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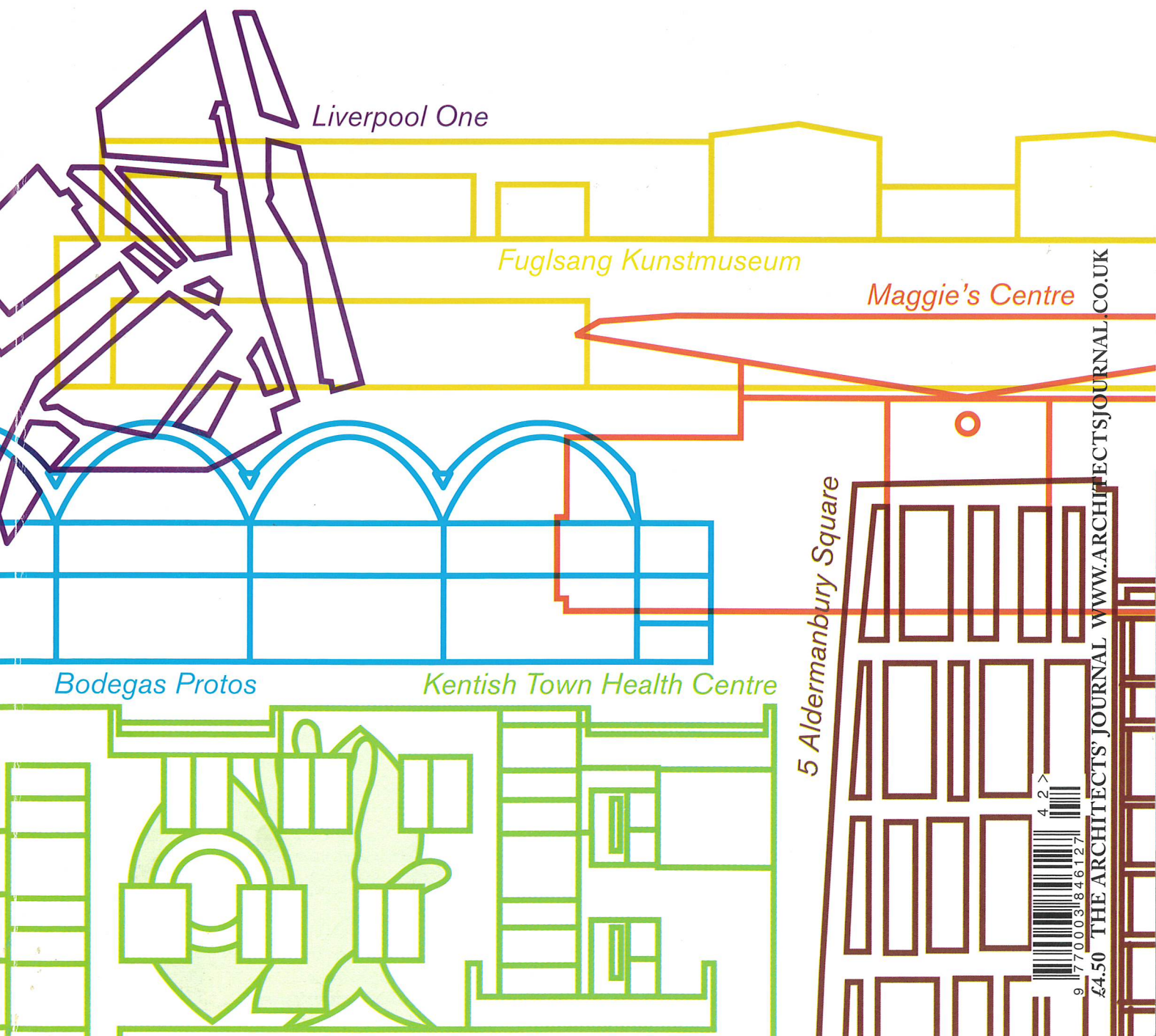
From Liverpool to Lolland
*A behind-the-scenes account
of the jury on tour – p30*

