

# THE KÖLN MUSEUM

## IMAGERY AND IMAGING IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF JAMES STIRLING

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## ESSAY 124/08

JAMES STIRLING  
WALLRAF RICHARTZ MUSEUM  
COLOGNE  
AXONOMETRIC VIEW  
COLLAGE

The 1970s museum projects of James Stirling provide the opportunity to explore a design process intended to design a building as a combination of fragments that quote historical buildings or typologies along a route. While the collection of spaces of the unbuilt museum for Cologne indirectly reveals Stirling's own architectural imagery almost in a chronological sense, the drawings produced

to present the competition entry in 1974 are anything but explicit and ask the reader to collaborate to decipher the architectural contents. This apparent contradiction is here analyzed and discussed in the key provided by Stirling's peculiar interest in drawing, his office organization, and the agency Leon Krier had in it while preparing the drawings for the first monograph on the Scottish architect.

## INTRODUCTION

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the architect Luigi Canina was asked to design the land purchased in Rome by the Borghese family between via Flaminia and their villa and garden. He designed three propylaea in a linear sequence – Greek-Doric at the entrance, Egyptian, and Roman. Built with simple stuccoed walls, the propylaea appear as full-scale models that recall the tradition of the ‘architectural collection’ inaugurated by the Emperor Adriano. Such an archaeological program is unusual for the Roman context, where ancient ruins and marbles were rather reused and resemantised and severs the relationship with the garden, which results a sort of architectural park inspired by the English picturesque taste (Consoli & Pasquali, 2005). Moreover, the chronological sequence of the pavilions built along a route and the archaeological interests of Canina reveal an explicit historiographical and didactic intent that indirectly materialises a part of the architects’ imagery that was generally confined to books and drawings.

More than a century later, the ‘revisionary modernist’ James Stirling (1926-1992), together with his associated Michael Wilford, designed three museums in Germany in which he dispensed his personal historical and architectural imagery. Stirling has been a worldwide known Scottish architect, awarded with a Pritzker Price in 1981. His architectural projects and buildings were widely celebrated and the subject of endless studies. In particular, the Wallraf Richartz Museum for Cologne, designed in 1974 and here analysed, has been described and discussed in journals (*Un museo per Colonia*, 1976; *Stirling in Germany*, 1976; Kreis, 1977) and monographs (Arnell & Bickford, 1984; Dal Co & Muirhead, 1990) that were triggered by the subsequent win of the Stuttgart museum competition.

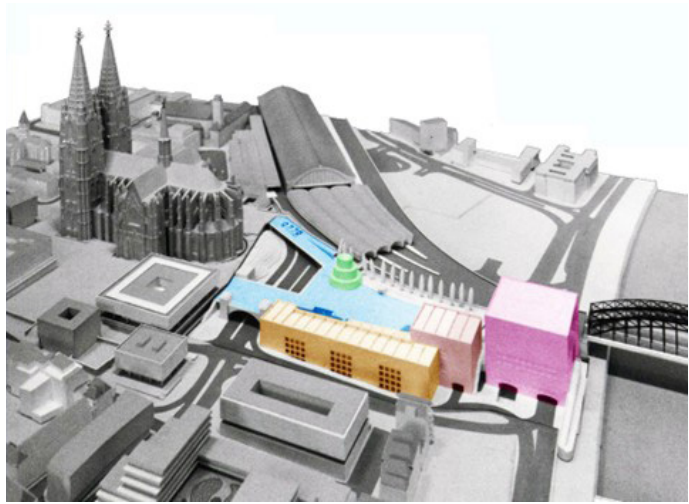
After his death in 1992, scholars have focused on his archive (Vidler, 2010), the memories of partners and collaborators (Jim and I, 1992; Baker, 2011), and the hidden potential of his unrealized projects<sup>1</sup>. Such a research promoted an ex-

ploration of his cultural background, partially revealed by his famous *Black Notebook*, and personality (Grafe et al., 2009; Reeser Lawrence, 2013), eventually remarking the centrality of Leon Krier's agency in Stirling's office in the early 1970s.

A central element of his architecture is the architectural promenade. Stirling's attention to the functional and narrative potential of circulation, possibly triggered also by his love for cinema (Stirling & Morteo, 1992), can already be traced in the Civic Centre he had designed as a degree thesis, whose plans are enriched with marks that establish preferential itineraries, perspective views, and travel times (Vidler, 2010); and in the competition entry for the University of Sheffield (1953), which externalises the volumes of the circulation system. After the Constructivist-inspired university buildings of the 1960s, Stirling gave the circulation a more intimate and human dimension, adopting the picturesque curved perspectives that reveal the destination little by little, both in the Derby Civic Center (1970) and the Olivetti buildings (1969-1972). Most of these projects reveal a deep interest in Le Corbusier, to whom he had dedicated travels and articles (Stirling, 1955; 1956), in his concept of *promenade architecturale*, but also in the mechanical analogy of the *machine-à-habiter* and the combinatorial logic of the competition for the United Nations Building in Geneva. Some of the architectural pieces devoted to human circulation he designed – the glass-wall, the lift, the ramp broken into two opposing flights, the stairs, the entrance portal, the corrugated counter, the canopy, the mushroom pillar, the blowholes and many others – come directly from Le Corbusier's projects, from la Cité de Refuge to La Tourette monastery's chapel – while others from engineering buildings or some of Buckminster Fuller's proposals. This heterogeneous equipment reaches a maturity in the three German museums where it combines with an –intertextual– path connecting fragments of architectural typologies from the past.

