Leslie Martin:

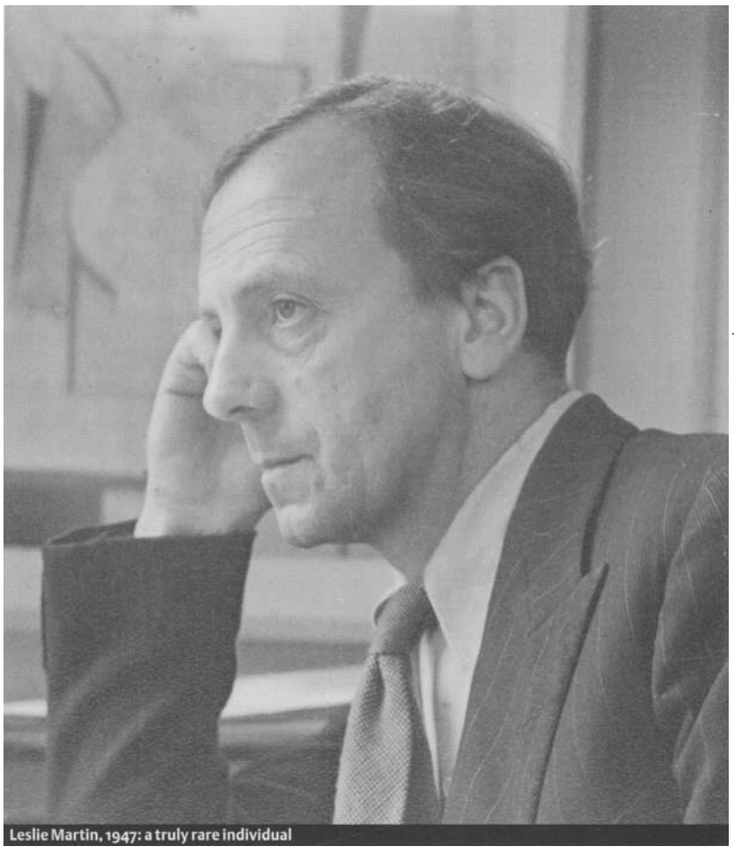
1908–2000

The prominence and length of the obituaries that appeared last August in all of the United Kingdom's major national newspapers and professional journals were a testament to Leslie Martin's achievements and influence – and that from *The Times* is reproduced here. However, such inevitably compressed accounts invariably omit or only hint at some their subject's most significant work. Those on Martin were no exception to this rule. Accordingly, we here present not so much an obituary as a celebration of this architect who did so much to create 'a coherent culture of research'.

The Times obituary is followed by contributions from three former Cambridge students: Lionel March, Richard MacCormac and Dean Hawkes. March, who collaborated with Leslie Martin on so much of his most influential research, reflects on this aspect of his work; MacCormac writes on Martin's buildings and the ideas behind them; and Hawkes considers his legacy to the indivisible trinity of education, practice and research.

John Meunier, himself a member of Martin's teaching staff at Cambridge, writes on his role as a model and mentor to the many staff and graduates of that period who went on to senior academic positions elsewhere.

Next, three architects who owed much to Leslie Martin's insight, support and inspiration write about this aspect of his work. Jørn Utzon recalls his support both before and after the saga of the Sydney Opera House; Manuel de Solà-Morales, the director of the urban research laboratory which provided the theoretical basis for Barcelona's resurgence, writes of his admiration for Martin's work; and Richard Rogers remembers Martin's effective support and energetic championing of his young practice.



Leslie Martin, 1947: a truly rare individual

Leslie Martin was in great demand as an advisor and consultant to other universities and organizations and acted for the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon for many years. Mario Krüger, head of the architecture school at the University of Coimbra, writes about Martin's long-standing links with the Iberian peninsula, his work there and his support for architects in the difficult years of political dictatorship.

Next, Jeremy Lewison, writing about *Circle*, introduces us to yet another group of people whom Leslie Martin supported – artists and, in particular, Ben Nicholson. *Circle*, which only appeared once, had an influence far beyond the numbers actually sold.

The last word goes to a 'user' of one of Leslie Martin's buildings, the Royal Festival Hall, London. Bernard Levin's

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eulogy was written in 1976, on the 25th anniversary of the Hall's opening. This, arguably the most successful and best loved postwar public building in the United Kingdom, was the one of which, in later life, Martin spoke with the greatest pride. He had hoped to be present at the 50th anniversary of its opening this coming year.

Sadie Speight, Leslie's wife, is hardly mentioned in these contributions – but is remembered with great affection by former students, colleagues and friends. She was, in her own right, a highly talented architect and designer and was acknowledged by Leslie in the introduction to his book, *Buildings and Ideas 1933–83: from the Studio of Leslie Martin and his Associates*, for 'her own very special contribution to my work throughout the whole of my professional career'.

PETER CAROLIN

See Leader p.291

Professor Sir Leslie Martin: Outstanding designer and teacher who built the Festival Hall, revived the study of architecture in Cambridge and redeveloped Kuwait

Sir Leslie Martin made a dramatic entry on the modern architectural scene with the Royal Festival Hall, timed to open with the Festival of Britain in June 1951. The problem in the brief appeared to be insoluble – a vast amount of accommodation for too small a site – until Martin had the brilliant idea of raising the auditorium above ground level, so removing an obstacle to the detailed planning of what turned out to be a great work of architecture. Everything fell into place: the entrance was underneath it, the form of its massive structure daringly expressed, and views of the river beyond revealed. His design was instantly acclaimed for its originality and imagination.

During his career Martin achieved an unusually influential position in the architectural world. Although he never practised on a large scale, each of his buildings was distinct and widely noticed by his colleagues because each one unfailingly exemplified his rigorous sense of architectural discipline and his fastidious taste.

In addition to being a notable designer, Martin was an outstanding educator (especially during the years when he held the chair of architecture at Cambridge University) and a thoughtful architectural philosopher and patron. Because his judgment was widely trusted, he was often asked to recommend architects for new projects, and many of the younger generation owe their start in the profession to his knowledgeable patronage.

John Leslie Martin was the son of an architect. He studied at Manchester University School of Architecture, qualifying in 1930, and in that year winning the Soane Medallion. He began his architectural career as a teacher, first at Manchester University and then, from 1934, as head of the School of Architecture at Hull. During this time he edited, with his wife, a book on the elements of domestic interior design entitled *The Flat Book* (1939) and, with Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo, *Circle*, a symposium of essays on the arts (1937, reissued 1971). *Circle* illustrated his intense interest in and sympathetic feeling for abstract art, which was dominant throughout his life. He maintained friendships with painters and sculptors of this persuasion and lived surrounded by examples of their work, chosen with rare discrimination.

In 1939 Martin was appointed principal assistant architect to the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, a post he occupied throughout the war. Here he made his first major contribution to the improvement of public architectural practice, setting up a development group within the LMS office for the study of prefabricated railway stations. This was the first of many such development groups, which in the following years played an important role in the architectural work of government ministries and local authorities. Martin's office erected several prototype stations based on the research of his development group, but his long-term programme of station rebuilding was frustrated by the war and by railway reorganization.

When, in 1948, the London County Council decided to build the Royal Festival Hall, the late Sir Robert Matthew, then architect to the council, chose Martin to occupy a new post of deputy architect with special responsibility for this important building. Under Matthew, Martin led the team of architects that designed the Festival Hall, and it was while in charge of this project, which aroused unusual interest, that Martin first showed his talent for the exposition of architectural ideas – clarifying to innumerable meetings, public as well as professional, aspects of the building's design ranging from acoustics to the Festival Hall's part in the future replanning of the South Bank.

In 1953 Martin succeeded Matthew as architect to the LCC, where he carried on his predecessor's pioneering work of transforming the public authority architectural office into a place where the young and ambitious architect could find worthwhile opportunities. But he remained for only three more years before accepting the chair of architecture at Cambridge, which he occupied from 1956 until he reached retiring age in 1972, when he was made Professor Emeritus.

Martin's work at Cambridge was richly productive. He found the School of Architecture a place of very little account and built it up into one of the leading schools in the country, with an emphasis – following his own personal bent – on analytical and scientific planning and the programmes of research such an emphasis demands.