Behind every
great building...
*The architects discuss
their shortlisted
schemes – p34*



THE STIRLING PRIZE

Comprehensive coverage of the UK's top architectural award – p29



Paul Finch's Letter from London

The Stirling Prize and BCI Awards recognise the inspired quality of boom-time designs

This week sees two major awards events: the Stirling Prize and the British Construction Industry (BCI) Awards. In each case, office buildings feature prominently on the shortlists, evidence of the quality that informed the London commercial sector during the boom. The buildings are very different, as indeed are the awards. The Stirling Prize is, of course, about Architecture with a capital 'A', while the BCI Awards are for success in the round – construction quality and the proven meeting of time and cost targets, as well as high standards of design (Mike Ingall of Allied London chaired the BCI jury this year).

Three developments stand out on the BCI list as exemplars in their different ways. In the major projects category is New Street Square, by Bennetts Associates for Land Securities. This cluster of office buildings is based around a highly successful public open space. The design replaced proposals to substitute an existing monolith with a dinosaur design contributing little to local amenity or the potential improvement of the area.

For Land Securities, a different approach, plus rigorous environmental design principles, represented a gamble. Agents were not convinced that the increased cost of 'green'

design could be justified, and the logistical implications of building a series of blocks were considerable. Mike Hussey and his then team decided that the Rab Bennetts proposition was more likely to pay dividends (literally). It turned out brilliantly, not least because of the sentiment of tenants, by the time construction was under way, was moving towards greener projects.

So a most interesting development, with an equally good rival just down the road (coincidentally also built by McAlpine). Kings

for Peter Simon's Monsoon fashion company, is in semi-suburban Notting Dale. Architect Allford Hall Monaghan Morris has produced a speculative building (engineering by Adams Kara Taylor), which looks and feels bespoke, for an extraordinarily low construction price – about £145 per sq ft. Shortlisted in the building of the year category, it proves that good space and volume standards can be provided without breaking the bank.

When we come to the Stirling Prize, the territory is slightly more conventional:

Each building is, as the Michelin people say, 'worth a detour'. We are lucky to have had such inspired clients

Place was designed by Dixon Jones for the private developer Peter Millican. At ground and below-ground levels are public facilities, a gallery, conference venue and concert halls; above are speculative offices, which are let to *The Guardian*, the office element paying for the cultural bits (which Millican now runs). Who says mixed-use is difficult to fund or make commercial? It also won the British Council for Offices overall award last week.

By complete contrast, the Yellow Building

a speculative City of London office tower close to Guildhall, designed by Eric Parry for Scottish Widows. An essay in stainless steel, 5 Aldermanbury Square is a large, sophisticated design, which Parry makes work at a human scale, unlike lumpy old Royex House (1962), which was demolished to make way for the development. It is a single building that can read as two; entasis diminishes the overbearing impact a pure box would have at the top; and an overlay on the facades avoids the monotony of same-height floor repetition.

There is a marvellous new public mini-square created as part of the development, a proper route through to Wood Street, and some welcome sculptural and water elements complementing woven artworks in the substantial (visible) foyer.

Each of these buildings is, as the Michelin people say, 'worth a detour'. We are lucky to have had such inspired clients using first-rate architects, and can only hope that the desire for quality survives our current financial woes. Paul Finch is chair of CABI and director of the World Architecture Festival. Read his blog at [blog at blog.emap.com/letterfromlondon](http://blog.emap.com/letterfromlondon)



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Eric Parry's
5 Aldermanbury
Square: 'an essay in
stainless steel'

