

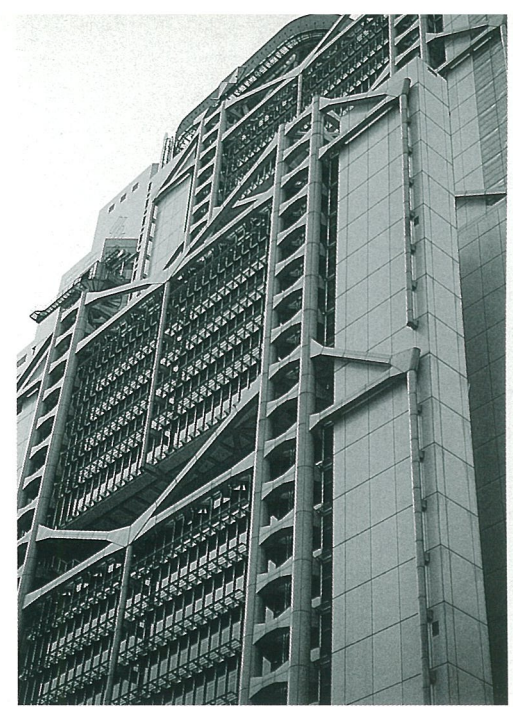
On the Work of Norman Foster
Teflon Tech:
Quarantine in the Big Shed

Since the Prince of Wales first entered the arena of architecture in 1984, the United Kingdom has placed at least 500,000 buildings on the list of historic buildings and ancient monuments. Half a million buildings are now legally protected from demolition or significant alterations, an unprecedented total. No country has ever taken such wide-scale and radical action to preserve its heritage as has Britain during the eighties. It is an attempt to employ official measures by government authorities to curb the destructive maelstrom of Modernism which until recently was welcomed by those same authorities with open arms. If the 'heritage industry' has anything to do with it, then from now on Britain will be preserved in aspic to become an eternal memento of bygone glory. The end of history is likely to meet little resistance here.

While Britain goes further than any other country in its advanced degree of historic somnambulism, it is simultaneously home to the most avid cult of technology in architecture. England clearly still identifies itself as the founder of the machine age. The country that once unleashed the Industrial Revolution and gave it its ideological ground rules ('Knowledge is power, time is money') can still pride itself on what Charles Jencks once called 'High Church Tech'. The buildings of such architects as Richard Rogers, Michael Hopkins, Nicholas Grimshaw and Norman Foster are recognised throughout the world as the thoroughbreds of 'High-tech' architecture. These architects prepare us for an Odyssey to the New Atlantis about which Francis Bacon once speculated. Of this illustrious company, Norman Foster is the one who has taken the technological aesthetics the furthest. Technology forms an ever recurring theme in his work and is exposed in all its beauty. He has little need of intellectual justifications. A multi-millionaire, manager and aesthete is at work here. Thus Foster is our best choice when it comes to assessing the cultural impact of this 'technicist' approach.

'Supernorm'

Some say the contemporary architect has no contribution to make to society. The architect may well get the assignment, but the investment decision, the programme of requirements, the site and ultimately a whole mass of details from climate control to potted plants, is defined by someone else. So what is left for the architect to do, permitted as he is to do his little turn somewhere halfway between the commission and the completion? The following: form. Form is his speciality, the domain of the profession. But even if form is the architect's only preserve and he has to leave the greater part of the project to the ministrations of the developer and the contractor, there are always margins within which the architect can find the elbow room to say something individual. If he does have something to say, then he can say it in those little bits of no man's land: domains like the manipulation of scaling, the areas between the served spaces, the vertical infrastructure, the corners, the boundary markings, the structural joints. The points where you think it really doesn't make any functional difference are exactly



Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, 1986

those where there is most that the architect can do. For that is where things are not rigidly defined by standards, conventions and the demands of the programme. The fact that the space has already been allotted to its various functions does not necessarily mean the final word has been said on the materials to be used, the positioning of the various spaces within the total building volume and the location of access routes. The architect who sets his sights further than the standard catalogue of solutions offered by the major industrial builders and the tried and tested typologies of form and system, can transmute the restrictions placed on his craft into an astonishing elegance and originality. There, in the margin between form and function, lies the promise of architecture as an art form. Once that point has been reached, the world opens and the whole litany of architecture's loss of meaning becomes a nonsense. And if an architect proves capable of continually ringing the changes within the specified constraints, of developing a unique style that may well mask the limitations of the institution but nonetheless overwhelms the public with an ostensibly functional display of meticulous precision, then he stands a good chance of achieving worldwide fame.