At Cambridge he restricted his private architectural practice to work that he could personally supervise. Most of it was for his own and other universities. His first building at Cambridge was Harvey Court (1960), a residential building for Gonville and Caius College, which evoked great interest within the architectural profession when it was completed, especially for its expressive formal vigour. It was followed by another residential building, for Peterhouse (1964); a group of specialist libraries at Oxford in the same year; the large but not so successful pathology building near the Parks, also at Oxford; and by buildings for Leicester and Hull. For the last two universities Martin served as planning consultant, though he resigned from his consultancy at Leicester when the university acted against his advice when commissioning one of the buildings in the central science area. He nevertheless continued to advise on the choice of architects for its subsequent buildings, which was typical of his magnanimity and his devotion to standards.

At this time he was in demand as

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a planning consultant in a bigger world than that of the universities, and two of his projects became highly controversial: that for the replanning of the area around Whitehall and Parliament Square, and that for the rebuilding of the British Museum Library. The report on the former, published in 1965, contained some enlightened proposals, such as those for rerouting the traffic so as to leave Parliament Square as a pedestrian setting for Westminster Abbey, but it was too ambitious and comprehensive to have much chance of execution. Furthermore, the proposals for Whitehall, involving the destruction of many of the existing buildings, including Sir Gilbert Scott's Foreign Office, were in conflict with the growing interest in architectural conservation and the modern preference for a mixed environment.

Martin's British Museum proposals similarly came up against a strongly expressed anxiety about disturbing an established environment, and were eventually abandoned in favour of a new library building on the northern instead of the southern edge of London University's Bloomsbury precinct. This was designed by Colin St. John Wilson, who had been Martin's collaborator in the original library plan, as well as his associate in several earlier projects.

In 1967, when he had completed his replanning scheme for Whitehall, Martin was approached for advice on the development of Kuwait City. Until then the Kuwaitis had been badly served by some other Europeans, and it was due to Martin that the names of remarkably fine architects were brought into the picture, namely the Danes Jørn Utzon (of Sydney Opera House fame), who won the competition for the parliament building, and Arne Jacobsen, architect for the Central Bank, and the Finn Reima Pietilä, for the Foreign Office. The work of these and others, and their subsequent influence, turned the architectural quality of the city around, and for this much credit must go to Martin.

Leslie Martin took a doctorate at Manchester University and received honorary degrees from that university, Leicester and Hull. He was also an honorary fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. He was awarded the RIBA distinction in town planning in 1956, served on the RIBA council, 1952–58, and was vice-president, 1955–57.

He was a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission from 1958 to 1972. He was consultant to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation at Lisbon, 1959–69, and lectured at Harvard (1966) and Princeton (1974), and was visiting professor at Yale in 1973–74. Of his many academic and professional awards, the most notable was the Royal Gold Medal in 1973. He was knighted in 1957.

After his retirement from the Cambridge chair, Martin continued to live in, and practise from, the many-storeyed watermill at Great Shelford which he had converted for his own use, and which was itself an admirable illustration of his architectural discernment and his imaginative handling of space. In 1978 he and his wife moved to another house in the same village, this one converted from a group of old barns, with equal flair and sensitivity. The work that came his way in the 1970s was mostly in the Middle East.

In 1934 he married Sadie Speight, a fellow student at the Manchester architectural school. She continued for some time to work as a designer, and her drive and enthusiasm had a strong influence on Martin's career. She died in 1992, but he is survived by their son and daughter.

Professor Sir Leslie Martin, RA, architect, was born on 17 August 1908. He died on 28 July aged 91.

'Setting out the possibilities': Leslie Martin and the advancement of architectural knowledge

Educated in architecture at the University of Manchester, Leslie Martin gained his PhD in 1936. The title of his thesis was 'The position of José de Churriguera in the development of Spanish baroque architecture'. Four years earlier, his MA thesis was entitled 'Juan de Herrera 1530–1597' – Herrera who carried through Toledo's 14 courtyard plan for the Escorial, initiated an academy of mathematical studies in Segovia, and founded a school of architecture in Madrid. It was rare for an architect of his generation to pursue academic research at this level. But then Leslie Martin was a truly rare individual. One of the most committed members of a circle of European 'constructive' painters, sculptors, and architects, he promoted the 'art now' of his generation, just as Herrera had in his time and place, and Churriguera had in his. The stylistic differences between a white relief of Ben Nicholson and an assemblage of capitals and panels in a Churrigueresque pilaster are apparent on the surface, but Leslie Martin sought to appreciate, beyond mere appearances, the enduring principles which each exhibited.

Unquestionably, the roots of the very Englishness of his modernism were to be found in the English free school – Lutyens, Lethaby, Voysey, in particular – whose houses were celebrated by Hermann Muthesius' *Das Englische Haus* (1904–05). It was the rational quality of the designs that appealed to Muthesius, a rationality that was inclusive and which did not exclude romantic tendencies. For Leslie Martin:

> *'The architectural ideas of my generation drew on these two streams (romanticism and rationalism) and, by merging them, developed a new code.'*

Lethaby talked of magic and architecture, but also spoke of the need for 'systematic research into the possibilities', and of a 'constructive' approach to architectural theory: a 'consequence of a lack of any agreed theory is the absence of a positive and reasonable basis for design, criticism, education or understanding: we "carry on" in a chaos of whims and pretences ... By "constructive" more is implied than is usually meant by "construction" ... It means an attempt to find frank, reasonable and inventive solutions of modern problems in a developing search for organic and perfect building forms and methods.'

Again, Leslie Martin:

> *'[Universities] would expect and have a right to expect that knowledge will be guided and developed by principles: that is by theory. Research is the tool by which theory is advanced. Without it teaching can have no direction and thought no cutting edge.'*

Curiously, *The Art of Building a Home* (1902) does not figure in Muthesius, nor do its authors, Unwin and Parker. In the course of his subsequent career, Unwin bucked conventional wisdom in demonstrating the effectiveness of low-rise housing and of quadrangular layouts; of seeing open space as the figure against a ground of building, not the building as figure on an open

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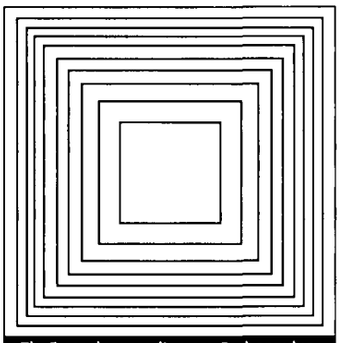


a The Fresnel square diagram. Each annulus has the same area as the central square

ground; and by observing some of the spatial consequences implied by the Fresnel diagram [see a].

Concluding a speculative study of the Foundling Estate area in London, Leslie Martin echoes the earlier concerns of Unwin:

> *'We can leave things as they are and call development organic growth, or we can accept a new theoretical framework as an outline of the general rules of the game and work towards this. We shall know that the land we need is there if we use it effectively. We can modify the theoretical frame to respect historic areas and elaborate as we build. And we shall also know that the overlapping needs of living in an area have been seen as a whole and that there will be new possibilities and choices for the future.'*

During the Second World War, Leslie Martin had worked for the London, Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS). As he told it, there was little actual building, but much reflective research and speculative prototyping in preparation for the inevitable period of reconstruction and modernization.

Before Leslie Martin joined the London County Council, housing was the responsibility not of the architects, but the surveyors. As I recollect my conversations with Leslie, it was J. M. Richards of *The Architectural Review* who had campaigned vigorously for the responsibility to be transferred to the architects. Leslie told me that a condition of this transfer was to be a year of research into the feasibility of different housing solutions. He had in mind the kind of research he had been involved in for the LMS. But, the urgency was such that the research year vanished in a flurry of design activity. Roehampton was the most notable result in which several housing types – slabs, point blocks, terraces – were mixed in a live experiment. Within the LCC, some architects – a 'left-wing' cell – objected to high-rise housing derived from continental models. Their objections had been formalized independently by Walter Segal *Home and Environment* (1943).

With Leslie Martin's coming to Cambridge University, the architecture programme became an honours degree and research degrees could be awarded. Sandy Wilson,[1] who had seen combat at Roehampton, joined the faculty. Among the first doctoral students were David Croghan and David Davies. Both examined housing issues. Croghan designed and built the artificial sky-dome and studied lighting for the type of housing patterns that Segal had proposed, as well as courtyard houses. Meanwhile, Leslie Martin and Sandy Wilson were making proposals, to the St. Pancras authorities in London, for high-density low-rise housing in which a novel sectional design was projected. In the new school, research and practice were in tandem.