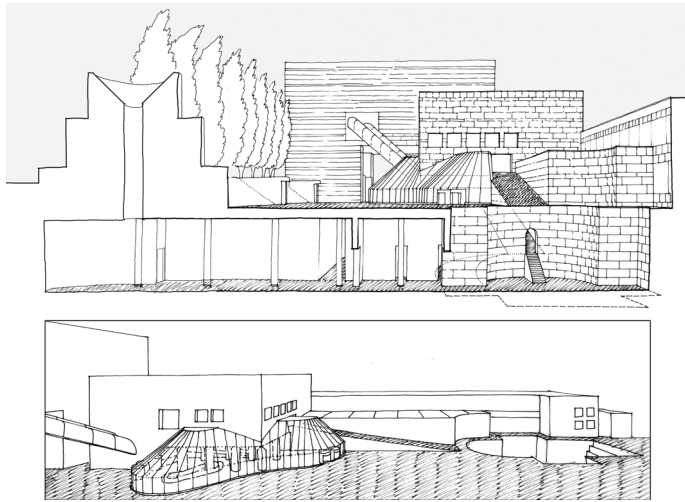
These architectural quotations testify to Stirling's growing interest in the forms of the past and their semantic role,

**Fig. 1** James Stirling's Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne as a combination of five pieces: the Piazza, in blue, the Ziggurat, in green, the Gallery, in orange, the Entrance box, in pink and the Theatre box, in fuchsia, by the bridge (elaboration by the author).



which he discussed in public first in 1974<sup>2</sup>. In Cologne, they serve to answer the contradictory questions of sites complicated by infrastructures and monuments and, in general, of a national cultural identity under reconstruction. However, neither the breadth of the architectural imagery involved, nor the attention to the spatial experience of the visitors seems to find an echo in the project drawings of the museum for Cologne. Orthogonal projections and axonometric views prevail; the use of perspective, which is expected when a promenade is designed, is occasional, while the model is rather conventional. Stirling's drawings are essential, purely linear, achromatic. As Banham wrote, they lack of "ingratiating qualities – colour, texture, atmosphere, anecdote" (Stirling, 1974b, p. 14). They rather show a neoclassical ascendance that leaves much of the task of interpreting the architectural contents to the reader. Though an explicit reference to the historical references involved in the museum project is missing, the intention to explicit the design process emerges as an innovative communication key. These apparent contradictions fuelled the research behind this article. Through the Cologne museum drawings, some interviews and secondary literature, it investigates Stirling's architectural images and

**Fig. 2** James Stirling's Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne. From top to bottom: Perspective section on the Ziggurat and the church-shape courtyard; perspective view of the Piazza with the Entrance box and the Gallery (sketches by author).

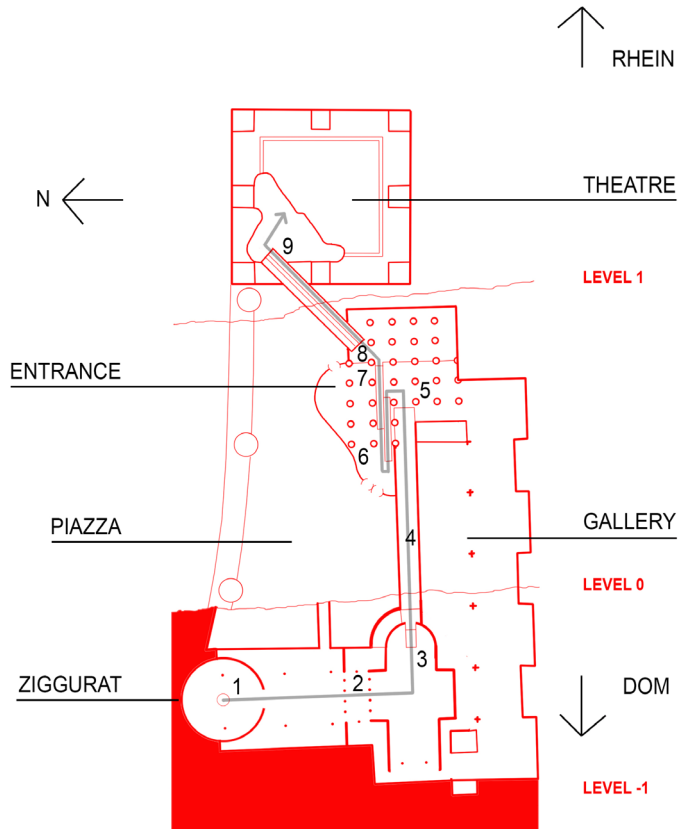


imagery by relating them to the work that Leon Krier carried out in the studio for the preparation of the so-called 'Black Book' (Stirling, 1974a), at a time when a brilliant new phase of Stirling's career and the controversial era of the Postmodern were about to start.