Sir Norman Foster is one who has achieved that lofty status. His success with the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank (1986), a megaproject without equal, rumoured to be the dearest building in the world, and documented in no less than twelve leading journals, has delivered him an aura of unassailable glory. His widening of the professional margin of action, his perfectly designed details, his hypertechnological innovations that trickle natural light down into the building's darkest nooks and crannies, and make it possible to adapt the structure to a new function 'in a single weekend'. These, together with his 'High-tech' image and his bulging portfolio, all go to make it possible for him to get done things that have long been classed as outside the competence of his less famous confreres. As soon as Foster's name is mentioned, financiers throw open their coffers, licenses are granted undemurringly, zoning plans are modified and the whole technical

I don't think architecture is made out of material. I mean, it is not the real substance of architecture. It's substance is mysterious. How to reconcile the technological instrumentality with non reasonable desire. That is the issue confronting architecture.

Kurt Forster

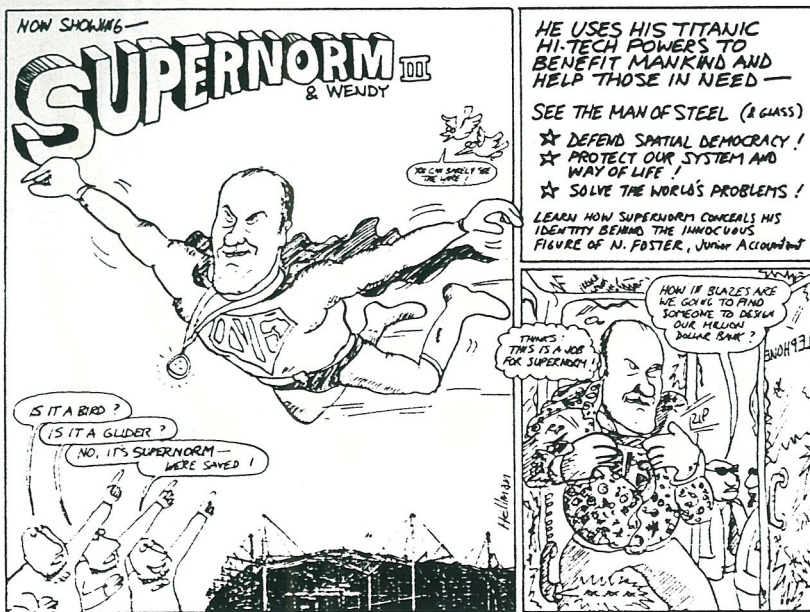
To return to the design team and the issue of posing the right questions. If the development and the realisation of a design are seen as a dynamic process in time, then all the variables - for example massing, materials, inside, outside, structure, heating, lighting, cooling, cost, time - are, like the control inputs to a helicopter, entirely interactive. You cannot change one without affecting some or all of the others. (...) When I fly an aircraft I can, in the same way that I analyse architecture, rationalise the event. Such factors as weight, load capacity, speed, range, fuel consumption and cruising altitude can be quantified into flight times and cost factors. I can even explain an aerobatic flight with blackboard theory, but the striving to

produce a graceful three dimensional sequence of manoeuvres in space requires not only a grand design but continuous in-flight decisions to refine the performance. The poetic ingredient of flight can lie close to the surface, even if it never emerges in conversation. In the same spirit, every decision in the design of a building is touched not only by reason but also by those intangible and poetic influences. Although unspoken, and often taken for granted, it is this fusion which may explain my own passion for architecture. Like any love affair it is difficult to separate the heart from the mind.

