



Building

Richard Murphy's
Carnegie Library and
Gallery in Dunfermline

Forum

Farshid Moussavi, Jane Duncan,
Gwyn Lloyd Jones, Fiona Scott,
Kyle Buchanan, Peter Murray

Works

Tonkin Liu, IF_DO, Bennetts
Associates

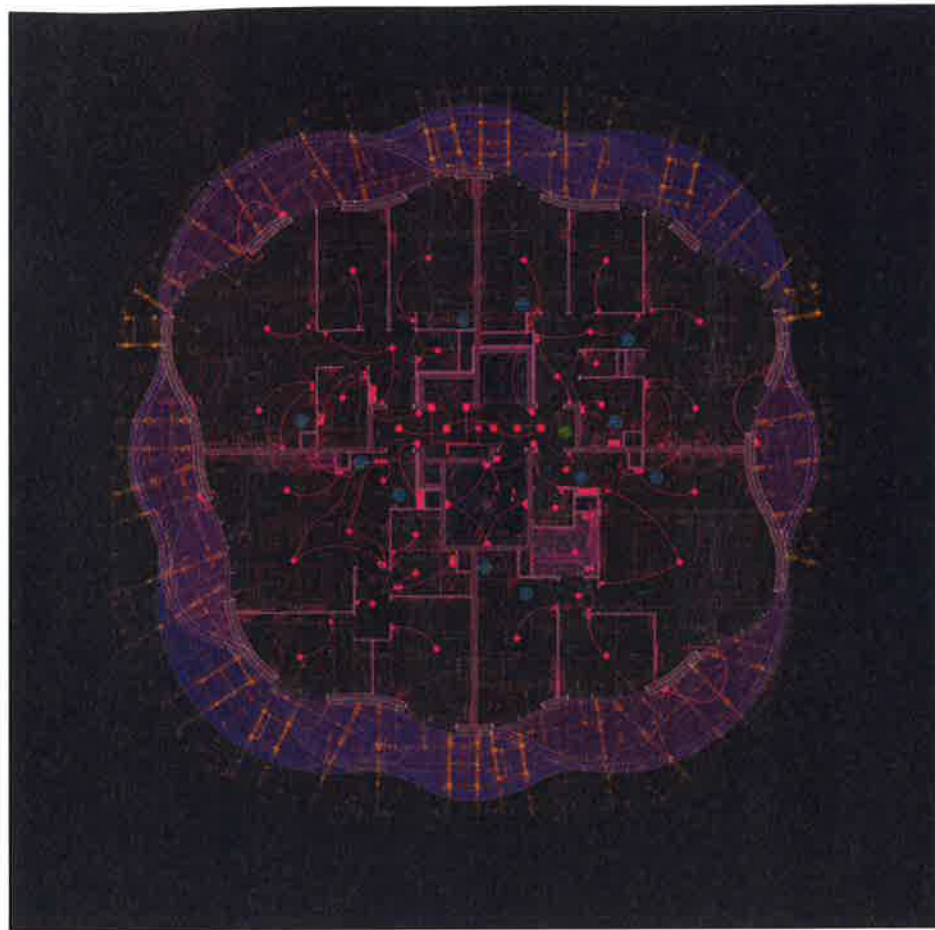
Focus

Envelope: Maccleanor Lavington,
Steyn Studio



Instructive Art

The Architecture Room at the RA Summer Exhibition gives visitors an X-Ray view of what architects do, says curator Farshid Moussavi



Architects make conceptual drawings, models and sketches to generate ideas for a building; images, models, and computer animation may then be deployed to present these ideas to clients and end-users; and a set of coordinated drawings needs to be made for use in the construction process. If examples of all of these were displayed together in a small gallery in the Royal Academy, the result would feel cluttered and devoid of any common framework.

When I was invited to curate the Architecture Room for this year's Summer Exhibition I decided to include only construction coordination drawings, which would unite the different exhibits around the theme of architecture as an 'instruction-based' art.

The architecture of a building is a complex assemblage of physical elements — colours, textures, shapes and forms — which make rooms and open spaces with a distinctive physical presence. In the process of designing a building, many different and often irreconcilable challenges have to be addressed, such as space planning, security, rights of light, sustainability engineering, facade engineering, fire engineering and health and safety. The task of the architect is to coordinate the different disciplines and determine how they interrelate: what is to be experienced and how; what will be conspicuous or inconspicuous or entirely concealed in our everyday experience of a building. Meanwhile, the architect remains responsible — and accountable, both legally and morally — for the ways in which her or his instructions are interpreted and for the way people will experience the building and engage with its architecture.

Left

'Planometric Coordinations, Montpellier Housing', by Farshid Moussavi (paper, 102×87cm).

Right

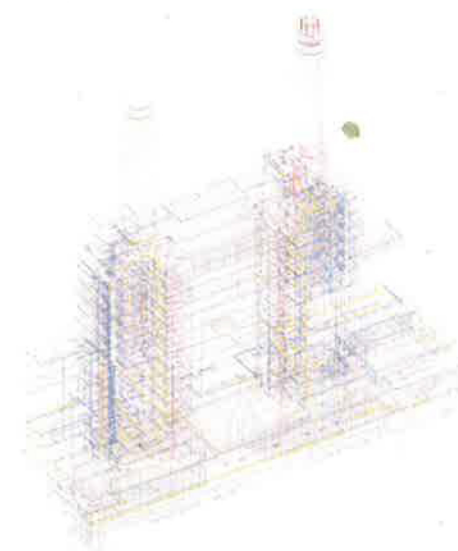
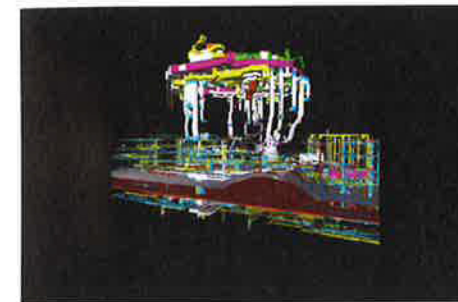
'The Finest Cut II, Macallan Distillery' by Lord Rogers of Riverside CH RA (ink and paper, 110×110cm).
Photos: DawkinsColour/John Bodkin.

Below

'Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Germany, 2001–2016, Technical Buildings Services', by Herzog & de Meuron (digital print, 84×119cm).

Bottom

'Battersea Power Station', by Wilkinson Eyre (digital print of BIM model, 180×150cm).



Construction coordination drawings — as distinct from construction drawings — are visualisations that together convey the architect's instructions for how a building should be assembled. They describe an architect's decisions, both practical and aesthetic. For example, they indicate precisely how all the elements of a building, such as pipes, conduits, expansion joints, ducts, electrical wiring and fixtures, as well as doors, windows, stairs, walls and roofs, relate to each other, and determine the part each will play in the experience of the building. When the construction drawings are issued, the layers have to be separated so that they can be read by the different subcontractors, but the architects have to make their decisions across the layers.

To reveal this decision-making process to the public I proposed that all the drawings for this exhibition be superimposed as different layers within a single drawing. The response was variable — a consequence of the democratic nature of the Summer Exhibition, for which Academicians can submit works of their own choosing — but I was able to select, from the send-ins as well as from architects I had invited, a group of drawings that resonate with the designated theme of architecture as an instruction-based art.

This selection includes straightforward construction drawings, planometric construction coordination drawings, axonometric drawings with the different layers gradually peeled away to reveal those beneath, and drawings that separate all the layers and display them side by side.

I hope that visitors will be surprised by the exhibited works, which are both engaging and informative, providing an X-ray-like view of buildings, and a novel insight into what architects actually do. *✎*