TIMOTHY SOAR

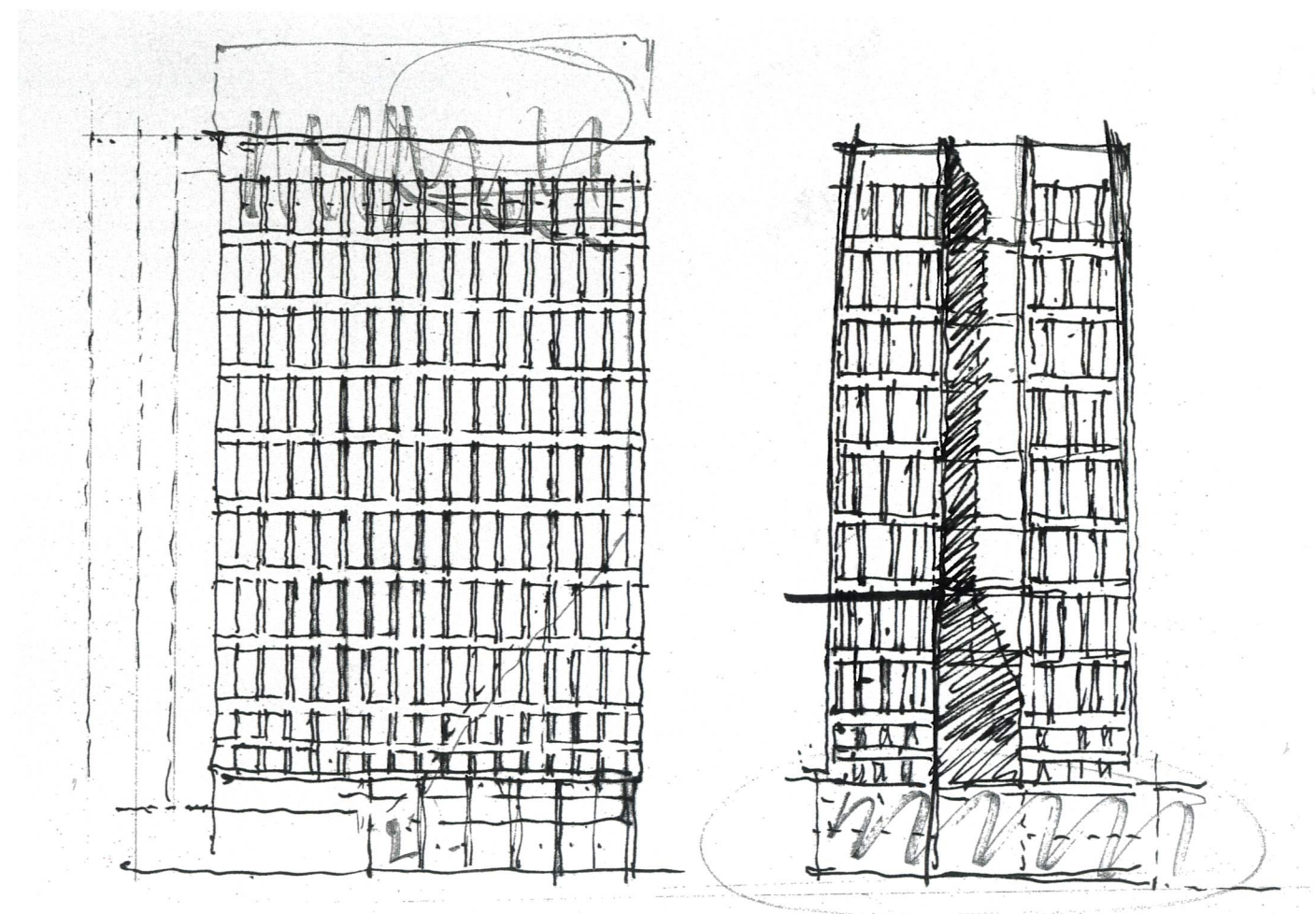


MAY FENTON

5 Aldermanbury Square

Eric Parry Architects

This 18-storey commercial office building is situated in the capital, next to London Wall. It is clad in shot-peened stainless steel which forms multi-height bays to accentuate the structure's verticality. It forges strong links with the immediate townscape, linking to a pedestrian route at ground level which connects to the Barbican Highwalk, an above-street-level public walkway.



