

communiqué / press release**For immediate distribution**

THE CCA PRESENTS *NOTES FROM THE ARCHIVE: JAMES FRAZER STIRLING*
On view from 15 May until 14 October 2012, the exhibition highlights the career and legacy of British architect James Frazer Stirling.



Portrait of James Stirling. Ray Williams, photographer. James Stirling/Michael Wilford fonds, Canadian Centre for Architecture © Ray Williams



James Stirling, Michael Wilford and Associates. Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany (1977–1984), 1984. Alastair Hunter, photographer. James Stirling/Michael Wilford fonds, Centre Canadien d'Architecture © Alastair Hunter / RIBA Library Photographs Collection

Montréal, 15 May 2012 — The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents ***Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling***, on view in the Main Galleries from 15 May until 14 October 2012. The exhibition is the first ever international showcase of the archive of British architect, Yale School of Architecture professor, and Pritzker Prize laureate James Stirling (1926–1992), presenting the work of one of the most important and innovative architects of the twentieth century.

The exhibition is co-produced by the **CCA** and the **Yale Center for British Art** and is curated by architecture historian **Anthony Vidler**, Dean and Professor of the Cooper Union's Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture, New York.

Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling premiered at the **Yale Center for British Art** in October 2010. It has travelled to the **Tate Britain** in London (April-August 2011) and to the **Staatsgalerie** in Stuttgart (October 2011-January 2012). For its showcase in Montréal, the exhibition includes additional materials extracted from the **James Stirling/Michael Wilford fonds** at the CCA, offering a more detailed overview of this important body of work.

The exhibition emanates from the CCA, when it first presented material from the James Stirling/Michael Wilford fonds to the public in 2003-04, with the exhibition *out of the box: price rossi stirling + matta-clark*. A book of the same title authored by Vidler and published by the CCA and Yale Center for British Art, in association with Yale University Press, accompanies the exhibition.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling features more than 500 original architectural drawings, models, videos and photographs. The exhibition aims to deepen knowledge of Stirling's unique approach to the design process, underline the fundamental importance of historical and modernist references in his work and demonstrate continuity in his thinking throughout his career, from his early years as a student to his final projects. It offers the potential for the re-evaluation of Stirling's work, considering the often radical shifts influenced by a broad architectural vocabulary spanning from traditional vernacular to modernist sources, as well from Neoclassicism to Brutalism movements, through the presentation of both built and unbuilt projects.

For its presentation at the CCA, the exhibition offers a closer perspective on the archive, including both a larger number and a more diverse range of objects. 150 new objects have been added to complement the narrative, with a selection of press clippings, video footage, drawings, and photographs by Stirling himself. According to Mirko Zardini, Chief Curator and Director of the CCA, "*Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling*, is the most thorough examination to date of the practice of one of the 20th century's most important architects, highlighting the possibilities of archival research and bringing to the fore one of the key archives within the CCA's Collection."

Generally acknowledged among critics and architects alike as one of the most influential architects of the second half of the 20th century, Stirling's success as an architect lay in his ability to incorporate a wide range of compositional inspiration in his work, from ancient Rome and the Baroque to many manifestations of the modern period, from Frank Lloyd Wright to Alvar Aalto. In turn, Stirling's work has been interpreted in a number of eclectic, and often conflicting ways. Some followed his work move through a series of modern styles; others insisted that Stirling was a steadfast Modernist; while others have suggested a departure from Modernism in the mid-1960s.

Stirling's career of 44 years produced a plethora of materials from lecture notes and sketches to hundreds of photographs, to the published articles and the famous Black Notebook of observations and ideas. Particularly rare are the news clippings, photographs and artefacts that Stirling and his office collected. Curator Anthony Vidler comments: "*Notes*

from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling brings together the heterogeneous materials in such a way as to present an inside look at the process of design and the working methods of an architect that defined an authentic approach to contemporary architecture. In this context, *Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling* is an exhibition of an archive rather than a monographic retrospective that, together with the publication, provide a tool for understanding an architectural practice of unusual complexity.”

Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling engages the visitor with an eclectic range of materials that includes press clippings and seminal books, audio recordings, lecture notes—written on the back of design studio assignments and jotted on postcards, index cards, and hotel stationery.

A selection of Stirling’s more important built and projected works are featured within the exhibition, illustrating his qualities as a designer such as the Leicester University Engineering building (1959–63); the History Faculty building at Cambridge University (1964–67); the Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (1977–84); the Clore Gallery for the Turner Collection at Tate Britain (1984); and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum at Harvard University (1979–84). Projects such as the Olivetti headquarters in Milton Keynes are shown in a sequence of drawings that details both the form and volumes of the building.