### A MUSEUM FOR COLOGNE

Stirling organized the opaque boxes of the Wallraf Richartz Museum as a geometric landscape to be perceived in speed from the roads and railways that split the articulated site between the Rhine and the huge cathedral somehow survived to the Allies' massive bombing. Some eccentric elements—the external escalators inserted in inclined transparent cylinders, a Ziggurat masking an electrical substation, a waving glass-wall and a long slope—feature the two main boxes—the Entrance and the Theatre, one of the two Propylaea by the Hohenzollernbrücke—and the long body of the Gallery, flanking the Piazza (Figures 1, 2). Unlike the coeval museums for Düsseldorf and Stuttgart, no rotunda here marks the centre of this centrifugal composition.

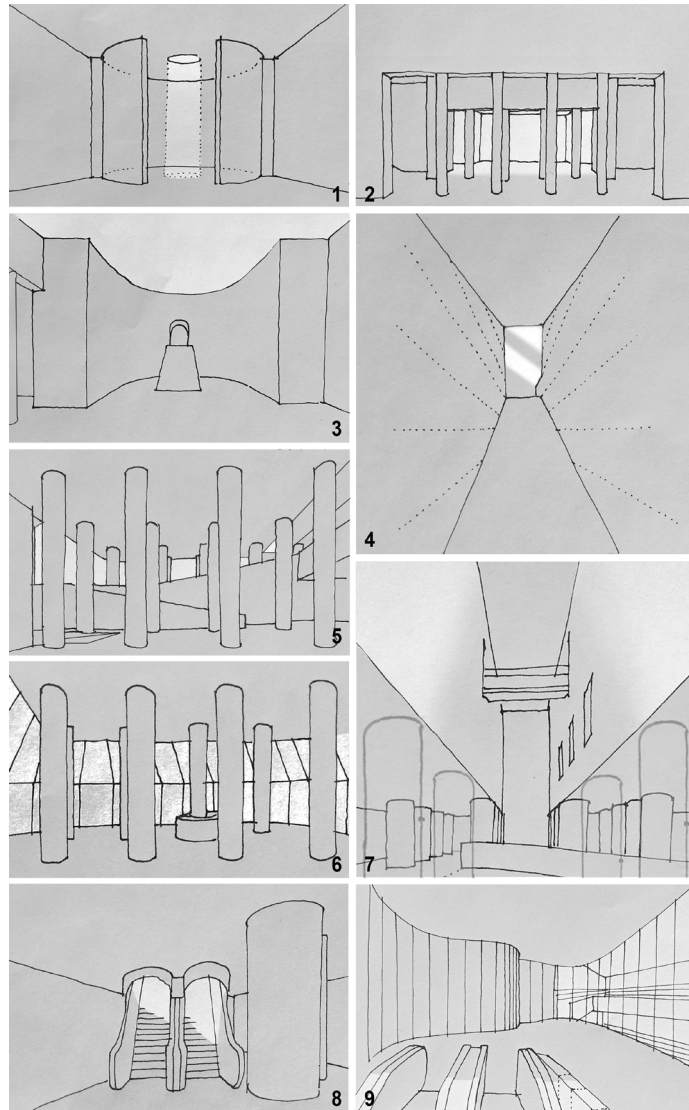
**Fig. 3** James Stirling's Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne. Diagram plan of the museum with the main route in grey along the three main levels. Numbering referring to Figure 4 (drawing by the author).



The main route (Figure 3) starts from the underground car park to access the art gallery from below. After a cylindrical hall beneath the Ziggurat, marked by a light-well, visitors are attracted by light coming from the sculpture courtyard carved into the upper square. Two rows of four free columns modulate the access to the cross church-shaped court. A staircase in the 'apse' leads us to a 50 meters long straight ramp raising between two stone walls up to the vast hypostyle foyer in the Entrance box. Thirty-two massive circular columns are here arranged on a square grid. As distant as twice their 120 centimetres wide diameter, they impose exclusive orthogonal views and disorient us. On the left, we hardly find the second ramp, which leads us towards the light coming from the upper level. Here the corner of the box opens outwards

through a weaving glazed veranda, which allows access from the main urban level, in direct connection with the public square on the rear of the cathedral. From here a third ramp, flanked by the second, leads to the upper foyer. In general, the sequence of ramps reminds Le Corbusier's Casa Curutchet where the first ramp is enclosed between two walls, the second is leaning against one of the walls and the third seems to

**Fig. 4** James Stirling's Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne. Views of the events along the architectural promenade. 1, Tholos; 2, Temple; 3, Church; 4 Dromos; 5, Hypostyle Hall; 6, Crystal Palace; 7, Cistern; 8, Tubular Escalators; 9, Informal Panorama. Numbering referring to Figure 3 (reconstructive sketches by the author).





float in the void and allows us to overlook both the atrium on the left and the hypostyle hall on the right. Halfway up, we discover that the oppressive ceiling of the foyer here rises and creates a sort of full-height internal canyon, which also cuts the upper offices into two blocks connected by a suspended metal walkway. Like a section, this view reveals all the internal floors in a sort of Piranesian engraving. While ascending, we understand that lifts and ramps are devices for moving not only in space but also in time, from the darkness of the rupestrian habitat to the light of skyscrapers. After an archaic Tholos, a Greek Temple, a cross-shape Church, an Etruscan *dromos*, an Egyptian hypostyle hall, a Roman cistern suggested by the full-height glimpse, we find glimpses of modernity with the glass-and-iron wall beyond the second foyer on the upper gallery. Encapsulated in translucent tubes quoting the Centre Pompidou or Paul Andreu's Terminal of Paris Airport, a pair of escalators connect the cubes and offer us a sudden view of the city skyline. They lead us into an informal hall closed by curved walls and watching over the belly of the theatre, suspended over a round public square open to the river, where the gaze is finally free to wander (Figure 4).