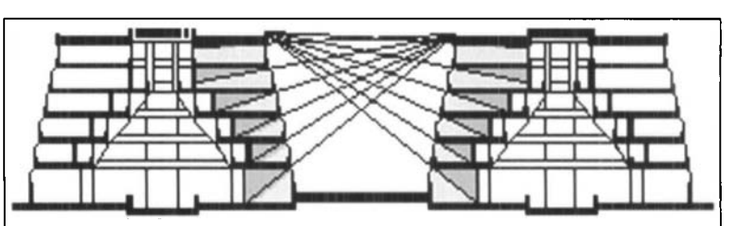
I joined the first class of Leslie Martin's tenure as Professor of Architecture. Christopher Alexander[2] was in the same class. We both had migrated from the Mathematical Tripos. The top student of our class – a double-first – was Nicholas Wood. On completion of my studies, I followed Christopher Alexander to the Joint Center for Urban Studies, Harvard and MIT. When Alexander moved to Berkeley, I was the only architect at the Center with the exception of Kevin Lynch. The place seemed to be dominated by lawyers, economists and political scientists. Much of the research employed computer methods and models.

Leslie Martin cut my American stay short by inviting me to participate on the Whitehall plan. He also recruited Jeremy Taylor, who had just completed his PhD under his guidance. The government had built three model high-rise office towers over a low-rise podium nearby in Horseferry Road. The official vision of the redevelopment foresaw the use of this building type in Whitehall itself.

Leslie Martin was not prepared to go along with the conventional wisdom. It was clear that an intensification of use in the Whitehall area would bring greater traffic loads to what was already one of the busiest nodes in London. Colin Buchanan, who had just published *Traffic in Towns*, 1963, was appointed traffic consultant. Without prejudice, Leslie Martin examined the options. The factors involved were many. What appeared to be the most significant were incorporated into a mathematical model. Architects at that time did not use computers and the computation of the model was carried through by the quantity surveyor, Philip Dunstone. Several thousand options were generated, but it became clear that some form of courtyard arrangement would perform as well as any. The published proposal showed buildings, no higher than the existing fabrics, which would not dominate Westminster Abbey, the Palace of Westminster and other historic monuments in the precinct. Further elaborated, a galleria section was suggested for the principal Ministries ranged along open courts (Martin, 1965) [see b].

I came back to a Cambridge where Nicholas Bullock,[3] Peter Dickens,[4] and Philip Steadman,[5] supported by a Gulbenkian grant, were working on an architectural re-examination of university planning policies. At the same time, Patrick Hodgkinson's[6] Foundling Estate proposal was on the drawing board, a proposal that effectively spread out horizontally the concept of *unité d'habitation*. All of these investigations and projects involved consideration of urban context and transportation systems. Practical issues called for more understanding, for free speculation, and for studied research.

I had reported to Leslie Martin on my multidisciplinary experiences



b Whitehall project. Galleria and courtyard system, showing daylight penetration to offices

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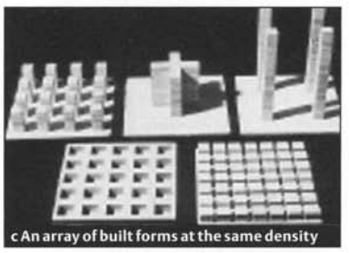
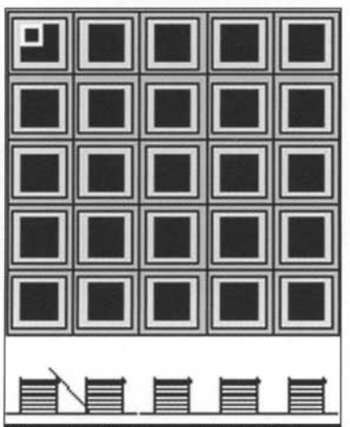
at the Harvard/MIT Joint Center, and soon the idea of the Centre for Land Use and Built Form Studies (LUBFS) emerged: the housing study, the university study and the office study shared this common question – what building forms would be most appropriate to accommodate particular uses on given sites? Land use was a planner's term, built form an architect's. The new Centre would attempt to occupy the, then, no-man's land between planning and architecture. Dean Hawkes[7] had joined David Croghan as a technical assistant in the artificial sky-dome. He moved over to join Philip Tabor[8] in the office study. With Marcial Echenique's[9] move from Sandy Wilson's office, the urban dimension was embraced and a balance between the interests of planners and architects, such as Unwin had envisaged, was achieved.

An early outcome of our research was a paper which Leslie Martin and I published in *Cambridge Research*, 'Land Use and Built Forms', 1966. It established the notion that high-rise building was not the outcome of land shortage, but of particular relationships between site and building volume. The same volume, distributed differently, could be laid out in low-rise arrangements; or, if the height was maintained, in large park-like settings. The mathematical model we used necessarily simplified the situation, but new computational models make more realistic assessments possible. Such computational modelling might well refute the original Martin-March conclusions for specific parameters. As Leslie Martin himself wrote: '... the situation is always changing, and the assumptions of each generation will be challenged, elaborated or developed by the next. This is the process that gives us the capacity to meet new problems. Each generation develops its own code of understanding' [see c, d and e].

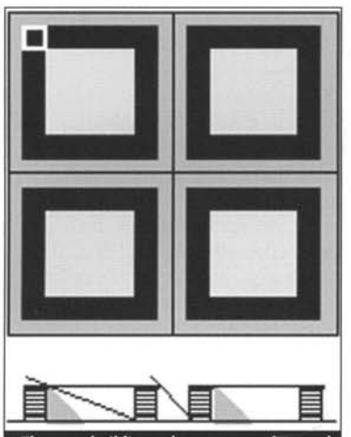
At this point Leslie Martin and I visited the Centre for Urban Studies in London. We discussed details with the Centre's young Assistant-Director, the mathematician Alan Wilson.[10] The result of our meeting was substantial funding to establish LUBFS. Students in the architectural programme became interested in the research activities. Ed Hoskins[11] was the first student to present a computer program as his architectural thesis at Cambridge



c An array of built forms at the same density



d An array of built forms as isolated blocks. Black, building. Light grey, open space. Grey, roads and sidewalks



e The same building volume arranged around courtyards. Building depth is half of that in c

as a result of Leslie Martin waiving the usual design requirements.

As the theoretical work of LUBFS attracted attention, clients sought practical applications. Leslie Martin listened to Ed Hoskins and me when we described a proposal to separate research from development, the university from a commercial consultancy, and gave us his full support in setting up Applied Research of Cambridge. Practice gave rise to general questions which university research might address. But university research was too tentative and untested to transfer to practice without further, considered development. Only then would the practical (especially computational) tools become available to practice. This was the ongoing practice-research-development-practice cycle that Leslie Martin nurtured.

The Greater London Council, during the 1960s, was still pursuing high-rise housing. A notable case was at Stewart's Road, Wandsworth, just south of Battersea Power Station. Here the executive architect had produced a scheme with four 22-storey towers. The project was a technological case study: their first steel residential structures, with glass-reinforced plastic cladding. The beautiful scale-model had received approval from all the appropriate GLC committees. The last step required the architect to take the scheme to the central government to qualify for the subsidy under the 'housing yardstick' regulations – a standard which underwrote high-rise structures by recognizing the additional costs of building high (in particular, foundations and elevators).

Behind the desk at the Ministry of Local Government and Housing was Dr David Davies, now a civil servant. He was not prepared to support the scheme. The assistant architect was Nicholas Wood. He described the moment. 'I laid the four towers on their side. They could be arranged around the perimeter of the site as low-rise terraces. The open space in the centre was as big as Parliament Square.' Nicholas Wood replaced the former executive architect. The scheme developed in three- and four-storey dwellings around a common open area. The GLC mustered their 'research' department to challenge the proposal on sociological grounds. The person who conducted the investigation was another Cambridge graduate, John Bunney. The authority did not get the negative answer they required. At each step, an individual, conversant through teaching and research with the studies at Cambridge, frustrated conventional wisdom, and lent support to a new, evolving code.

This is what Leslie Martin stood for: having regard for the actual, research into the possible; having awareness of current formulae, consider other, novel options; knowing how to satisfy existing needs, seek out potential opportunities; being cognizant of evaluative norms, be prepared

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critically to introduce new modes of assessment. Leslie Martin's modern architect generates original designs, not from 'a chaos of whims and pretences', but through knowledge 'guided by principles, that is by theory'.

Leslie Martin would have been proud of his successors who, working with the community and its representatives, have engaged in 'setting out the possibilities' for *Cambridge Futures*.[12] The involvement of the Department of Architecture in this exercise parallels the academic and professional leadership shown by the Solà-Morales brothers in Barcelona.[13] Full circle.