Norman Foster

Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing... Technè belongs to bringing forth, to *poiesis*; it is something poetic. (...) Essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. The Greeks conceive of *technè*, producing, in terms of letting appear. *Technè* thus conceived has been concealed in the technics of architecture since ancient times.

Martin Heidegger



Drawing by Louis Hellman of Norman Foster, published on the occasion of the RIBA Royal Gold Medal, London, 1987

team is made subject to the word of the maestro, who, in passing, pushes certain products and methodologies. Ergo: the more flexibility you demand of him, the more the result will be a real 'Foster'. And that is his secret. He designed the Century Tower in Tokyo in 1991 and is now working on a Millennium Tower, 800 metres tall. Not even the sky is the limit. It seems that someone with Foster's ability is able to give architecture its old authority back. For a proven talent like his, the institution of architecture appears to be capable of more than most people think.

The Quintessential Foster

Foster's Stansted International Airport, completed in 1991, pairs exemplary simplicity with exceptional refinement in design. In functional respects the project is little more than a gigantic hangar or shed of steel and glass which rises out of the landscape. All the public facilities are placed on a single floor level. All the technical spaces are hidden below ground. In as far as technical elements such as heating, ventilation, air conditioning and lighting have to appear above ground, they are generally concealed in a graceful supporting structure. Light, both natural and artificial, plays subtly among the roof trusses.

The interior displays a virtually limitless isotropy. Everything is smooth, flat and uninterrupted. The whole building is the very enemy of delay. It has practically become an aircraft itself: a medium for ultrarapid transit to nowhere, to the next halt. It is an architecture that demands a perspective as open as the sky itself. We can detect an ambiguous attitude to the image in Norman Foster's oeuvre. On the one hand, the work is marked by a considerable transparency. The buildings have been 'purged' of iconographic extras and radiate a narrative modesty. Imposed meanings are not allowed to obscure the function. The architecture is a neutral platform, a tool.

Architecture is a bridge over time, spanning between those cultures of the past and the future. Buildings created today are sited in places which have evolved over the history of past cultures. Each of our projects attempts to be a special response to its own place, influenced by and sensitive to the past also shaped by an anticipation of the future.

Norman Foster

One may claim that, unlike either science or art, architectural practice favours stasis rather than process and that it tends, however weakly, to resist the fungibility of the industrialised world. In this regard, latter-day appeals to science and art may be seen as subtle efforts to accommodate architecture to the dominant categories of a totally privatised and process-oriented world.

Kenneth Frampton

On the other hand, whether you take the neutral transit hall of Stansted, the cathedral of big business in the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, the speculative floor space of the Century Tower or the prestigious heights of the Millennium Tower, his work is invariably designed. For him, no monstrous tangles of piping, no brutal lines of rivets or lock-nuts; just suavely recessed Allen screws. His buildings often have an 'aerodynamic' skin of smooth steel or glass panels, as though they were about to shoot off at any moment. As a concession to the Miesian need for reserve and classic integrity, colour is used only sparingly. The structure stands aloof with an air of monochrome autonomy. Within an image which is polished in the extreme, Foster favours escalators and lifts as his most expressive element. Every building is self-evidently one-off, despite its overtly industrialised forms. Here the genius of the architect prevails over the pragmatism of the engineer.

The building materials are smooth, hard and 'industrial' – steel, glass and plastics. Even the stone paving at Stansted has a polished perfection that takes away its natural character.

The construction is unambiguously technical both in fact and in appearance. The umbrella structures of the Renault Distribution Centre (1983) and the suspended floors in the skeleton frame of the Century Tower result in a scaling up of the engineering metaphor. The oversized quality and expressive dynamism of the structure bring the architecture onto a practically metaphysical/ideological plane of meaning with strongly utopian connotations. With this, we move on from empirical observation to the realm of cultural interpretation.