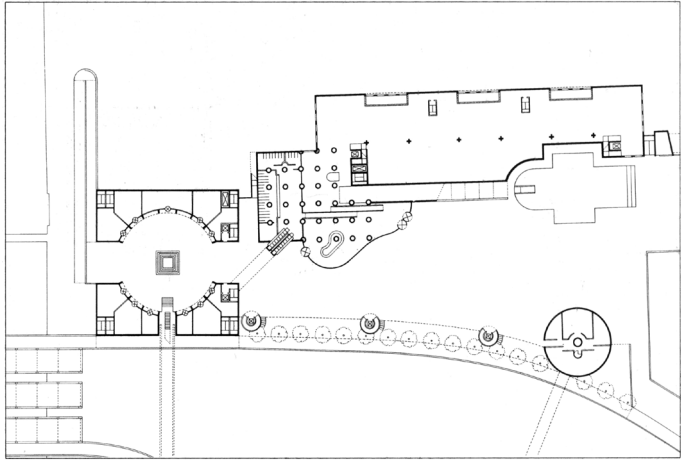
The museum composition follows an additive and combinatorial process that reflects the picturesque 19<sup>th</sup> century culture, the practice of industrial assembly and also the surrealist approach of the historical avant-gardes. While the coeval museums for Düsseldorf and Stuttgart had irregular sites and historical layers that could orient Stirling's picturesque approach, in the case of Cologne he arranged a sort of artificial historical layering. The result may recall Disneyland or Colin Rowe's Collage City seen through the surrealist gaze of the *cadavre exquis*. Yet, the historical pieces find their place in a modest and cultured way. The fragments are subject of a careful process of connection, homogenization and formal reinterpretation and result as colonised and re-functionalised ruins, like Diocletian's palace in Split. These are not fragments framed and cited to evoke noble origins –Renaissance– or to be historicised –18<sup>th</sup> century– nor are

they combinations of pieces useful for constructing original eclectic forms – 19<sup>th</sup> century. Stirling is rather addressed to a didactic interpretation of architecture in a figurative and phenomenological key, useful for linking and updating spatial experiences inherited from the past or to access the semantic reservoir of forms censored by the Modern Movement. This makes it possible to stage the fiction of a layered architecture built in different eras, which basically belongs to the DNA of Cologne – and of Rome, of course.

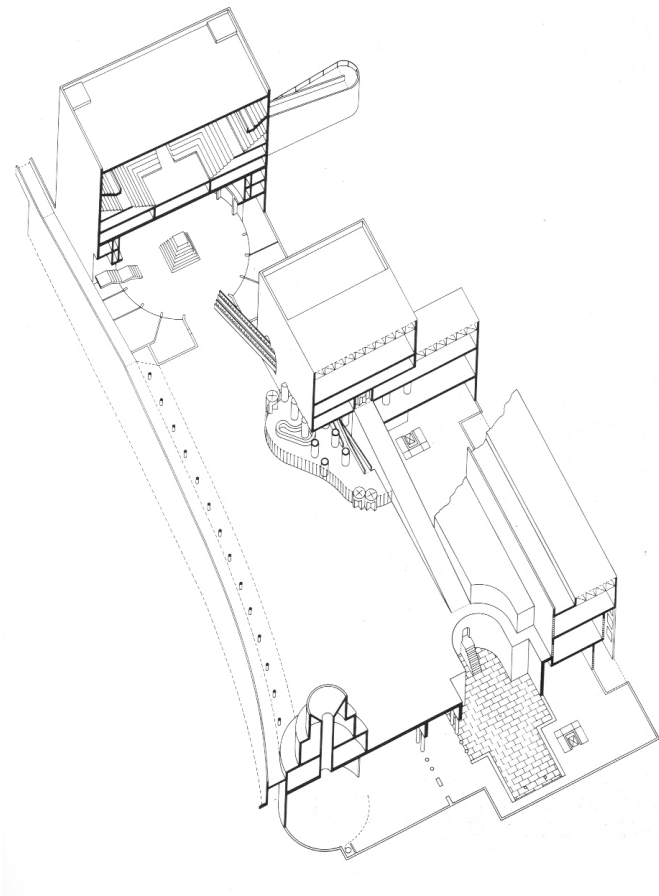
### COMMUNICATING PROJECT AND PROCESS

Most of the original drawings of Stirling's project for the Wallraf Richartz Museum are today conserved at Montreal<sup>3</sup>. Among the 167 survived drawings, there are two master plans –one with the shadows– 11 general plans, at least 7 sections, three general axonometric views, three axonometric sections, an axonometric detail. Added to these, some doodles and a curious axonometric sketch show the volumetric elements of the circulation. The promenade above mentioned has been reconstructed mainly by studying plans and sections drawings, which describe the architecture in a rather consistent and exhaustive way (Figure 5), and comparing the solutions with Stirling's built works. Drawings also reveal, for example, that the columns of the hypostyle hall perform no structural function and result to have been added at a later time –they are missing in the sections– for narrative, didactic or anti-perspectival reasons. Nevertheless, figuring out the imaginary walk through the museum after the drawings is quite difficult. Orthogonal and axonometric projections prevail, useful for understanding the extent of the spaces but certainly not for anticipating their experience. There are almost no perspectives; after all, in this convoluted concatenation of volumes, there is neither an enfilade connecting all the spatial events, nor a real focus onto which to organize any panoramic view. Only a partial axonometric view of the circulation sys-

**Fig. 5** James Stirling, Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne, 1974. General plan of the Piazza level. Ink on transparent paper (Arnell & Bickford, 1984, p. 210).