How privileged I was – so many of us were – to have such a generous and open-minded mentor.

LIONEL MARCH

Lionel March is Professor of Architecture and Computation at the University of California, Los Angeles

Notes

1. Emeritus Professor of Architecture, University of Cambridge. Architect of the British Library.
2. Professor of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley.
3. Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge.
4. Reader in Sociology, University of Sussex.
5. Professor of the Built Environment, University College London.
6. Emeritus Professor of Architecture and Urbanism, University of Bath.
7. Professor of Architectural Design, University of Cardiff.
8. Senior Lecturer, University College London.
9. Professor of Land Use and Transport Studies, University of Cambridge.
10. Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Urban and Regional Geography, University of Leeds.
11. Venture capitalist and founding Managing Director of Applied Research of Cambridge.
12. *Cambridge Futures*, University of Cambridge Department of Architecture, 1999.
13. Professor Manuel de Solà-Morales was Director of the Laboratorio de Urbanismo, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona, and was responsible for the publication of March, L., Martin, L. and Echenique, M. *La Estructura del Espacio Urbano*, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 1975.

Buildings, ideas and the aesthetic sense

Writing about Leslie Martin's architecture cannot be done without writing about his ideas. No architect of his generation sustained a more consistent intention to relate theory to the procedure and outcome of design. The buildings from his studio therefore invite an evaluation, not just of their intrinsic quality but of the extent to which they fulfilled and promoted theoretical intentions. Martin makes clear in *Buildings and Ideas* (Cambridge University Press, 1983) that he inherited both the objectives and the methodologies of the European modern movement. In particular his understanding of Corbusier and his concept of the 'object type' precipitated his quest for the underlying organizing principles which characterize a building type. But at the same time he admired Corbusier's very different and arguably conflicting aspiration to design within the purely abstract geometric discipline of primary solids – the cube and rectangular volume. Martin also had roots in the English Free Style and in the formal disciplines of the Beaux Arts and Lutyens' later work which may be seen as equivalents to Corbusier's contrasting modes of composition.

Although he will always be associated with the masterful realization of the Royal Festival Hall, Martin perceived his major projects as those undertaken in the Great Shelford studio from the 1950s onwards while he was Cambridge professor. This was the studio of like minds' which stimulated the intellectual infrastructure of the University's School of Architecture. This was where a powerful, volumetrically complex and distinct architectural language developed, in the context of academic and institutional commissions, which combined traditional and new materials in a peculiar and influential conflation of modernism and the 'materiality' of the arts and crafts movement.

In *Buildings and Ideas* Martin set out to describe three principal building types in the studios' output – university residential buildings, libraries and auditoria, and to find in each an underlying order.

In university residential buildings this was to be found in the relationships between clusters of rooms around stairs and corridors and the embodiment of community in site layout. The adoption of the court form, which underlies several projects and subsequently became so influential in research, originated in the monastic origin of the Cambridge College court and its earliest application was for women's Halls of Residence at the University of Leicester (1956) designed in collaboration with Trevor Dannatt.

The Leicester project was the beginning of an enquiry into the characteristics of student residences that achieved its most powerful and paradoxical realization in Harvey Court for Caius College, Cambridge (1958). An initial design study adopted a dual aspect split-level arrangement of rooms associated with the half landings of a dog-leg stair which could hardly be bettered in terms of the ratios of circulation to usable space and external wall-to-floor area.

But also latent in this study was the idea of a stepped section inherited from an unrealized scheme for King's College in the city centre, where, ingeniously, the inside of the stepped court was for students and the resulting perimeter undercroft for outward-facing retailing. Without the urban context, it was this proposition that prevailed. The tiers of rooms, surrounding an acropolis-like raised place, which recalls Aalto's raised court at Säynätsalo, set back over a peristyle of gigantic brick piers within which the peripheral cloister and stairs are suspended. Not only is most of the ground floor of this building uninhabited but in the single-aspect stepped section, habitable rooms take up only about half of the available volume. Yet for me, this is one of the great twentieth-century buildings [see f]. The organizing idea is not pragmatic but an extraordinary formal and intellectual proposition within which a hierarchy of circulation is composed [see g].

f Harvey Court. One of the great C20 buildings

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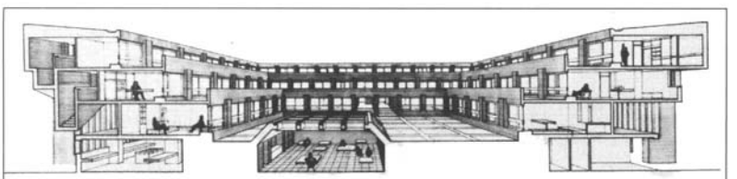
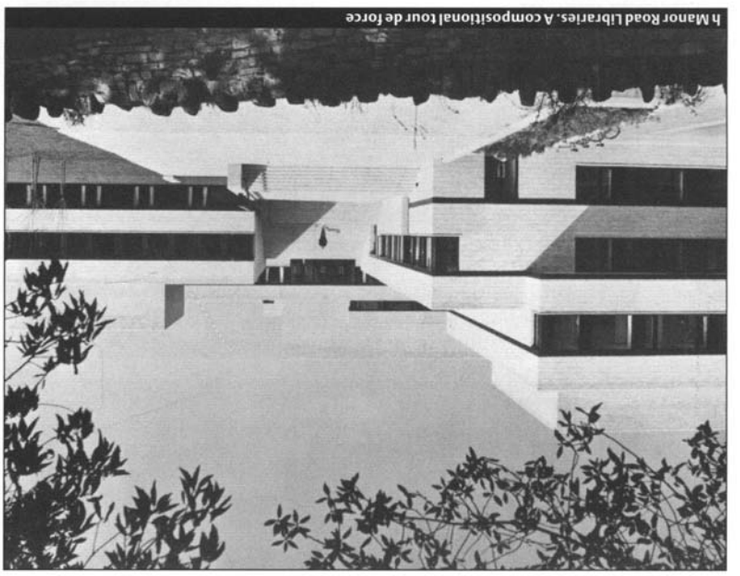
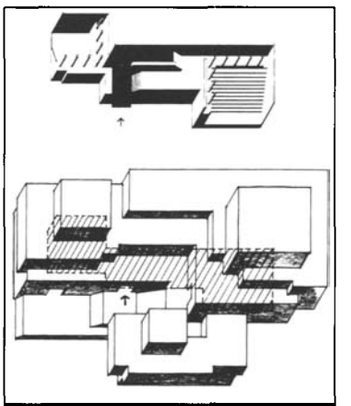


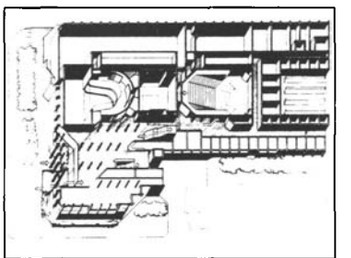
g Harvey Court. An extraordinary formal and intellectual proposition



h Manor Road Libraries. A compositional tour de force



i Manor Road Libraries. Crucial pattern recognition



j Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Another raised plinth and giant order

Yet, even if it is difficult to be wholly convinced that the organizing principle of Harvey Court is generic to student accommodation, the architectural language it developed, the immediate sense of constructional order conveyed by the brick piers, the raised place as a circulation device and the central volume surrounded by repetitive cellular spaces was highly influential in future designs for other building types.

Martin shared with Aalto the sense of analogy between architecture and landscape, an insight which Aalto revealed in his description of designing the Viipuri Library. We see this in the reading rooms in the Manor Road Libraries at Oxford (1959) as raised daylit plateaux around which other territories are clustered. The form of these libraries is immediately intelligible because of the sequence of entrance, toplit reading room, book stacks and perimeter carrells. Here the idea of the generic organizing principle applicable to the different scale of each of the three libraries is very persuasive and, in fact, proved highly influential.

The building is a tour de force compositionally [see h]. Like Harvey Court, it is built over and around a raised first floor plinth which gives access to the English and Law libraries from monumental flights of steps. But here the plinth provides for secondary functions which surround the two ground floor lecture theatres in a relationship which imitates the pattern of the reading rooms and book stacks above [see i]. This kind of pattern recognition, comparable to Kahn's idea of 'served and servant' space, is crucial to a design procedure which here creates continuity of vertical circulation and the coincidence of long and short span structures above one another.