A Shed as a Servant Space

The act of construction itself is not made manifest in Foster's work. Technology, in his view, is only interesting when associated with a skilled hand, with 'love and care'. He hereby explicitly introduces the notions of individual craftsmanship and artistry into a work that at first sight has such an impersonal aspect. In nineteenth century terms, what would previously have been treated as 'core form' is now articulated by Foster as 'art form'. What began as mechanical aesthetics here becomes the aesthetics of form. The engineer turns out to be a masterly visual designer. This is almost certainly exactly where the secret of Foster's global prestige and portfolio lies. Not only do his 'High-tech' designs appeal to countless industrialists and politicians who are keen to underline their ambitions with a 'scientific' allure, but he offers the ingredients of an optimistic world-view. Since he does not supply these services in the guise of an anonymous manipulator of prefab elements but as a unique artist with a unique style, he also appeals to those who seek the salvation of architecture in the consolidation of its 'artistic' qualities. Foster thus kills two birds with one stone: he advances the march of progress by a technological revitalisation of architecture; and, at the same time, he bolsters the image of the architect as artist, locked in a one-man battle against the uncaring world.

Since there is nothing else that 'defines' the space, it is dominated by the expressive properties of the structure. Foster's unique achievement is to bridge the seemingly

Today, technology is no longer distinct from science; there is instead, 'techno-science' (Lyotard), the instrumental integration of research and development, knowledge, and power. This system erodes definitions on all sides: the difference between body and not-body, the difference between life and death, the difference between nature and not-nature. This is real deconstruction – practised not on literary texts or works of art but on our very bodies and environment. In this type of deconstruction disciplines like architecture are eroded, its terms – body and space – are transformed by new machines and speeds. Given this practical deconstruction of architecture by techno-science, do we really need its theoretical deconstruction in the academy?

Hal Foster

Without a clear definition of needs, there is no basis on which to design. But often an honest 'don't know' is a far more precise acknowledgement of the reality of a situation than some spurious attempt to quantify an unknown future. Unlike the design of artefacts, buildings are conceived in the present for a volatile future, but, culturally, they cannot be separated from the context of the past.

Norman Foster

unbridgeable gulf between technology and architecture, which has held the discipline in its grasp for some two hundred years; and he does this not so much by striving for technical efficiency as an end in itself but by glorifying technology as a potential source of architectural form. The Kahnian 'servant space' has here become the entire building. All space has become subservient to the machine. In other words, Foster's architecture involves obeisance to technology without a proper consideration of its social consequences, namely the dissolution of authorship in an anonymous productivism. He manages to escape the reality of his object of adulation, namely technotopia achieved. His work remains a stereotype representation of the possible, of the future as a 'High-tech' Utopia. It is precisely the all too familiar image of the good old march of progress that conveys a sense of nostalgia.

This is palpable in the case of Stansted, where the building deliberately refers to 'the pioneering days of civil aviation'. Foster wishes to celebrate mobility in its finest hour, without a thought to the price we have since had to pay for it: the constipation of every infrastructure by an excess of motion, the destruction of place, the isolation of the individual, the economisation of society and, finally, the virtualisation of life itself.

Belief in Technology is a Matter of Technique

Foster derives his 'High-tech' idiom from the methods of engineering construction, especially of bridges, ships and aircraft. This architecture also has an air of 'manufacturing industry' about it, with a suggestion of production facilities, assembly halls, distribution centres and warehouses. This represents a curious narrowing of the whole idea of technology. Today the cultural significance of technology lies in the problems of identity associated with cybernetics, mediatisation and biotechnology. Manufacturing industry is becoming less and less fundamental to our society. The keyword of the post-industrial age is 'communication', and that is largely an electronic affair. Thus Foster's work is a representation of an outmoded idea of technology. It is a perfect futurist metaphor for the past – no less so because this architecture corresponds to an obsolete collectivist conviction, namely that 'we are all working together to achieve something great'.

Foster's position inevitably leads to a number of internal contradictions. Firstly, the plea for 'appropriate technology' is linked to consistent Fosterism. Foster aims to find an 'appropriate technology' for every project. He hopes to find the architectural means that fit the assignment as exactly as possible. This is the reason for his resistance to repeated attempts to elevate him to a sort of pope of high technology. Still, his work has remained unmistakably Fosterian over the years.

Secondly, the suggestion of standardisation ends up as technological symbolism. Robert Adam noted how much the 'High tech' rests on false premises. Although the 'High-tech' imagery suggests otherwise, the production of a building bears no resemblance to industrial manufacturing.

