

It was understandable that the Conservationists should be surprised.

In 1994, the year of the Judge's completion, I was invited to the First Year to act as the External Architectural Examiner at the Cambridge Faculty. I fell asleep three times during the Professors' Presentation of their Student's work. I was, it is true, heavily stressed by my Cambridge project - which was visible from the windows of the Faculty of Architecture. But what really tired me was the sight of anyone with a natural bent for Architecture being ejected by an intellectual regime that re-heated ideas that had not developed since their invention, a century ago, during the collapsing Mittel-Europa Ancien Regime cultures of Austria and Germany.

All building materials were reduced to a universal 'stuff'.

Space was de-contextualised.

The Ground, or even, if you like, the Earth, became 'level zero'. I am always tempted to leave my mark on elevators that use this terminology - just to show we are humans, not robots. Anyone who expressed an 'innocent' interest in the ornament, decoration, pattern or colour, found in all Architectures except that of the late 20C, was made to feel as if (usually she) had uttered an obscenity. The objects of attention were 'space, light, surface, texture and so on (one knows the flatulent incantation by heart)'. The idea was to massage these into improbable shapes and accompany this with wads of solipsistic text. It was an exercise to fit the young architect to his future fate - which was to perceive a senseless design solution and garb it in the au-courant 'look'.

What would the graduates of such Academies know of how to combine new and old Architectures so that both conversed with ease and understanding?

And how would they so engineer it that the Architect of the 'Old', were he to return to this day, would not be aghast at the total rejection of everything he and the thousands of Architects before him had struggled to understand and effect? How could these new Graduates so design their work that the Old Architect would, instead, be filled with envy for us who build anew? For that is the only ambition which can be acceptable to a cultured and civilised Modernity.

While dozing I overheard the Professors discussing XX. their most brilliant pupil. "XX", they said, "would, in his second year, probably study the 'presence of absence'. Then in the third year, (leading to his BA), he would 'probably commit suicide'.

The Concrete Industry, keen that infant Architects should learn about cement and suchlike arcana, commissioned the Cambridge Martin Centre, on a budget of £250,000, to put together a Teaching Pack of texts, slides and videos. It so happened that the Judge project was half-built when all the Professors who had the responsibility for teaching about 'concrete' came down to Cambridge to collect this teaching-pack, compare notes, and so on. The C&CA asked me to take the party over the Judge, which was 3/4 built, and give a talk on JOA's coloured and patterned concretes.



FA-TB* Green 'New Earth' through-colour concrete. Blue 'air-sea' through-colour concrete inlaid with 15mm-thick white concrete 'flying raft, Spirals of Janus. Indigo 'colour of shadow (could be darker) microporous painted wood windows set into green-painted wood shiplap. Polyester-coated mullion and light shelves - white above and red below. Limestone concrete window sill to reflect light inwards. 'Cancelli' pattern stock brick spandrel. Dark grey concrete capital clear lacquered to go a 'deep-space' black.



A delivery of through-colour blue 'cyma-reversa' units and through-colour red balcony 'Cancelli' spandrels, waiting to be hoisted into place. I call this material 'photolithic'. It combines the qualities of the pure, ethereal, light (phos) that is chromaticity, with those of dark matter (lithos) which is solid, heavy, mass. The ancient distinction between surface and body, appearance and reality, is now, by this technology, abolished.

*FA-TB=From Above To Below

*FB-TA=From Below To Above

After our return from Site, over sandwiches, it became apparent that **nothing of the sort JOA had developed, and which had been written up, for many years, in the Concrete Journal, was in their new 'pack'.** This 'teaching aid' arrested the surface treatment of concrete in the 1960's when people (like the late American Architect, Paul Rudolph, inventor of the **truly grim Architecture Faculty Building at Yale, which the students had once tried to destroy by fire**), would cast its grey surface into thin, projecting ribs, these would then be **smashed off with a pneumatic hammer.** This gave the surface a more **'arty' look,** like the wobbly lines drawn on the thick paper of watercolourists.



One of the Professors asked: "But John, how do you choose your colours and patterns?"

It was a fair question. I knew that my answer would leave him even more even confused. **Concrete is an entirely artificial material.** This is why the French like it. Its physiognomy is, today, becoming seriously interesting with **concrete that springs like steel,** and so on. One can not play the old Nordic trick on concrete, as one can with wood or stone, and expose its raw surface so as to reveal its 'True Nature'. **Raw cement looks like ashes.** This is because cement is the pulverised cinders of limestone and clay that have been burnt at 1,200°C. **It is a blankness on which the designer must 'write'.** But my own Profession, which reaches its most doctrinaire and pig-headed in its 'high-level' Journals and Academies, had tabooed the study of colour, pattern, decoration and ornament for going-on 100 years. **These very intelligent people knew no properly arguable reason, for choosing one pattern, or one colour, over another - let alone many such, all interlocking, conversing and adding-up to a complex whole greater than its component (merely coloured and patterned) parts. They were not only ignorant of these matters. They observed the taboo upon discovering anything about them with a religious scrupulousity.**

Chastened, I gave an inadequate reply.

Most Schools of Architecture could be closed **without ill-effect on the design of the human livespace.** They **only damage their pupils.** But what would replace them? Faculties of 'construction management' are the most likely candidate. **It is not the Schools that are defective, but their denial of an 'architectural culture'** that most of their Professors have failed to study in sufficient depth to enable them to **decipher it** to the point of passing it on in a way that is **useful to the present and the future.**

Several generations of brilliantly clever, but **iconically illiterate,** Professors have now been school-trained.

They authenticate this achievement by obliging each new cohort of students to join them in their proud ignorance. Their graduates emerge knowing nothing of how ideas can be enflashed by the boxy constructions erected by the despised 'Practitioners', or active exponents of their professed medium; They know even less of what the public expects of it.

This polychrome surface should have inscribed the 26M (80'0") high columns of the Gallery proper. The Gallery was, after all, the 'occluded temple' of Alberti which, because of the mediaeval tightness of central Cambridge's narrow streets, was only visible from afar, over the Classical Neo-Grec temples and campus greens of Downing College.

Lunching with its Master, I was relieved to hear that he would not object to the height of my Gallery, which was necessary to cross-ventilate its top as well as to admit a little of the evening light. His only stipulation was that it would sport no crop of silvered exhaust vents, like the biochemistry block next door. I gathered that he, also, was not an enthusiast of the 'High-Tech' version of Modernity. Nevertheless, my nerve failed me and these patterns, which should have snaked dizzily up the biggest columns in Britain, slid down to cower in this tiny street. They remain entirely unknown to 90% of the people who pass down Trumpington Street, and think they know the Judge.

FB-TA An engineering brick (ocean-deep blue) base projects its spandrels. The yellow glazed brick pyramid of the 'fiat lux' is topped by the 'X'-division of day from night, on which floats the green blitzcrete 'raft of twigs' that supports the ashes of the hearth and their inner germ of fire. The hypostylar matrix of the 'extension of airy speech' spreads out over the main fields of the (white Belgian brick) wall as pools of fire and water.*