The third building type, the auditorium, which Martin explored for its typical characteristics is recognizably similar in its relationship with surrounding ancillary accommodation to that between reading rooms and book stacks in libraries, and courts and the rooms that surround them in university residential accommodation.

Middleton Hall, at the University of Hull (1967), again employs the strategy of the raised plinth from which the auditorium is entered and within which it is embedded, surrounded at the lower level by foyers, exhibition areas, art gallery and chapel. This strategy of the raised plinth giving public access to auditoria serviced at ground level by surrounding ancillary accommodation underlies the much larger and more ambitious Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow which also reworked the giant order of Harvey Court to produce an extraordinary urban presence [see j]. Although without the sectional complexity of the Scottish project, the Cambridge Music School also exemplified the idea of auditorium as large volume surrounded by a periphery of ancillary accommodation disengaged in this case, by small courts and concourses.

So, a series of buildings, consisting of libraries, lecture theatres and auditoria share organizational characteristics which give each building a kind of topography consisting of a main volume, or volumes, emerging out of surrounding lower buildings which might exhibit the deceptive modesty of the Cambridge Music School or the supremely controlled complexity of the Oxford Libraries. To the end of his career, Martin continued to develop his architectural language, notably in the project for the Arts Faculty for Bristol University and his marvellous gallery for the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon

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and his quest for underlying principle created the springboard for the prodigious research undertaken by the Martin Centre.

Leslie Martin was reluctant to be drawn into discussing aesthetics and symbolism from which one might deduce that he shared, with less sophisticated thinkers, the idea that architectural form is somehow an inevitable 'expression' of function. He was an artist and his quest for the generic and the recognition of pattern was itself aesthetically motivated. The aesthetic sense was not separate but intrinsic to his whole procedure and is visible in the eloquence of what he built.

RICHARD MACCORMAC

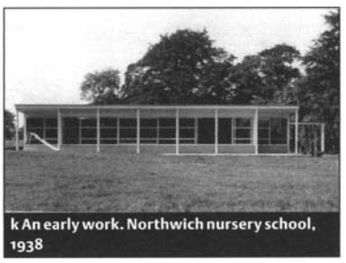
Richard MacCormac practises in London and is a Past President of the RIBA

1. Colin St. John Wilson and Patrick Hodgkinson, Douglas Lanham, Colen Lumley, David Owers and Ivor Richards.

'Only connect...'[1]

The working life of Leslie Martin spanned, as he himself defined it in his book *Buildings and Ideas* (Martin, 1983), from 1933 to 1983. In other words, precisely over the critical period in which the tenets of international modernism came to Britain and exerted a crucial influence upon both the theory and the practice of architecture. In attempting to identify the nature of his legacy, I propose to examine the part he played in the arenas of education and practice and, in particular, to show how he saw research as the instrument for the development of both.

At the very beginning of his career Martin combined practice and teaching, following his appointment as Head of the School of Architecture at Hull in 1934. This was the period during which he built a number of notable houses and the delightful nursery school at Northwich [see k]. While he was still at Hull, he collaborated in the publication of *Circle: international journal of constructive art*, in joint editorship with Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo (Martin, Nicholson and Gabo, 1937). In his own essay, 'The state of transition' – among those by Mondrian, Le Corbusier, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, J. D. Bernal the crystallographer and historian of science, Breuer, Neutra, Giedion, Gropius, Massine and Moholy-Nagy – Martin made an emphatic statement of his



k An early work. Northwich nursery school, 1938

commitment to the idea of architecture existing in essential unity with both the arts and the sciences.

> '... *in adopting a principle similar to that which has by common consent proved universal in the abstract art of architecture, non-figurative painting and sculpture does not necessarily sacrifice its "human" appeal. But it may be true to say that it avoids the "personal" element in order to make its "human" appeal more profound, and that it has abandoned "realism" only in its effort to get a firmer hold on "reality" itself. In this respect it is important to recognize that the building of a new "reality" is a task not confined to modern art alone. It is a matter of common knowledge that in science, the world of "appearances" .... has been abandoned. In science as in art, "appearance" has been jettisoned in favour of a world discovered only through the penetration of appearances.*'

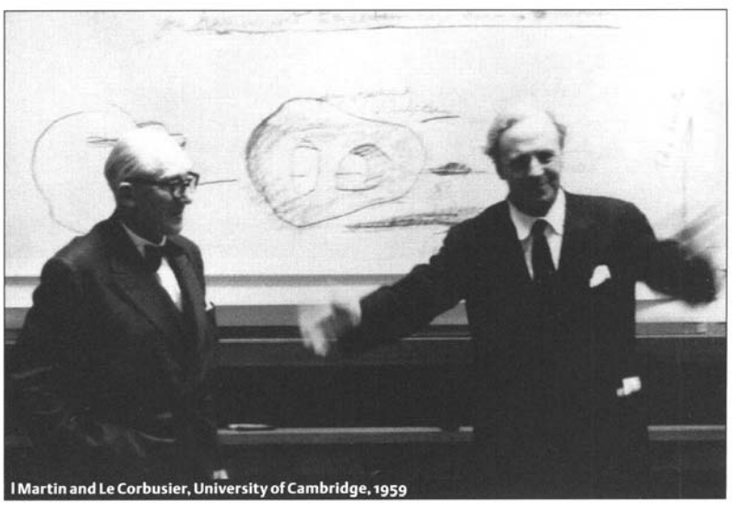
It is this powerful sense of the connections between things, and the ability to encompass both art and science, that characterized his work throughout his career.

At the Royal Festival Hall (RFH), Martin and his team were responsible for one of the first major buildings of the twentieth century which actually realized modernism's rhetoric about the role of science and new technology in forging a new architecture. In the special issue of *The Architectural Review*, which was devoted to the RFH, J. M. Richards (1951) declared the building to be,

> '... *something without precedent in this country and with very little precedent elsewhere: a modern building – modern in the sense of owing allegiance to no other age but ours – which is also monumental.*'

But, in this case, the definition of a 'modern' building went beyond questions of composition or material and enlisted the potential of the emerging science of architectural acoustics from the outset of the design process. The independent acoustic consultant Hope Bagenal was supported by William Allen and Peter Parkin from the Building Research Station, thus establishing and symbolizing the connection between significant architectural practice and the resources of institutional scientific research.

Following his resignation from the headship of the Hull school in 1939, Leslie had no direct involvement in education until, in 1956, he was elected as the first Professor of Architecture at Cambridge [see l]. There, in parallel with a 'golden age' of practice, in which he and his collaborators produced a sequence of buildings of international standing, he embarked upon a fundamental re-examination of the nature of architectural education which was to have wide implications. Central to this was his determination to guarantee the status of architecture as a valid academic discipline. It was here where he turned his attention to the question of theory.



l Martin and Le Corbusier, University of Cambridge, 1959

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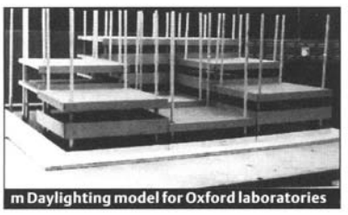
A key event was the R.I.B.A. Conference on Architectural Education, held at Oxford in 1958. Leslie Martin wrote the report on the conference and, in a now often quoted passage, he insisted that effective teaching must rest upon the articulation of coherent theory.

> *'Theory is the body of principles that explains and interrelates all the facts of a subject. Research is the tool by which theory is advanced. Without it, teaching can have no direction and thought no cutting edge.' (Martin, 1958)*

This, however, begs the question about the nature of that 'theory'. What is theory in the field of architecture? At that time, when the principles of scientific rationalism were influential in many fields of critical study, it was, perhaps, inevitable that the model of theory and, hence, of research in architecture would look to the paradigms of science. It was the scientific model that informed much of the early research in the Cambridge school. The construction of a large artificial sky (Croghan, 1964) opened up the opportunity to carry out theoretical studies into the relationship between daylighting and the design of housing layouts. In addition specific investigations were made to assist the daylighting design of numerous buildings [see m], designed by Martin and by others, in a continuation of the kind of collaboration in acoustics with the Building Research Station at the Royal Festival Hall. Outside the field of what is now called architectural science, the discipline of systematic method was central to the first major publication of the Centre for Land Use and Built Form Studies, which Martin created at Cambridge in 1967. *A Theoretical Basis for University Planning* (Bullock, Dickens and Steadman, 1968) proposed a logical framework for decision making in the planning and design of universities to serve the programme of university expansion which was then under way in Britain.