**Fig. 6** James Stirling, Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne, 1974. Axonometric section Ink on transparent paper (Arnell & Bickford, 1984, p. 209).



tem is present and also the usual axonometric details of the circulation are here missing, presumably because the urban and infrastructural issues took most of the resources. Despite these are images designed for a competition, they are but explicative or seducing. Materials and colour, which are so central in Stirling's architecture (Colonnese, 2012), are completely missing; effects of light and shadows appear only in the photographs of the grey model inside and outside the urban context; the presentation text simply describes how the building works. Indeed, much of the design communication is entrusted on the curiosity of the reader to explore patiently the axonometric sections, the only drawings that explain –partially– the hierarchy and concatenation of spaces (Figure 6). In this sense, the drawings metaphorically represent the opacity of the museum boxes, which do not reveal much of the internal spaces. Unlike the scientific research centre he would design in Berlin in the 1980s, where “diagrammatic forms of historic types [that work] as compositional elements” (Vidler 2010, p. 195) eventually shape the external volumes, too, this sort of geometric still-life makes the internal promenade unpredictable and surprising. According to James Gowan the search for surprise was fundamental for Stirling.

[He] worked visually, using his eye rather than his intelligence. He would fumble his way through in an exploratory manner, an artistic manner, and basically he didn't know what the outcome was going to be except that he wanted it to be a surprise. (Woodman, 2009, p. 74)

Besides an element of surprise, this ontological distance between appearance and experience is somehow a consequence of the design process, which is partially clarified by a series of interviews with Stirling and his collaborators. As Baker summarizes:

Stirling, at the early stages of design liked to work with small sketches, of a manageable size. These would be done by many people –including Stirling– then revised by his selecting the most promising idea, sometimes circling it and giving a thick. Larger drawings, *under drawings* as

they were called, would follow. From initial rough sketches an idea is progressively refined until the final drawings emerge. These take the form of working drawings and presentation drawings. (2011, p. 10)

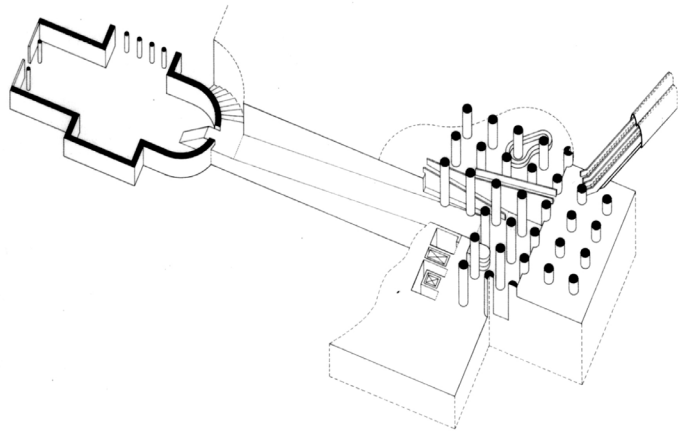
The design process was divided into two main stages (Woodman, 2009). Initially, Stirling envisioned the project in organizational terms, to fit the program through purely functional logic. Neither structure nor circulation issues had to condition the project organization at this stage. This phase was developed through small doodles on tiny scraps of paper or napkins on the train that he shared with his collaborators, beginning a sort of 'tennis match'. He asked everyone to propose general organizational solutions which were then discussed, also because he found easier to work on the drawings of others and bring the most of the ideas out of them. The second phase, in which he returned to producing sketches and formal hypotheses, consisted instead in geometrising the structure through modules and grids and giving volumes and interiors an iconographic guise, which often served to contradict the initial premises. The route through was designed at the very end. As Russell Bevington reminds about Stirling's approach, "whatever you do, don't worry about the route through the building. [...] Get the building and then we'll see how we can lay a route through the building" (quoted in Baker, 2011, pp. 15-16). According to these sources, Stirling's design process had a rational approach but translated into a stratified and ambiguous architecture, in which the circulation mostly resulted from the space in-between the major forms. In such a scenario, illustrating the process to make it part of the design communication was an opportunity to stress the distance between appearance and experience. To this scope, he developed the so-called 'Stirling cocktail', a combination of sketches and other drawings that aim to produce what Goldschmidt and Klevitsky defined "reconstructive memory" (2004, p. 41), or the story of the project. The autographed design sketches, which were originally intended to encourage exchange with collaborators, were selected to be a part of a

heterogeneous graphic system intended to communicate the process. Such a 'cocktail' became a standard in Stirling's competition entries that was imitated by both some of his colleagues and the academies, in virtue of the growing prominence of process over product and the emerging figure of the architect-philosopher (Mitrović, 2021).