Eric Parry, director, Eric Parry Architects

What was the inspiration for this design?
The earth, the sky and the stuff in between. There were the resonances with the past from the nearby Roman remains, Antonioni's view of this bit of the city [a reference to director Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blow-up*], to our neighbours now. There was the verticality of the building seen from so many city angles and the opportunity of a contrasting tension with a new urban landscape under and beyond the building and the materials to reinforce these ideas.

Did you work well with the client?
Having two large pension funds as our client is a bit like having godparents who are paying for your education: distant but respectful. This was our second building for Scottish Widows

[the first was 30 Finsbury Square, London] and the day-to-day relationship was with their agent, with whom we have a mutual goal of making a building that is as uncompromised as possible within all the usual knotty constraints.

How was the jury visit?
The Stirling jury was about the fourth visit [to the building] so I felt well practised. Perhaps expectations were low with a regular city office building and so generally jurors seemed happy when they left. There were several interesting points of debate: sustainability, the city, architectural order and crafting.

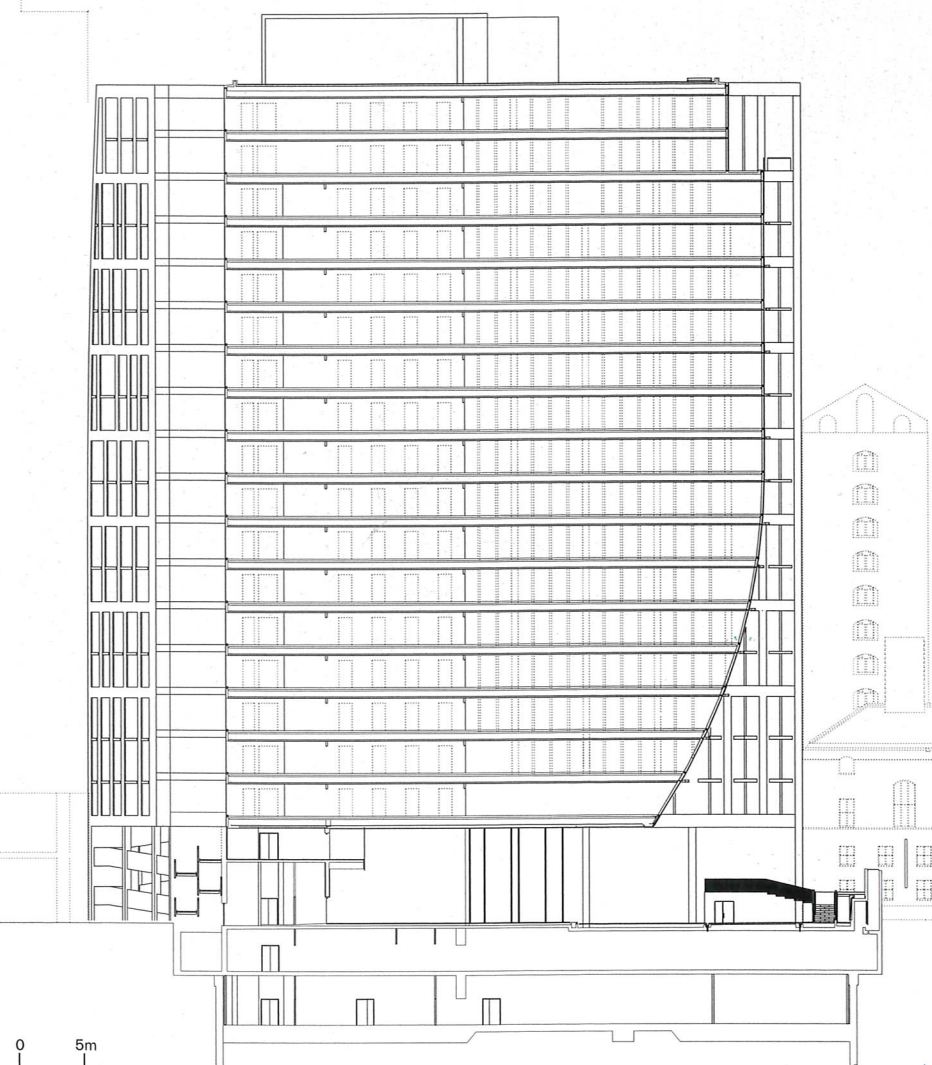
What would it mean to your practice if you won the Stirling Prize?
Of course it's a very important accolade, and a specific recognition for the whole team, >>