But, while this early research observed, and undoubtedly benefited from the discipline of the scientific model, Martin's constant concern was to make connections between these studies and the broad themes of architecture, *not* to make architecture itself 'scientific'. Robert Maxwell has observed that Martin's approach was founded upon the belief that architecture has a separate existence from



m Daylighting model for Oxford laboratories

architectural or building science and that, in its fundamentals, the work at Cambridge,

> *'... condensed as a love of architecture ... [that there should be] no artificial opposition between the invention of architectural form and the rational analysis of what had been invented ... [That] practical reason led on to speculative reason without a break.' (Maxwell, 1996)*

Martin's contribution to the advancement of architectural education, through the creation of a coherent culture of research, must be counted as one of his greatest achievements, to be set alongside his built works. Its influence has been felt, directly and indirectly, in schools throughout Britain and further afield. The schools are now the source of numerous publications and the majority of teachers bring the benefits of their personal scholarship into the studio and the lecture room. As a consequence the education of architects has improved out of all recognition. But what must be understood is that his vision was vitally informed by the breadth of his personal culture and, crucially, by the insights which came from his work in practice. This, implicitly, but directly, defined the academic agenda. In his mind practice, education and research were fused into a seamless whole, cross-fertilizing each other, and he sought constantly to demonstrate that point.

It was significant that, when in 1967 Leslie gave a lecture in the R.I.B.A.'s series 'Architects' approach to architecture' (Martin, 1967), he chose to emphasize the process, the research, that lay behind the production of his designs, not merely to present a sequence of images.

> *'... as we increasingly rely on ... [images] we are left with an architecture that moves towards a marginal activity incapable of taking its proper and central place in setting out alternative choices and methods of attack on our environment. The work that I now want to describe may be regarded simply as a series of studies. It is not intended to show successful ends but rather a developing means.'*

DEAN HAWKES

Dean Hawkes is Professor of Architectural Design at the University of Cardiff

Notes

1. 'Only connect ...' is the epigraph of E. M. Forster's novel *Howards End*, described, by Oliver Stallybrass in his introduction to the Penguin edition, as, 'a novel much concerned with the relationships, and the possibility of reconciliation, between pairs of opposites: the prose and the passion, the seen and the unseen, the practical mind and the intellectual, the outer life and the inner'.

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A model and a mentor with an infectious vision

What was it that made Sir Leslie Martin a model and a mentor for so many of us who went on to be heads of schools and colleges around the world?

First, and perhaps most importantly, was the sense of a 'noble calling'. Not for us has been the scepticism so often expressed in academia about administration. If being the head of a school of architecture was a job that Leslie could embrace at the peak of his career, then it was certainly worthy of our aspirations. And we had learnt from him that it was a position from which one could leverage some influence, within

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the university, the community, the profession, and, particularly, the academic discipline of architecture.

Second, was his vision of Architecture as an intellectual and creative field which integrated science and art; in which disciplined rationality could open the doors to fresh ideas. In this I am sure he was influenced by his Russian Constructivist friends, Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner. He shared in the passion of his generation for an architecture that would contribute to the development of a better world. It is that infectious vision for which many of us feel ourselves to be continuing stewards.

Arising from that was his commitment not only to the creation of 'built form' (architecture) but also 'land use' (planning). The Centre for Land Use and Built Form Studies, later to be renamed in his honour, made it clear that a school should do more than teach. The discovery and generation of new ideas through research and scholarship and their publication was a fundamental task. And so it should be no surprise that in a College such as the one of which I am currently dean, there are strong planning and PhD programmes, a research centre with a very broad mandate, and a publication programme.

And then there was his development of a parallel practice, where the work could be seen to be made of the same intellectual cloth as that being woven in the school. Few of us have been able to follow him there, to the same level of achievement, but nonetheless the sense of a necessary connection between teaching research and practice was an important part of the model he provided.

And lastly there was his willingness to delegate to others. Once a task had been given he trusted that it would be delivered. Occasionally I did understand that when he asked to instruct my class it was actually towards me that the lessons were indirectly intended. He rarely told anyone what to do, but rather asked for their help in doing it. I suspect that one of the reasons I have lasted as long (25 years) as an academic administrator is because I learnt this last lesson very well.

JOHN MEUNIER

John Meunier is Dean of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at Arizona State University

Making architecture a joy and art for others

I liked Leslie Martin immensely because he did something no other architect I know of did in the same way.

In his role as a client advisor, he carefully selected architects and, having introduced the parties to each other, he supported the architect throughout the entire project. He was advisor to the state of Kuwait and it was evident at my very first meeting with the Minister for Public Works that the Minister had complete confidence in whatever Leslie Martin said. So all my work in Kuwait was done with a client who never questioned anything concerning my ability. Such was the personal authority Leslie Martin gave people. He acted in the same way for Pietilä and the other architects who, in that rapidly developing country, were creating examples of modern buildings which could serve as examples for its future architecture.

Leslie Martin was an assessor for the Sydney Opera House competition, with Saarinen, Ashworth and the government architect, Parkes. When Leslie Martin and Saarinen were about to leave Sydney they sent me the marvellous news that I had won, and invited me to meet them in London. At that meeting, it took Saarinen and Leslie Martin five minutes and a drink before dinner to decide that I was OK and that I did not need to have any partners collaborating with me on the project.

Reading the other day, I found what Goethe wrote on his trip through Italy to study people, art and architecture: 'Give me a job I can devote myself completely to and then it is not a job any more but joy and art'. Leslie Martin was totally devoted to architecture and he made it a joy and art for others. I have never experienced any other person or architect who would give so much time for what is the most important thing in architecture – the respect among clients, politicians and people for our work.

Just consider a man who selected someone for the Sydney Opera House, and that person was then kicked out – and then picking him again for Kuwait and supporting him. It sounds improbable – but that was the kind of person Leslie Martin was.

JØRN UTZON

Jørn Utzon was architect of the Sydney Opera House and the Parliament building in Kuwait.

The doyen – influential, generous and European

At a time when accepted wisdom is inclined to point an accusing finger at the architecture of the immediate postwar period, Sir Leslie Martin must be singled out as one of its finest exponents. Martin was without doubt the doyen of postwar British architecture and left his stamp on the architecture department of the London County Council which was by far the most outstanding department of its kind in Europe. The radical designs for schools, housing schemes and public buildings generated under his aegis were an inspiration for young architecture students. In particular, the Royal Festival Hall stands out as a timeless example of his elegant and intelligent designs.

An outstanding educator, Martin was also a generous patron and always made time for young architects who came to his door seeking advice. When Su Rogers and I were desperately trying to keep our newly fledged practice afloat with no prospect of new work on the horizon, it was Martin who urged us to persevere. It was he who suggested us to the Design Research Unit, at the forefront of contemporary design in the late 1960s, which we joined for a number of years until we won the Pompidou competition. Martin subsequently put our names forward for various potential jobs, such as the Kite project in Cambridge and more recently for our South Bank proposals – an area in which he retained an understandable interest.

Together with his wonderful wife Sadie, herself an architect, Martin maintained a particularly European vision at a time when much of Britain was determinedly insular. His skills as an architect, informed by an admirable intellect, made him a hugely influential figure in postwar Britain. His generosity as a human being also earned him a place in many people's hearts.

RICHARD ROGERS

Richard Rogers practises with his partners from London and was recently chairman of the Urban Taskforce set up by the UK Government to report on the revitalization of our cities

A concern for the most fundamental aspects of urbanity

Like in his life, like in his person, the urban ideas of Leslie Martin were distinguished in shaping

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banal materials into meaningful forms and by marking architectural reasoning with a vector of collective and personal sentiments.

Evidence of his preoccupation with urban architecture should not be sought in the scale or programme of his projects or research. It was, instead, a concern for the most fundamental aspects of urbanity – density, continuity, social interaction and shape – that characterized his work.

Barcelona, my own city, was certainly one of his points of reference. As an expression of heterogeneous regularity (rather than regular heterogeneity) and a place where architecture and urbanism blend together without possible distinctions, this city clearly inspired him. In return, those of us in Barcelona looked and still look at his pioneer master work in the 'type-form' debate, the housing for the LCC at Roehampton. And, as a real landmark of 'the other Modern tradition' or 'the second history of the Modern Movement' as we have sometimes described it in reaction to current historiography, we also revere his Glasgow project.

Yes, Leslie Martin was a hard rationalist. But his search for a more rational architecture concealed a spirit of romantic platonism, a search for perfection and the most delicate respect for individual humanism.