### ISOMETRIC STIRLING

In the drawings' visual negotiation between appearance and experience of the building –and between the Stirling's imagery and the reader's expectations– a particular agency is performed by the axonometric views, like the sophisticated view of the hall (Figure 7). This is a peculiar typology of architectural drawings Stirling was celebrated for. Actually, most of his interest in axonometric views, in illustrating the design process or in exclusive linear drawing can be referred to the role that Leon Krier played in Stirling's office in the years before the German museums. Around 1968, Stirling had commissioned Krier to redesign his works for the publication of the so-called 'Black Book' (Stirling, 1974a), which was widely inspired by Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complete*. Like Le Corbusier's sketches, Krier's perspective views of Stirling's projects often show peculiar elements, borrowing feelings and ideas from the everyday life in the office, too. In this sense, while the human figures of Derby Civic Centre may reveal Krier's passion for Otto Wagner's drawings (Colonnese, 2016), the views of the Olivetti Headquarters present the figures of Stirling himself and his beloved 18<sup>th</sup> century furnishings<sup>5</sup>. As Krier was producing a large number of drawings after old projects, Stirling was reworking his own old sketches and redrawing some of the lost ones. Such a retrospective practice on previous projects surely complicates the historiographical issue but provided Stirling with a new awareness about the design process and the single projects, whose latent potential is revealed by Krier's axonometric views.

**Fig. 7** James Stirling, Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne, 1974. Axonometric detail of main components of circulation. Ink on transparent paper (Arnell & Bickford, 1984, p. 213).



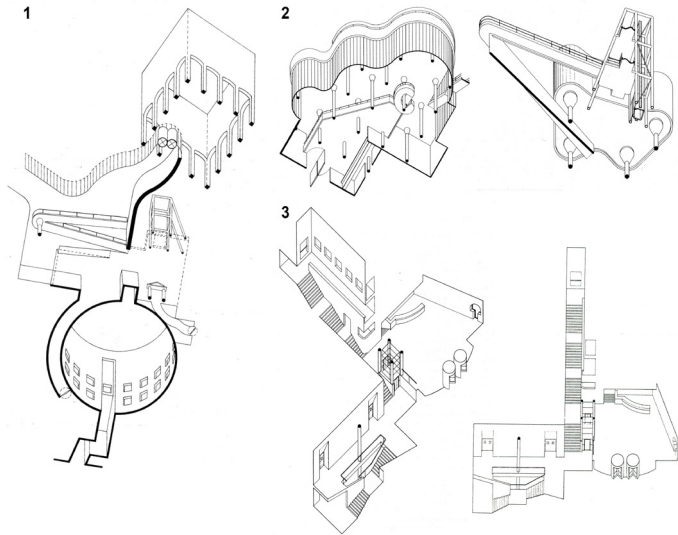
The *Isometric Stirling* exhibition at the Royal Institute of British Architects' –RIBA– Heinz Gallery, London, in 1973, certified the expressive potential linked to the ambiguity and paradoxes of linear drawing, and the axonometric views in particular<sup>5</sup>. Before featuring Le Corbusier's design communication, such a graphical model had been used by the French historian Auguste Choisy (1899) to design demonstration figures of ancient monuments:

In this system, a single image, agitated [*mouvementée*] and animated like the building itself, replaces the abstract figuration fractioned in plan, section, and elevation. The reader has in front of his eyes, simultaneously, the ground plan, the exterior of the building, its section, and its interior disposition. (Choisy quoted in Bois, 1989, p. 114)

According to Yve-Alain Bois, Choisy intended an axonometric view as a graphic device capable of inducing a virtual movement:

The perfect tool for expressing the temporality of the construction process with the utmost clarity, showing the different phases on a single figure (as in *L'art de bâtir chez les Romains*), or for restoring the historical mutations of a building typology (as in *L'Histoire*) [...] but it also serves as a substitute for the storyboard to declare the temporality of perception, precisely because it does not refer to a fixed point of view. (Bois, 1989, p. 114)

**Fig. 8** A collection of James Stirling's axonometric views of elements of circulation. Ink on transparent paper. 1, Design for the Nordrhein Westfalen Museum at Düsseldorf from below, 1974 (Dal Co & Muirhead, 1990, p. 84); 2, Conference room and Restaurant from below, Olivetti Headquarters in Milton Keynes, 1971 (Stirling, 1974, pp. 176-177); 3, Two alternative abstract views of the hall of the Music School and Theatre Academy, an extension of his Staatsgalerie, in Stuttgart, 1987-1995 (Stirling & Wilford, 1993, p. 62).



