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Playing Around the Docks Tate and the Architectural Imagination

Tate is not just a modern place, where we exhibit art. It is built within a tradition, the one that had built Liverpool through centuries and will be the cornerstone of the future.

Tate is located in between the arts, a space where you can both admire great art and find yourself within an architectural space of high interest. A building, revolutionary in its era, created with regard to history – non-flammable, open, enthusiastic about Britain’s industrial development and cultural prospective.

Therefore, its place in 21st century is around art and education, things that we view now as the future of the world. We, as the students of the Liverpool School of Architecture, place even more hope in the connections that make each citizen’s life more joyful and, what is more important, more meaningful.

Creating these links allows us to no longer build upon isolated disciplines, but to understand the real value of sharing, discussing and shaping these somehow lost relations, which are strongly rooted within our cultures. United we stand, in the variety of backgrounds we create.

The joint force of distinctive approaches from all around the world resulted in 37 different designs of 37 students from seven countries.

With the guidance of Marco Iuliano, Jane Moscardini, James Jones and Valentino Capelo, as well as Michael Wilford, environmental, structural engineers and workshop technicians we have generated our vision of the society to come, more diverse, equal and open to dialogue. Perhaps, this can be summarized in the beauty of architectural design.

Display at Tate Liverpool by
Liverpool School of Architecture (LSA)
Tate Exchange programme, 9-15 April 2018



Curated by Marco Iuliano
with James Jones and Jane Moscardini
and organised with LSA's students.

Texts: Paulina Keller and Emily March
Students' images: Jian Zhou, Tian Zhaoxi,
Jinghong Li, Shuyi Hao, Bowei Liu, Xinran Li
Stills: Michael Blackwood's *Stirling* (1986)
Stirling's sketch (1982), photograph (above,
1961) and axonometric (poster, 1983)

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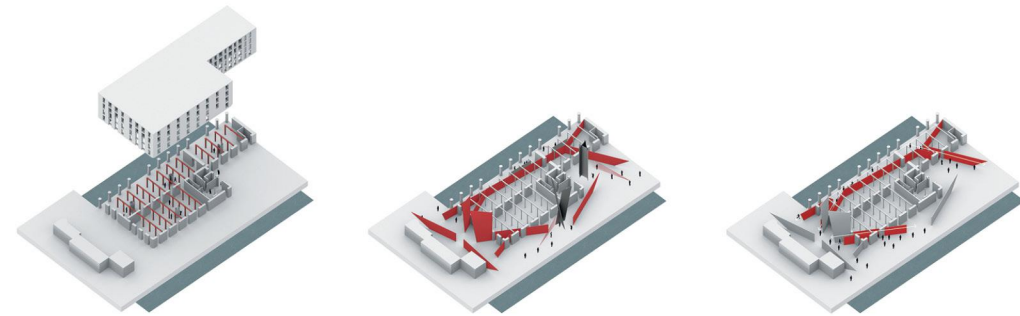
PLAYING AROUND THE DOCKS

In 2018 Tate Liverpool celebrates its 30th anniversary, which is an appropriate moment to reflect on the past, think of the current role of the gallery within the city and establish the goals for the future. No form of art can develop in separation from the rest of the society, as art is the reflection and the identity of its generation. Drawing upon these premises, the University of Liverpool School of Architecture established a collaboration with Tate Liverpool, in order to strengthen the link between academia and society.



Tate and the Architectural Imagination

The decision to establish a 'Tate of the North' was made in the early 1980s following turbulent period in Liverpool's history, that led to huge tension in the local society. Regeneration of the docks and bringing a famous gallery into the city was supposed to raise the spirit of Liverpool and emphasize an important position of the region in the cultural life of England.



James Stirling, Michael Wilford and Associates were formally appointed in 1985 to transform the former warehouse into an art gallery, a project completed in 1988. Although the outcome of their design was successful and the solution they proposed is still working today, the question was raised. Is an architectural process ever finished? 'Playing Around the Docks' display is the result of tracing back the question asked in the past, suggesting new alternatives. All our projects are strictly respectful to the heritage of the listed building and the possibility of continuing the work started by both Jesse Hartley, who designed the Albert Dock, as well as the Stirling, Wilford and Associates new design.

As a part of the partnership with Tate Liverpool, our Studio did research that included the interpretation of the original sketch done by Stirling in 1982, the final built scheme and the place occupied by the Tate within the city. Our task was to provide a new entrance and redesign the gallery. Each student has come up with their own way of how to approach the problem. Some of us excavated, some added a new part and some negotiated the space of the old building.