In the interiors of the Kettle's Yard Gallery, in the King's Mill and in his gestures; in his urban ideas and his feeling for Barcelona: shape and sentiment. We love him for that.

MANUEL DE SOLÀ-MORALES

Manuel de Solà-Morales was Director of Laboratorio de Urbanismo at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, Barcelona which prepared the theoretical base for the resurgence of that city

Extending the creative process in Portugal

Leslie Martin had strong connections with Spain and Portugal. He presented his PhD thesis, 'The position of José de Churriguera in the development of Spanish baroque architecture', at the University of Manchester in 1936, the year the Spanish Civil War broke out. We can now reflect on this dissertation and the connections that Leslie Martin made researching it since he

n Centre of Modern Art. Building and landscape united by an architectural idea

'examined a number of original documents and ... examined during several visits to Spain, all the work under discussion'. This was a work which included 'for the first time, a family tree of the Churrigueras', in which 'the signatures of the more important members of this family of architects are compared'. He concluded that 'this part of the history of Spanish Architecture [should] be re-written'.

If it is true that Leslie Martin made a contribution to understanding Spanish baroque architecture, it is equally true that his studies of this subject had a considerable impact on his own development as he explicitly suggests stating that 'the peculiar juxtaposition of circumstances which produced the Spanish Baroque can occur only once in history; but the state of ... change for which it stands as the artistic expression is not uncommon'.

The Gulbenkian

Leslie Martin's connections with the Gulbenkian Foundation were developed at several levels over a considerable period of time. In 1968, the Foundation provided funding for him to undertake research at Cambridge on university planning.[1] Meanwhile, in Lisbon, he acted as consultant to the Foundation on two buildings – the Foundation's headquarters, completed in 1969, and the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum. The planning, co-ordination and execution of this work was headed by Luis Guimarães Lobato, while the architectural design was undertaken by Alberto Pessoa, Pedro Cid and Ruy Athouguia. Luis Lobato had himself researched the question of land use and built form in the context of the Lisbon city ordinances, and the architects were members of a rising opposition to the totalitarian imposition of a retrograde style of public architecture known as 'Portuguese lite'. These were recognizably modern buildings and Leslie Martin expressed disappointment, bordering on disgust, when the historian John Summerson declared, in an opening address, that he would have preferred it if the buildings had been in the classical style.[2]

In 1979, the Foundation invited Leslie Martin to design the new buildings for the Centre of Modern Art (CMA) and the Children's Pavilion, suggesting that these should be located in the park so as to integrate the existing amphitheatre and water plane into a unified landscape. Leslie Martin described how this was achieved: 'It is probably externally that the idea of a stepped roof makes its greatest contribution. The landscape rises from the level of the lake. The roof levels of the stepped section are planted so the rising level of the landscape is extended onto the building itself. A water source from the restaurant terrace feeds a channel of water that protects the park and the gallery overlooking the park. Rainwater from the planted roof levels spills into this channel and finally forms a meandering stream that descends to the lake below. The building and the landscape are united by the architectural idea' [see n].

Leslie Martin aimed at providing a flexible gallery where the main exhibits of any particular show could be placed in temporary, screened areas under one roof, pitched to the slope of the site. Under the highest section, two split-level floors are inserted for more intimate events. The roof structure is carried by five paired concrete portal frames. The sectional design can be interpreted as a transformation of the thick, sculpted and stepped wall in Churrigueresque design. Referring to the Spanish baroque, Leslie Martin had observed that the 'mask facade' is one in which an area of textures, contrasts with the blank wall surface of the actual facade itself. He found this to be the 'constructive driving force' – the contrast of a formal concept and an 'enriching element'. The concept of using a truss is plain and simple. But at the CMA, the architect's constructive drive enriches this concept by the realization that the

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o Holiday house. An original fusion of two traditions

horizontal bracing slab, outside, might become a hanging garden sweeping down to the park below. Likewise, the vertical bracing, inside, becomes the framing for the north lights providing natural, ambient illumination to the gallery.

At the Alvar Aalto exhibition held in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1983, Leslie Martin recalled to a packed and receptive audience, that 'like Aalto in his generation', each architect and generation 'will have renewed and different problems. As each generation solves these problems with imagination and talent, the creative process of architecture is continually extended and the architectonic language is constantly developed and enriched'. It is precisely this that Leslie Martin achieves at the CMA in Lisbon.

Holiday House in Portugal

The family house that Leslie Martin loved so much, located in the Azeitão and built in 1964, is sited in the District of Setúbal[3] south of Lisbon on a steep slope. In the manner of the paired trusses at the CMA, two parallel block walls follow the slope of the hill. These almost unpunctured walls are plastered and painted white. Between them, at three levels, span the habitable spaces: bedroom, living area, bedrooms. Each level has a terrace contained by the walls, but the living area also extends beyond one of the walls to a hillside patio [see o]. The floors are brick paved, the roofs are tiled, and partition walls are wood. The two 'blank' white walls contain within them the 'enriching elements' for living with their variety of textures. Once again, Leslie Martin seemingly uses that 'constructive driving force' to take the thick, sculpted walls of the Spanish baroque and transform them into the sectional design of this small modern dwelling.

The house is a fitting blend of two traditions and an original fusion of both. The spatial arrangement is reminiscent of the English Free School; but the house also reflects regional characteristics. The terraces which interlock the other spaces of the house as well as the large and prominent chimney reveal some *fragrance* of the south, more precisely, of Moorish origins, in sympathy with the Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos 1961 report on popular architecture in Portugal. The report, commissioned by the government, but written by the rising generation of architects, was critical of existing policies. The dictator Salazar said of its authors: 'so young and so perverted'. It was this young generation of Portuguese architects, isolated from the mainstream of modern endeavour, whom Leslie Martin, with his international reputation, encouraged and inspired.

In this way 'the creative process of architecture is [also] continually extended and the architectonic language is constantly developed and enriched'.

MARIO KRÜGER

Mario Krüger is Professor and Head of the Department of Architecture at the University of Coimbra

Notes

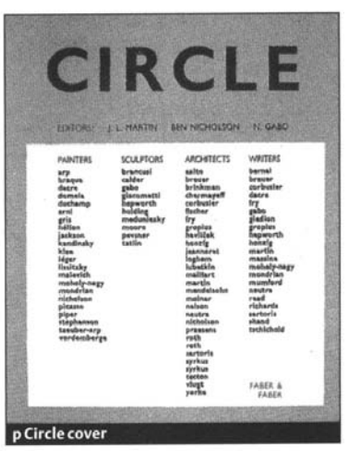
1. Bullock N., Dickens, P. and Steadman, P. 'The Theoretical Basis for University Planning', LUBFS Report 1, 1968.
2. Personal communication with Lionel March.
3. Region of Portugal, on the southern bank of river Tagus facing the Atlantic, with a strong Christian and Moorish cultural heritage.

Circle – a determining effect on the practice of architecture

Of the small number of critical and theoretical modernist texts published in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century, *Circle* [see p], edited by Naum Gabo, Ben Nicholson and Leslie Martin, was one of the most important. It had an impact reaching forward across the decades to the present day and a determining effect on the practice of architecture in Britain. Our interest in modern materials, particularly glass and steel, in modernist geometric abstraction, in integrated town planning, in achieving a unified and healthy environment where art and life would co-exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship, all found forceful expression in this publication. Destined to be a serial, *Circle* only appeared once. It sold few copies (about 500 were bound) before stocks were bombed during the war, but it was widely known among the artistic and architectural community. A reprint in the 1970s ensured that it would become a classic with a wide dissemination.

Circle originated as a direct result of Leslie's, and his wife, Sadie's, friendship with Ben Nicholson. Leslie first saw Ben's work at the Unit One exhibition in 1934. Unit One was something of a prototype for *Circle* in its grouping of architects (Wells Coates and Colin Lucas) with artists but in spite of its title it was far from unified. Leslie's and Sadie's curiosity led them to Ben's studio in Hampstead, to the first of a series of purchases made over many decades and a lifetime of friendship. It was through the support of such collectors as Leslie and Sadie that Ben and Barbara Hepworth managed to survive through the economic slump of the 1930s. Leslie amassed one of the finest private collections of Ben's work leavened with a sprinkling of Hepworths and Gabos. Visiting his last house in Great Shelford, a converted barn, was like visiting Kettle's Yard, the extension to which he designed in 1969 (opened 1971). It was both a treasure house and a sanctuary of peace where art and life were fully integrated. Leslie's house was the culmination of ideas adumbrated in *The Flat Book* and developed further in *Circle*.