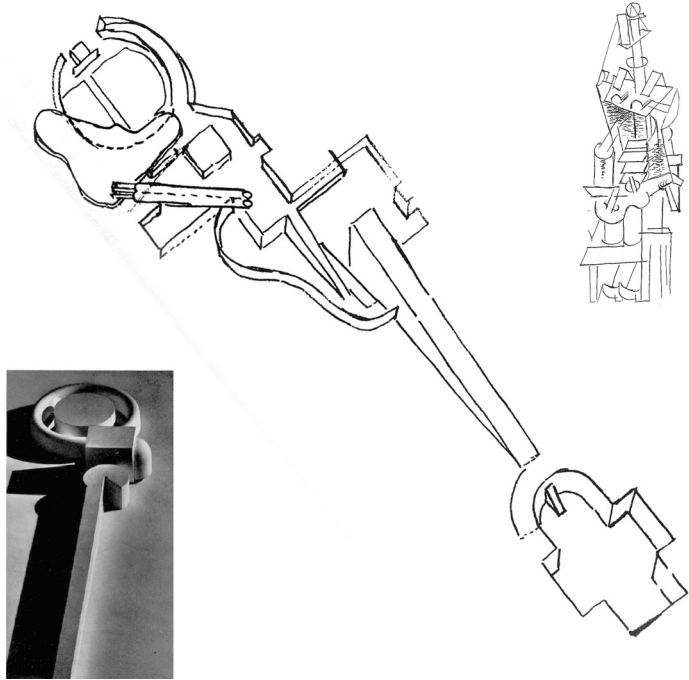
Like Choisy's, Stirling's axonometric views are complex and composite drawings that demand for the collaboration –and the virtual movement– of the reader. Exploded views, sections and cross-sections are generally composed of several section planes and enriched by a refined repertoire of conventional marks useful for indicating parts that are sectioned, hidden, transparent or obliterated (Figure 8). They are not drawings to be shown to the client but belong to the author's universe. As Reyner Banham wrote at the end of his introduction to the catalogue of the RIBA's exhibition, "a Stirling drawing is lucid in itself and explicit in its content. Appropriately enough, they are drawn always on tracing stock, and the light comes through them, much as the mind passes through and illuminates their intellectual transparency" (1974b, p. 14), an implicit invitation for the reader to explore them. The from-below-to-above axonometric views –or 'worm's-eye-view'– inherited from Choisy owe much to Leon Krier's contribution. Updating a visual typology inspired by both Mantegna's and Giulio Romano's illusionistic quadrature in Mantua and manuals of mechanical engineering, they amplify the machine analogy inherited by Le Corbusier through their inhuman and impossible point of view. Stirling used to ask Krier to simplify



the drawing and to obtain an abstract, ambiguous and anti-naturalistic image, which reveals nothing of its material, tactile and light properties. As Krier recalls, “I had sketchbooks full of doodles and he [Stirling] always chose the ones which would be the most mechanical” (quoted in Baker, 2011, p. 184).

Like those traditionally used to illustrate “the inner parts of mechanisms, the sections of the tissues, the articulations of organisms” (Di Napoli, 2004, p. 293), Stirling’s isometrics “were clear, sharp, unshaded, uncoloured and above all unsentimental. Not unlike the surgeon’s knife, they cut into the fabric to reveal the essential organs” (Jones, as cited in Jim and I, 1992, p. 69). Leonardo da Vinci was among the first to address this issue systematically. In his depiction of the human body, he reports the procedure to distinguish in the “very great confusion that must result from the combination of tissues, with veins, arteries, nerves, sinews, muscles, bones, and blood which, of itself, tinges every part the same colour” (Richter, 1883, p. 110). He states that at least three drawings, like those combined by Choisy in his axonometric views, are needed to understand an organ, “everything else being destroyed with greatest care” (Richter, 1883, p. 110). Stirling also ‘destroys’ all the matter that would compromise the visibility of the circulation pieces: “every drawing has to be designed in such a way that all surplus information and that the stance or viewpoint in the projection is essential” (1974b, p. 16). The caption ‘floating objects’ in a sketch for the Düsseldorf museum (Dal Co & Muirhead, 1990, p. 37), addressed to his collaborators, testifies to Stirling’s awareness of the visual power of these fragments. Like components extracted from Buckminster Fuller’s prefabrication experiments, their formal autonomy seems to reflect, and somehow reveal, the fragments of historical typologies that feature the promenade of the Cologne museum. At the same time, they echo the artistic autonomy the architectural drawing was acquiring in parallel in the same years, when the so-called ‘paper architects’ were contributing to lead architectural drawings into galleries and collections. Isolated from their architectural context, these architectural fragments

**Fig. 9** James Stirling, Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne, 1974. Axonometric detail of circulation (Dal Co & Muihead, 1990, p. 101) compared to Picasso's sketch (Scalbert, 2009, p. 38) and Luigi Moretti's (1953, p. 10) solidified space model of a part of Villa Adriana at Tivoli.



also promote comparison with other artistic products. In this sense, Irénée Scalbert (2009) associated the axonometric sketch of the circulation of the Cologne museum (Figure 9) with a cubist work such as Picasso's *The Guitar Player*; Amanda Reeser Lawrence (2013) compared it with the solidified space models of Luigi Moretti (1953), whom Stirling considered the third most important architect of his generation, after Giuseppe Terragni and Gunnar Asplund (Crinson, 2010).