Others work such as the competition entry for the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1989, a “miniature city” of books, are also displayed; a topic that is further explored inside the CCA’s Octagonal Gallery in an exhibition which also opens on the 15th May entitled *Très Grande Bibliothèque (Very Big Library)*, documenting the materials produced by Dutch architectural practice OMA for the same competition.

THE JAMES STIRLING/MICHAEL WILFORD FONDS

The James Stirling/Michael Wilford fonds were received by the CCA in 2000 from Mary Stirling and Michael Wilford and were catalogued in 2009 with the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The finding aid is available on the CCA web site.

Material from the James Stirling/Michael Wilford fonds were first shown to the public in 2003-04 in the exhibition *out of the box: price rossi stirling + matta-clark*, that presented materials from four recently-acquired archives. While *out of the box* offered a first look at material only recently removed from the studios of these major figures in twentieth century architecture, *Notes from the Archive* provides the opportunity for a more considered reflection upon Stirling and his oeuvre.

BIOGRAPHY

Born April 22, 1926, in Glasgow, Stirling was the son of a ship's engineer and a schoolteacher. He spent his childhood in Liverpool and, after service in World War II, studied architecture at Liverpool University in the late 1940s, notably with Colin Rowe. (Stirling graduated from Liverpool in 1950). While working in London for Lyons, Israel & Ellis, he met and went into partnership with James Gowan (b. 1923), 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 Faculty building at Cambridge University (1964–67). After the dissolution of the partnership with Gowan in 1963, Stirling set up his own practice in London. Michael Wilford, who had joined the firm of Stirling and Gowan as a Senior Assistant in 1960, continued working with Stirling after 1963. In 1971, Wilford became a partner in the firm.

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. The commission for the highly influential Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (1977–84), won in competition, mingled abstract references to Neoclassical building types and 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 spaces and the meanings that façades and building masses can assume in a constrained urban context. The last building completed while Stirling was alive was the bookshop in the gardens of the Venice Biennale (completed 1991).

Stirling was the Davenport Visiting Professor of Design at the Yale School of Architecture from 1966 to 1984. Throughout his career, he received numerous awards and other expressions of public acclaim for his work. He was made an honorary member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin in 1969, an honorary fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1976, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1979. He received the Royal Institute of British Architects Gold Medal in 1980 and the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1981.

CURATOR

Anthony Vidler is Dean and Professor of The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture at The Cooper Union. A historian and critic of modern and contemporary architecture, specializing in French architecture from the Enlightenment to the present, he has consistently

taught courses in design and history and theory and continues to teach a wide variety of courses at The Cooper Union.

As designer and curator he installed the permanent exhibition of the work of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux in the Royal Salt Works of Arc-et-Senans in Franche-Comté, France, as well as curating the exhibition, *Ledoux et les Lumières* at Arc-et-Senans for the European year of Enlightenment. In 2004, he was formerly asked to curate the portion of the exhibition *out of the box* dedicated to Stirling, for the CCA.

He has received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities; he was a Getty Scholar in 1992–93 and a Senior Mellon Fellow at the CCA in 2005.

His publications include *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Regime* (MIT Press, 1990) which received the Henry-Russell Hitchcock Award from the Society of Architectural Historians, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (MIT Press, 1992), *Warped Space: Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (MIT Press, 2000), *Histories of the Immediate Present: The Invention of Architectural Modernism* (MIT Press, 2008), *James Frazer Stirling: Notes from the Archive* (Yale University Press, 2010), and *The Scenes of the Street and other Essays* (Monacelli Press, 2011). He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and received the architecture award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2011.

EXHIBITION AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

The exhibition concept and design was developed by the CCA curatorial team. Architecture design was created by Brussels design firm **OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen**.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication, *James Frazer Stirling: Notes from the Archive* (Yale University Press, 2010), authored by Anthony Vidler. The book interprets the James Stirling/Michael Wilford fonds at the CCA as a living document of Stirling's attempts to broaden the language of Modernism while remaining faithful to his twin precepts of 'accommodation' and 'association.'

While not a catalogue of the exhibition, this publication follows the themes of the exhibit and develops the interpretation of Stirling's contribution to the history and vocabulary of modern architecture that is presented in the exhibition. The book is a project by the CCA and the Yale Center for British Art. It is available for purchase at the CCA Bookstore.

RELATED PROGRAMS

The exhibition vernissage will take place on **Tuesday 15 May** and features a **talk with curator Anthony Vidler** in the Paul-Desmarais Theatre at **6:30 pm**. It will be followed by two **music performances** by POP Montreal protégés **TOPS** and **Fall Horsie** and **DJ Shaydakiss** in the Shaughnessy House. Free admission.

THE CCA

The CCA is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive Collection, the CCA is a leading voice in advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on architecture, its history, theory, practice, and role in society. cca.qc.ca

PARTNERS AND FUNDING

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