Circle was devised partly in response to the International Surrealist Exhibition on view in London in the summer of 1936. It became in effect a manifesto for a counter movement that took the name constructive art (rather than constructivist since that term had been adopted by Gabo to describe



p Circle cover

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his own work of the 1920s). The central editorial office was Leslie and Sadie's house in Hull. The paste up team was Sadie and Barbara. Letters were written to the leading modernist artists, architects and writers for permission to reprint articles that had appeared elsewhere (for example in *Transition*), for new contributions, for drawings and photographs to reproduce and for statements. Bringing together contributions, whether visual or verbal, by such illustrious names as Mondrian, Le Corbusier, Giedion, Massine, Neutra, Breuer, Gropius, Mumford, and Bernal among others was unheard of in an English publication. Setting them alongside the likes of Nicholson, Moore, Hepworth, Jackson, and Martin himself was adventurous. It promoted a strong sense of internationalism at a moment when London was temporarily the centre of the modernist movement as artists and architects sought refuge from fascism. For a young architect with little reputation, it was a great achievement to assemble all this material. But it was also an indication of how small the modernist community was in the late 1930s. *Circle* bred a spirit of togetherness.

Leslie's friendships with artists, who were a generation younger than himself, had a direct impact on his thinking. The double-height space at Kettle's Yard, may be directly compared to a Nicholson white relief with its interpenetrating planes and pierced walls. Leslie himself acknowledged the importance of Ben's 'constructive' use of colour in the late 1930s and suggested that architects could learn much about the spatial properties of colour from Ben's example.

Leslie's friendships were enduring. When Ben returned from Switzerland, in the early 1970s, his first port of call was Shelford. When Henry Moore set up a foundation, Leslie was named one of the foundation trustees. Leslie was trusted by all for his good work, his exquisite taste, his intellectual grasp and his sympathy for the modern.

JEREMY LEWISON

Jeremy Lewison is Director of Collections at the Tate, London

q The Royal Festival Hall

r Foyer

Times remembered in the Royal Festival Hall of Fame

So the Royal Festival Hall is 25 years old; well, well. That means that when, exactly 25 years ago today, I made my way slowly across a crowded Hungerford Bridge to pay my first visit to it, I must have been not quite three years old; it's a mercy I wasn't trampled to death in the crush. Since then, we have both aged, the RFH and I; it is hardly for me to say which of us has worn better. But I remember, and I shall remember no matter how many more quarter-centuries of the Hall's existence I survive, the first overwhelming shock of breathless delight at the originality and beauty of the interior. Design has gone a very long way in those 25 years (not always in entirely happy directions), and the result is that this revolution, too, has devoured its children, so that young people paying their first visit to the RFH [see q] today must find the foyer and ambulatories [see r] nothing more than spacious, airy and admirably lit; what they cannot feel is what we did, which is that we had been instantly transported far into the future, and even that we were on another planet altogether.

I do not exaggerate; I vividly remember talking to an attendant on a visit a week or two after my first, and being told that at the end of every concert the ushers were assembled at the top of the building and that they then, linking hands, moved slowly down from concourse to concourse, gently shepherding from the precincts audiences that otherwise simply could not bring themselves to leave, so affecting was the experience of being *in diesen heil'gen Hallen*.

I remember particular parts of that first experience no less vividly; saying, for instance, towards the end of the interval, what a pity it was that in a few moments all that elegance and beauty would have to suffer the disharmony of the usual jangling bell. Even as I finished speaking, that delicate, silvery chime that signals RFH audiences to go to their seats began to toll. (Did you know that the note it sounds is an A, and that this is because, A being the note to which orchestras tune, it is the first sound you hear when you enter, thus experiencing a pleasant feeling of harmony?). And I recall my companion on that first evening disappearing during the interval and returning with a beaming smile on her face and the words '*Smashing Ladies!*'

The music I have heard in the hundreds of visits I have paid to the Festival Hall since May, 1951, has formed a kind of palimpsest in my mind's ear, but it is not just the great performances that I can hear most clearly. For instance, the acoustic of the Hall was too dry to start with ('It ees', said Claudio Arrau after his first performance there, 'a leetle-*antiseptic*', especially to ears nurtured on the Albert Hall's cotton-wool (though the RFH technicians installed equipment in 1964 which has greatly improved the resonance), but I have heard, twice, an orchestra make a noise so stupendously loud that it produced what in that Hall is an absolute impossibility, to wit an unmistakable echo, crashing off the back wall; once it was Cantelli, conducting the newly-formed Philarmonia (in, I think, the third movement of the Tchaikovsky Sixth), and on the other occasion it was Leonard Bernstein with the New York Philharmonic.

I suppose the most memorable experience the Festival Hall has so far provided was the visit of the Vienna State Opera in 1954. They stayed for a fortnight, doing *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro* and *Cosi*, and I seem to remember being there practically every night, hearing incomparable casts (they included Paul Schoeffler, Irmgard Seefried, Lisa della Casa, Erich Kunz and Leopold Simoneau – the last-named being the exceptional rarity, a true Mozart tenor). Kunz was their Figaro, of course (even our own

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beloved Geraint has never surpassed him in that role), and the opening *Figaro* provided a neat moment of dramatic irony, for Kunz had had an accident on his arrival in London, falling down the aircraft steps, and when, in Act Two, the genuinely limping singer told the Count of his damaged leg – 'e stravolto m'ho un nervo del pie' – a great growl of amused sympathy ran round the audience. The Festival Hall was not designed to take stage performances, though it has had a good many, which have managed surprisingly well in view of the lack of facilities; I recall not only the Vienna Opera but the Stuttgart, the latter with, among other things, a *Fidelio* produced by Wieland Wagner which I thought perfectly horrible, the heavily symbolic and stylized *mis-en-scène* robbing the work of all its glory. (Fidelio without glory – imagine!)

I have also been present at some deeply moving occasions at the RFH, such as the last appearance – somehow we knew it was going to be the last – of Albert Cortot, who played all 24 Chopin Preludes before the interval, and all 24 Etudes after it, a programme that I imagine would daunt the inexhaustible Barenboim himself. There were also three concerts at each of which a great conductor returned after an illness which had looked like being his last: respectively Beecham, Klemperer and Monteux, and the third of these produced the most sensational single moment in all the 25 years of the Hall's existence; Monteux, in his eighties, had a heart attack, and was not expected to survive, let alone ever conduct again. But he did both; the programme I remember – on a very hot evening – ended with the Beethoven Ninth, and in the third movement Monteux suddenly staggered, dropped the baton, and toppled slowly forward. There were some three thousand people in the Hall, and I am perfectly certain that every single one of them had exactly the same instantaneous thought that flashed through my mind. Here was a man full of years and honour; who had spent his life in the service of the noblest and deepest of the arts; who had conducted the first performance of *Pelléas* and of *Le Sacré du Printemps*; and who had been beckoned by death at the foot of one of the very greatest monuments mankind has ever erected; could there be a more perfectly fitting way to go? Evidently there could; for as a front-desk violinist leapt up to support Monteux, and the orchestra wavered, the great conductor shook himself upright and carried on – it was afterwards reported that he had been momentarily overcome by the heat.

But for me, the most moving musical occasion I have attended in the Festival Hall, or indeed anywhere, was Kirsten Flagstad's farewell concert. She had naturally given up by then all the Wagner roles with which she had been so inseparably associated over the years, and her contribution to the evening included nothing very strenuous. But when she had taken her final bow, and the final cheer had died away, and we settled back for the last, orchestral item of the evening (*Bolero*, I think it was to be), Sargent, who was conducting, announced 'Ladies and gentlemen, there will now be a change of programme, and those of you who are not satisfied can have your money back. Madame Flagstad has said that if we will play the Prelude to *Tristan*, she will sing the *Liebestod*'. And so she did, for the last time on this earth, floating that last F sharp out into the auditorium as ethereally, as beautifully, as ever I have heard her do in her prime.

Thousands of the happiest hours of my life have been spent in the Royal Festival Hall, and to this day, as I catch the first sight of it from the other side of the river, its huge windows glowing in the dusk, my heart lifts not only with the thought of the evening's music to come, but with the richness that, in its 25 years, the music I have heard within its walls has added to my life. *Du teure Halle, sei mir gegrüsst!*

BERNARD LEVIN

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