## CONSIDERATIONS

Composing and representing architecture design through fragments implies a specific conception of space and time pivoting on the role of montage. Stirling's graphical practice testifies a specific interest in montage. In the 1950s, he had frequented Team 10 meetings and was a member of the Independent Group, which organized exhibitions with an innova-

tive approach to images. Besides being remembered as “the man who introduced ‘zip-a-tone’ to Britain” (Stirling, 1974b, p. 5), he had experimented the collage of photographic figures onto his drawings in the project form the Churchill College at Cambridge (1958) and photomontage in the residential expansion of St. Andrews University (1964), with also an axonometric view of the building montage of prefabricated components, or the Hotel in Meineke St., Berlin (1976). Such a familiarity with the practice of montage in the production of images, which is implicit already in his variegated use of transparent paper (Colonnese, 2021), intertwines with his interest in the picturesque tradition of experiencing space along a route Le Corbusier had formalised in the *promenade architecturale*. This reveals the importance of time in architecture in its several acceptations, which shapes all of his work as a system of negotiation between the artist’s imagery and the world.

The first component is the time of the architectural experience. This is ruled by the *promenade architecturale*, the physical –and visual– trajectory that guides the visitors through the spaces in a certain sequence, not necessarily unique. Approached in the second stage of the design process, the circulation has the role of surprising visitors presenting unpredictable spatial events produced by its interstitial nature and hiddenness from the outside.

The second component is the time of history. This is expressed by a number of architectural models of the past, “forms and shapes which everyday public can associate with and be familiar with” (Stirling, 1975, p. 275). Never explicit, they are generally oriented to the sensory and phenomenological dimension of the architectural experience. Krier’s neo-classical linear drawing, presumably echoed by success of the *ligne claire* in the Francophone comic art, helps to indirectly evoke an era in which architects aspired to accord and assemble the most of the formal heritage of the past, eventually through a grid.

The third component is the time of the project development. Stirling develops an original and heterogeneous com-

bination of images to stage the design process, or rather to illustrate the project as a factory or a machine that organizes the program into elementary forms.

The fourth component is the time of the reader that orient his or her individual reception of the project through the architectural drawings and models. Presenting the iconographic superstructure of building, they enounce the implicit distance between the appearance of the building and its experience. Of course, reading a perspective view takes a shorter time than interpreting an axonometric view of a piece of circulation or deriving the whole *promenade architecturale* from plans and sections. In this sense, while the orthogonal projections and the model present the measured form, three-dimensional drawings perform two complementary roles. On the one hand, perspective views add the human factor and a narrative that reveals functional and social dynamics, some of which are internal to the office itself; on the other, the axonometric views introduce a narrative inspired by the efficiency and rationality of a machine assembling fragments from different sources. Associated with the image of circulation devices, the public space where relational and physical activities are more stimulated, they also refer to a collective and social dimension of architecture that metaphorically requires a direct participation and virtual movement of the visitor which is parallel to the reader's 'active cooperation' in interpreting their graphic ambiguities.

As this *modus operandi* reached a maturity in the German museums, it seems plausible that Stirling consolidated this methodology through the work he had been carrying out on his own heritage of projects with Krier the years before. Somehow, such a process of rereading, interpreting, rewriting and redrawing lost fragments might have metaphorically triggered his interest in the history of architecture and the way memory and imagination can contribute to translate the architect's imagery into images, eventually experiencing the German museum designs as a catalyst. This surrealistic approach was to become particularly clear and aware in his



**Fig. 10** James Stirling, *Roma Interrotta*, 1977. Ink on radex.

work for *Roma Interrotta* in 1977 (Figure 10), in which he filled the Trastevere portion of the Nolli's map with a selection of his own projects, both built and unbuilt, connected by new streets to work as an urban scale *promenade architecturale*.

#### EPILOGUE

In 1978, the competition already won and contracted, James Stirling is still representing the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie. To communicate the colour of the metal elements and the stone cladding, he produces six large 1:20 drawings on transparent paper. Coloured with pencils, these frontal axonometric views from below state a new stage of Stirling's curiosity for the architectural image. They look like autonomous works of art, freed from their presumed pragmatic goal. It is no coincidence that they have been included in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art of New York. They are elegant

and abstract views of architectural pieces that, despite the colour, are hard to understand in the three-dimensions. At the same time, the colour of surfaces and sky demonstrate that they are oriented to the senses of the readers, not only to their mind. In this sense, they indirectly reveal an evolution in Stirling's approach to architectural project—and his whole life—presumably triggered by the world-wide success of his museum design. This kind of drawings are going to partially replace the black-ink linear drawings, featuring the representation of other important museum buildings, like the Sackler Gallery at Harvard (1979-1984) or the Clore Gallery at London (1980-1986) as well as the competition entry for London National Gallery extension (1985), where the shadows make their appearance, almost prefiguring the bitter win of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's project.

#### NOTES

- 1 Stefen Lauf's early digital explorations of James Stirling's unbuilt projects can be found in [www.quondam.com](http://www.quondam.com).
- 2 His presentation at the 1974 International Congress of Architects at Persepolis, Iran, during which he associated his designs with buildings of the past, is summarised in Stirling 1975.
- 3 Montreal Canadian Centre of Architecture, James Stirling and Michael Wilford fonds, professional papers, architectural projects, Wallraf-Richartz Museum Competition, Cologne, Germany, 1974-1976, AP140.S2.SS1.D44.
- 4 Such a narrative function of perspective views became part of Stirling's design communication, as testified by the view of the Chandler North Building of Columbia University collapsing to the ground to express the frustration for a lost commission (Maxwell & Muirhead, 1994).
- 5 The catalogue collects 27 axonometries, 14 perspectives, 14 orthogonal views, one photograph and one sheet of sketches (Stirling, 1974a).

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