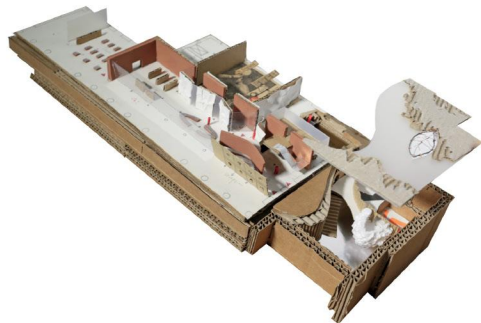
Handmade models of our designs are part of the exhibition and you can test our ideas by placing them into the site model. The interaction with our models is crucial to experience our proposals, but in order to understand why our architecture looks in this particular way, we want to take you through the whole process. All started with the abstract visualisation of Stirling's sketch, site analysis, historical research, experimental models and months of hard work, that led us to produce accurate renders and detailed miniatures.

Sketching

With an ever expanding use of technology, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of hand drawing and sketching as a tool – not just for representing ideas, but also exploring them, translating the image in the mind to the physical world. Paul Laseau said that “sketching is a continuing source of learning rather than a string of performances”. The act of putting pen to paper enables us to observe, analyse and understand space.

Early Concepts

The brief for a project is very specific question, since this specific combination of time and place will only occur once. Therefore, for the architect, the question is: what could possibly be imagined for this site? We must repeatedly push ourselves to imagine and reimagine the future – perhaps site conditions and constraints, the client, technology, heritage or even a particular material can drive the design. However, it is through the production of physical models, sketches and research that we negotiate and explore these possibilities, concluding with one architectural answer. As you can see around you, each answer differs greatly from one student to the next.



Craft a Model

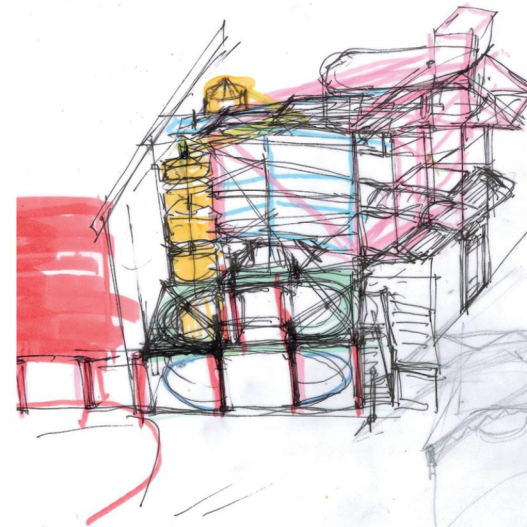
- Modelling is a tool. It is the equivalent of sketching but in the physical world.
- We used models in order to study different solutions to interpret the brief, define the masses and the voids of the project, and explore space, light, atmosphere, scale and proportion.
- Models are incredibly useful devices to observe, analyse and improve how the three dimensional volumes of the design relate with the context, how does the new interact with the existing warehouse.

Digital Representations

- Digital resources are necessary instruments to express and narrate the design results, but also the different stages of the project.
- Technology allows powerful explorations and engages people, but it is fundamental for designers to combine the digital skills within the design process in a coherent way.
- The digital representations of our projects stretch from the first phases of analysis, to the development of concepts through to the final visualisations.

The Architect's Answer

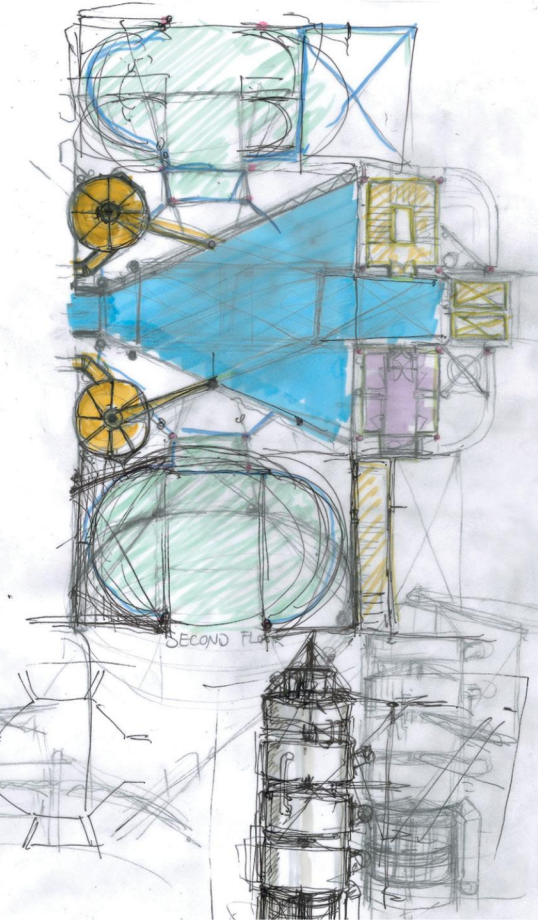
This section has been conceived especially for the display. It aims to show different architectural propositions. You can take a model and insert it into the Albert Dock site-model. How is the original Tate Liverpool changed by this addition? What are the new relationships created? What would the new space feel like? Find your favourite and check the solution in the real context.

