

James Stirling/ Michael Wilford Archive

collection

The work of the internationally acclaimed British architect James Stirling (1926-92) is rooted in the Modernism of Le Corbusier, liberally spiced with an eclectic and original blend of historical and contemporary references drawn from the world of high architecture, but equally and importantly, from vernacular buildings. Stirling's buildings and projects are, in addition to their striking formal qualities and inventive uses of materials, remarkable for their masterful planning (especially of circulation), their sensitivity to the human environment, and their expression of his concern for context and harmony.

Born in Glasgow, Stirling studied architecture at Liverpool University in the late 1940s, notably with Colin Rowe. While working in London for Lyons, Israel & Ellis he met and soon went into partnership with James Gowan, with whom he produced projects that brought the firm international notoriety in the 1960s, including the Leicester University Engineering Building, Leicester (1959-63) and the History Building at Cambridge University (1964-67).

Stirling remained in London, and his work between 1971 and 1992 – alone and in partnership with Michael Wilford – includes competition entries and built works throughout the world but especially in Germany. In the highly influential Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (1977-84), won in competition, the mingling of abstract references to Neoclassical building types – notably Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin "quoted" in the open rotunda, with motifs drawn from Constructivism and Le Corbusier – became the hallmark of an intensely individual style, balanced between tradition and modernity.

After the Staatsgalerie Stirling once again received major commissions in England – the Clore Gallery for the Turner Collection at the Tate Britain, London (1980-86), the Tate Liverpool (1984), and No. 1 Poultry in London (1986). His work revealed a particular interest in public space, and the meanings that façades and building masses can assume in a constrained urban context.

The James Stirling/Michael Wilford Archive at the CCA comprises roughly 40,000 drawings and models, 103 linear metres of documents, and nearly 18 linear metres of photographic materials covering Stirling's entire career, beginning in 1948 with his student work (including his thesis) and continuing through his partnerships with James Gowan and Michael Wilford, up to those projects on which he worked before his death in 1992.

