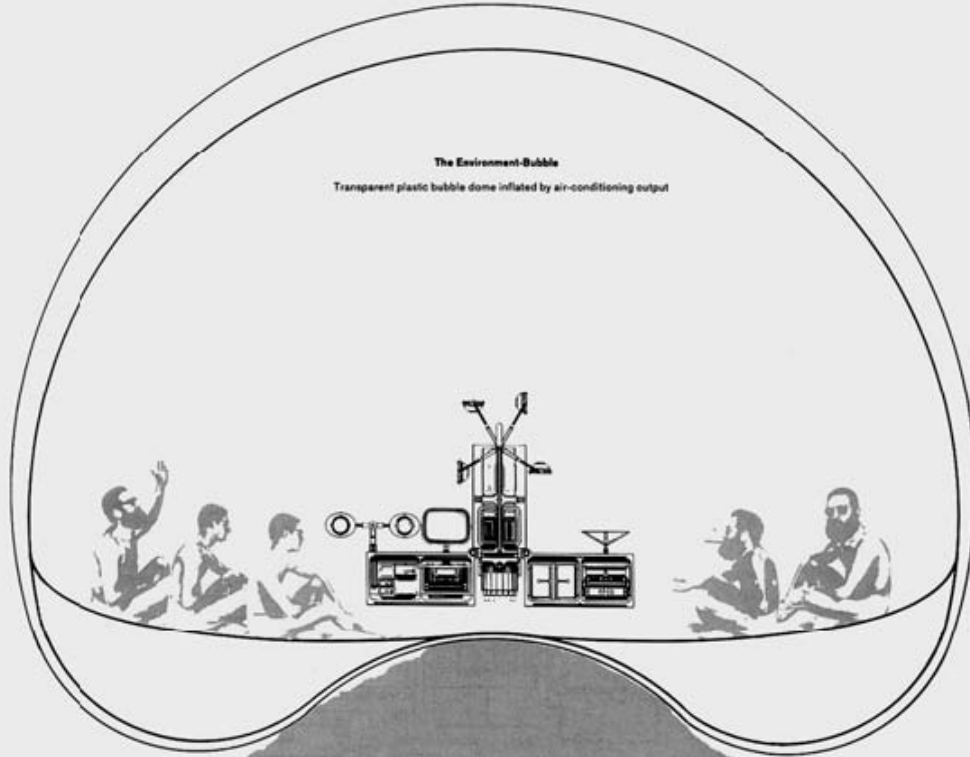
Only the monument is such a generous solution that it astounds me that Americans are still prepared to employ it, except out of some profound sense of insecurity, a persistent inability to rid themselves of those habits of mind they left Europe to escape. In the open-footed society, with its social and personal mobility, its interchangeability of components and personnel, its gadgetry and almost universal expendability, the persistence of architecture-as-monumental-space must appear as evidence of the sentimentalism of the tough.

The environment bubble
In the present state of the environmental art no mechanical device can make the rain go back to Spain; the standard of living package is apt to need some sort of umbrella for emergencies, and it could well be a plastic dome inflated by conditioned air blown out by the package itself.



The Environment-Bubble

Transparent plastic bubble dome inflated by air-conditioning output







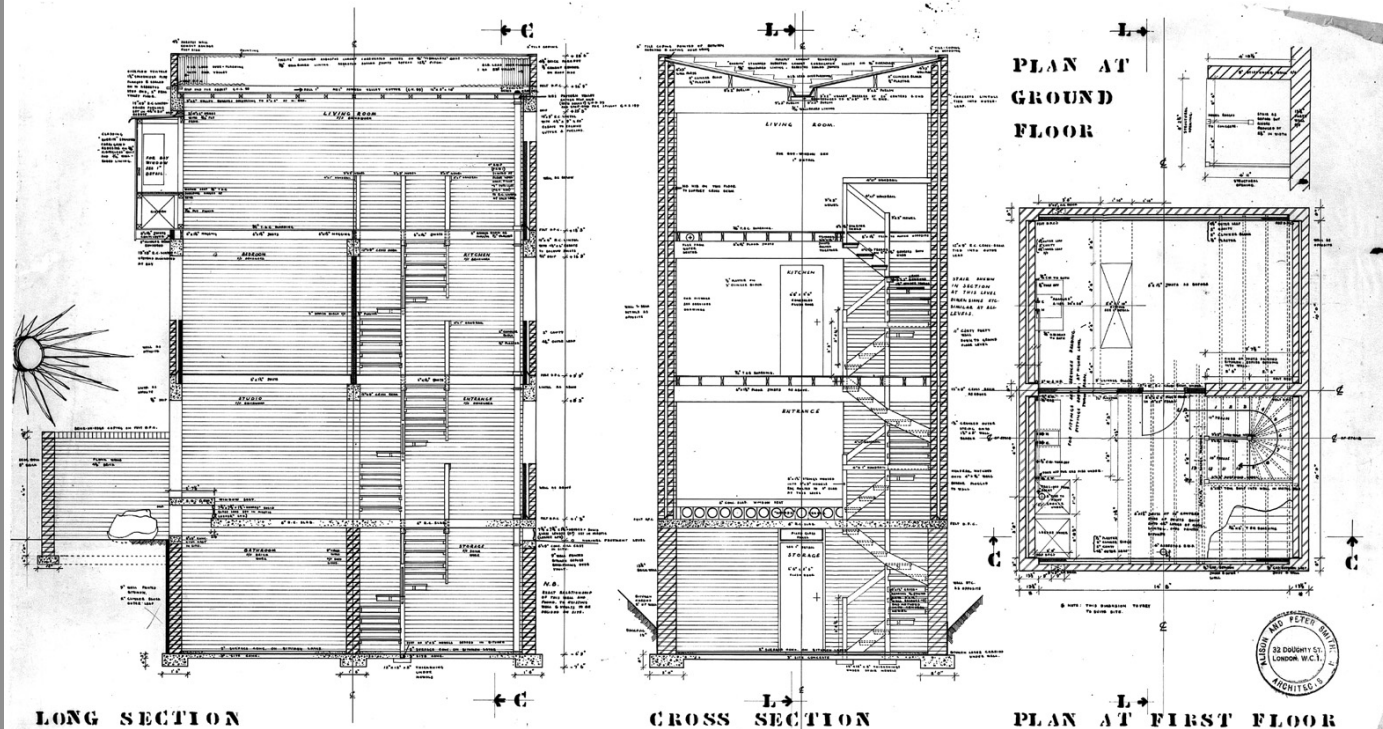


SOURCES

Reference: 406 for 'A' format & left & right



A way of life



LONG SECTION

CROSS SECTION

PLAN AT FIRST FLOOR

STAIRCASE $\frac{1}{2}$ "