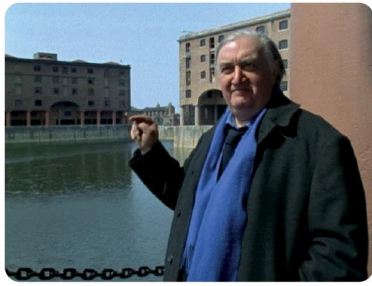


Tate Architecture Studio

Marco Iuliano (lead), Valentino Capelo, James Jones, Jane Moscardini.
Visiting Professor: Michael Wilford

Students: Jian Zhou, Ruihui Zhang, Jiaxin Yun, Bei Sin Yong, Chaohui Yang, Yiyin Xu, Zheng Wei, Zhe Wang, Xindi Wang, Xin Wang, Shiwen Wang, Chengcheng Wang, Alicia Tymon-McEwan, Zhaoxi Tian, Katerina Stefelova, Nur Alia Nadia Binti Raub, Lang Qin, Hongyu Pan, Nuramirah Binti Mohd Yunos, Kudzai Matsvai, Emily March, Fangzhou Luo, Yee Fui Liu, Tzi Kin Liu, Bowei Liu, Yuchun Lin, Kun Liang, Xinran Li, Jinghong Li, Xin Hui Rachel Lee, Paulina Keller, Kate Johnstone, Emily Hughes, Anna Harris, Shuyi Hao, Wee Kee Goh, Thomas Gardner.





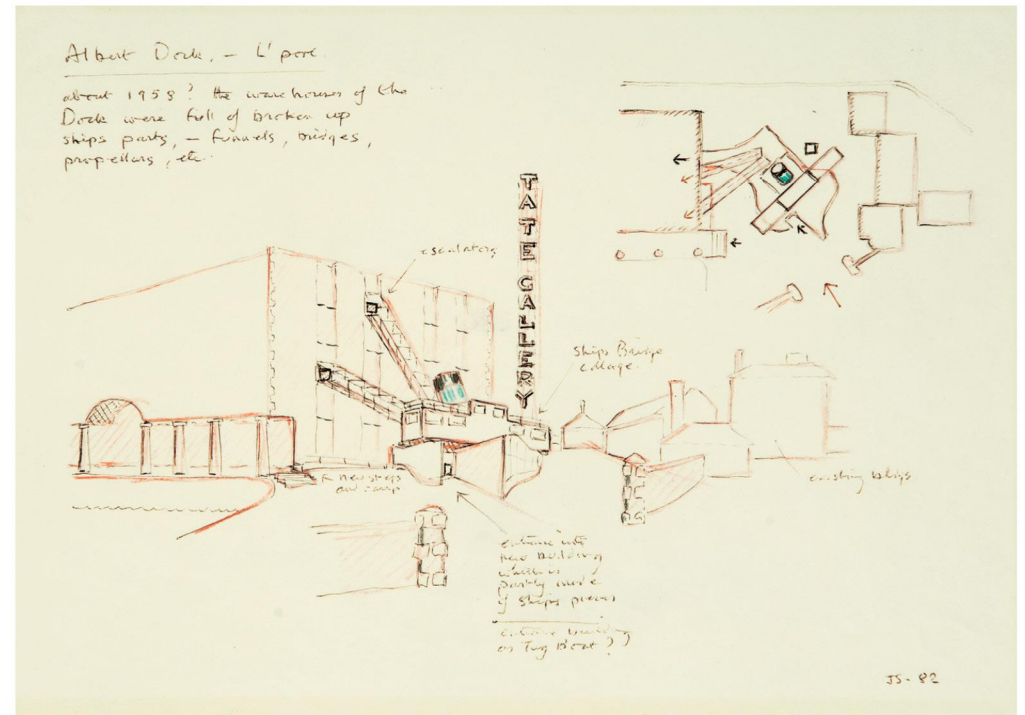
James Stirling in Michael Blackwood's *Stirling* (1986)