JAMES NEWTON

Opposite Parry's scheme sits alongside Terry Farrell's Alban Gate development

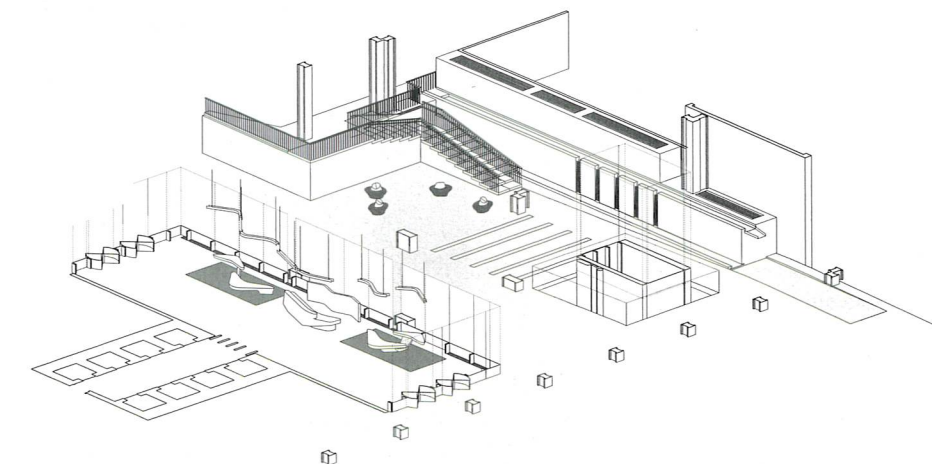
Top Sketches reveal the subtle entasis of the building's form
Above Ground level



Above Section through the building

Below Isometric study of the ground floor

Right Seat sculpture designed by Eric Parry



from client to subcontractors. It recognises a standard and helps with the will to do better.

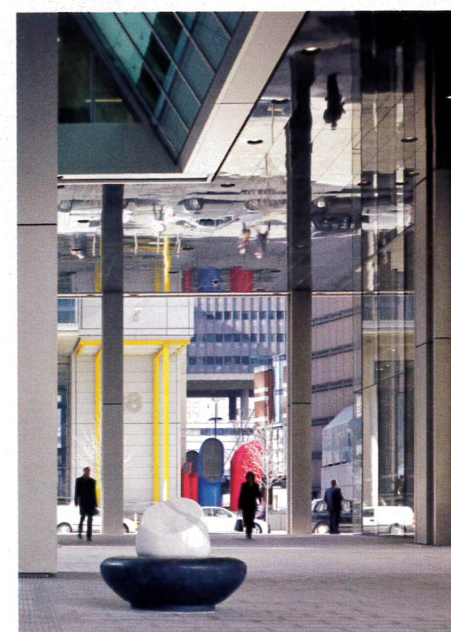
Which other project would you pick to win?

I have only visited AHMM's Kentish Town Health Centre, which is a very impressive achievement. I rather like the idea of the Liverpool masterplan, because it pursues an urban idea rather than a single building.

Is it harder for a commercial project to catch the imagination of the Stirling judges than a community one?

Every Stirling jury seems particular so it's hard to generalise – but on the whole, yes.

For a video interview with Eric Parry go to www.architectsjournal.co.uk



TIMOTHY SOAR

Start on site May 2004 (demolition), January 2005 (main contract)

Completion date October 2007

Gross internal floor area 35,165m²

Form of contract Design & Build

Total cost £72 million

Cost per m² £2,047

Client Scottish Widows plc

Architect Eric Parry Architects

Structural engineer Ramboll Whitbybird Engineers

Services engineer Hilson Moran Partnership

Quantity surveyor Northcroft

Main contractor Bovis

Annual CO₂ emissions 91.33kg/m²

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