My father was a marine engineer on a ship, which meant that he was a long time away from home. His ship, every two or three months, would come sailing in and out of Liverpool, then he'd be on a leave for two or three weeks, I guess. So a lot of my kind of visits to my father were involved with playing around the dockland in Liverpool and it seemed to me that, the kind of, the ships and the docks and the river crowded with ships, was the background which I most easily remember. So it was an amazing kind of landscape to grow up in. It was not like hills and dales or rivers and fields – it was a great horizontal plane of water and then an urban dockland with huge objects around. It was only later on when I read *Towards a New Architecture* by Corbusier that I realized he had this fascination for marine ships that I had as a small boy in short trousers.

Now it's empty, but the Albert Dock is being made into a Tate Gallery of the North of England – an extension of a Tate Gallery in London. It's built like an Italian piazza, quite formal around a perfectly formal square, but the square is not for walking, it's for sailing, where the ships come in. And around the square you have these colonnades. My first recollection to this dock, when I was about 6 or 7 years old when I used to come through these docks and my friends and I used to play around these colonnades. Then there were magical places, full of dark skinned gentlemen loading off barrels, people from all over the world.

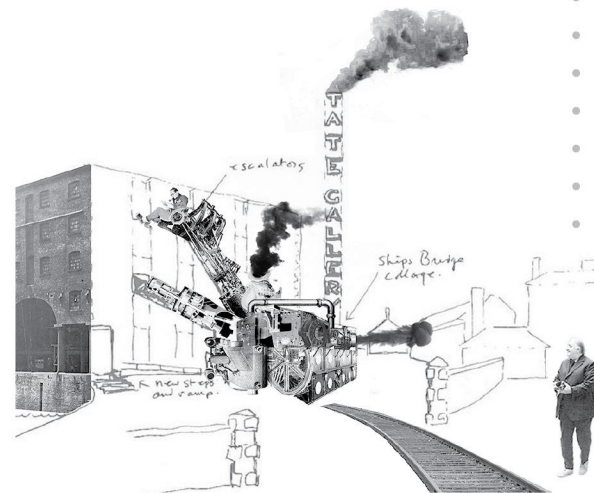
I went to school in Liverpool, I went – in retrospect I think – to a rather progressive school, as a matter of fact, it was the same school sequence exactly as John Lennon had, a decade or more, later. I mean, I went to the same elementary school, the same high school and the same art school and it always kind of amused me to think that he probably had the same teachers in these schools that I did.

I grew up with the beginning of the war, I was in fact called up to the army at 17 and I was in the last two years of the war. And it wasn't until after I came out of the army, where I was wounded and came out, that I suddenly found out that I was eligible for an ex-service grant, so I could go to university which had never been in a plan of my parents or a thought in my head, so I had to make my mind up and that's when I made a decision to study architecture, had to make a decision in a couple of days. So, I went to Architecture School in Liverpool.



The 1980s Conversion

Around the docks of Liverpool, James Stirling observed scattered parts from ships amongst the derelict warehouses. In 1982 he sketched the new Tate Liverpool and explored an ambitious and iconic new entrance (image above). He transformed the melancholic grandeur of scattered



- nautical parts and the traces of the docks' industrial past into a design that acknowledges this heritage in a positive way – literally collaging the old into the new gallery, immortalising it in history.
- After the ambitious sketch idea was rejected by the conservationist lobby and the question of land ownership, which would have taken a long time to resolve, Stirling and Wilford realised a different scheme, completed in 1988. They made only the most delicate of interventions to allow for the gallery to exist within the fabric of the original warehouse, designed by Jesse Hartley and opened formally in 1846 by Prince Albert. The junctions between materials are pragmatic and direct. Plaster meets stone and brick with no ornamentation, one of the very few subtle details included were the brass portholes around the bases of the columns – harking back to the nautical themes of the site and of the initial sketch.

James Stirling, Tate Liverpool (up-view (top floor), 1983, CCA, Montreal)