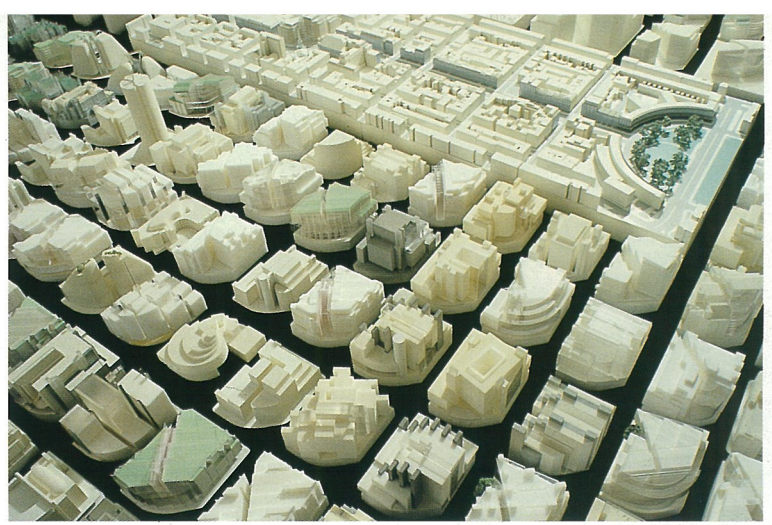
'On a site the operative must move to his task whereas the essential quality of factory flow production is that the task must move to the operative. In fact, the Modernist ideal of factory-inspired production is largely symbolical.'

Architecture is first and foremost about people and their needs, both privately as individuals and publicly as communities. In our work this theme of social context extends from the basics of shelter to the creation of symbolic spaces, the dynamic of movement and the poetry of natural light.

Norman Foster

There is a tendency for a certain mystique to develop around such words as 'design', especially 'good design'. This is unfortunate because it tends to cloud the importance that design decisions have in our lives. (...) The 'style' in which the problem is solved is far less important and it is unfortunate that this aspect is often over-emphasised. This dilemma can be seen in two current attitudes. First, there is a public apathy and indifference to the most fundamental aspects of design as they affect our very existence. Second, there is a tendency among designers to over-indulge in the more superficial aspects of their trade to the exclusion of the fundamental problems. The ensuing dialogue with its overtones of 'good taste' and mystique is largely irrelevant to a world going about its business.

Norman Foster



Concept models, BBC Radio Headquarters, London

Thus, in Adam's opinion, the superplastic aluminium used in the Sainsbury Centre (1978) in no way introduces a new, universal factory standard; and thank goodness for that, for if building were really to take place strictly according to mass-production principles, it would make a horrible world. If 'High-tech' remains purely symbolic we should certainly not regret the fact. ★

Thirdly, technological anonymity is coupled to world renown for the 'unique' talent. Something that Adam misses is how Foster's work helps clarify our thinking in this area. You would

★ Adam, Robert, 'Tin Gods', *Architectural Design* 61 (1990), pp. VIII-XVI.

expect an advanced, 'High-tech' architecture like that of Foster to diminish the architect's role even further than before. But, on the contrary, Foster's ability to interpret technology as a design element seems to enlarge that role (at least in his own case, considering his promotion to knight and media personality).

Fourthly, the pretence of offering a forum for human emancipation is undermined by measuring the human image in terms of technological rationality. We shall examine these four points one by one. Foster's style relates to a widespread psychological belief. The work is grounded in the Modernist idea that in this world people have to sort things out for themselves, individually and together. This thinking leaves no room for architecture to be anything other than a functional precondition. To paraphrase Karl Kraus, if it's a friendly atmosphere we want, we shall just have to create it with our friends. Foster's work is totally unrelated to Team 10's concept of an informal shelter intended for a non-authoritarian society. His buildings are not social condensers. On the contrary, their teflon technicism projects pure formality. Their neutrality does not come from a reduction to basic necessities to provide a backdrop for life at its most intense; it is an explicit and whole-hearted statement.

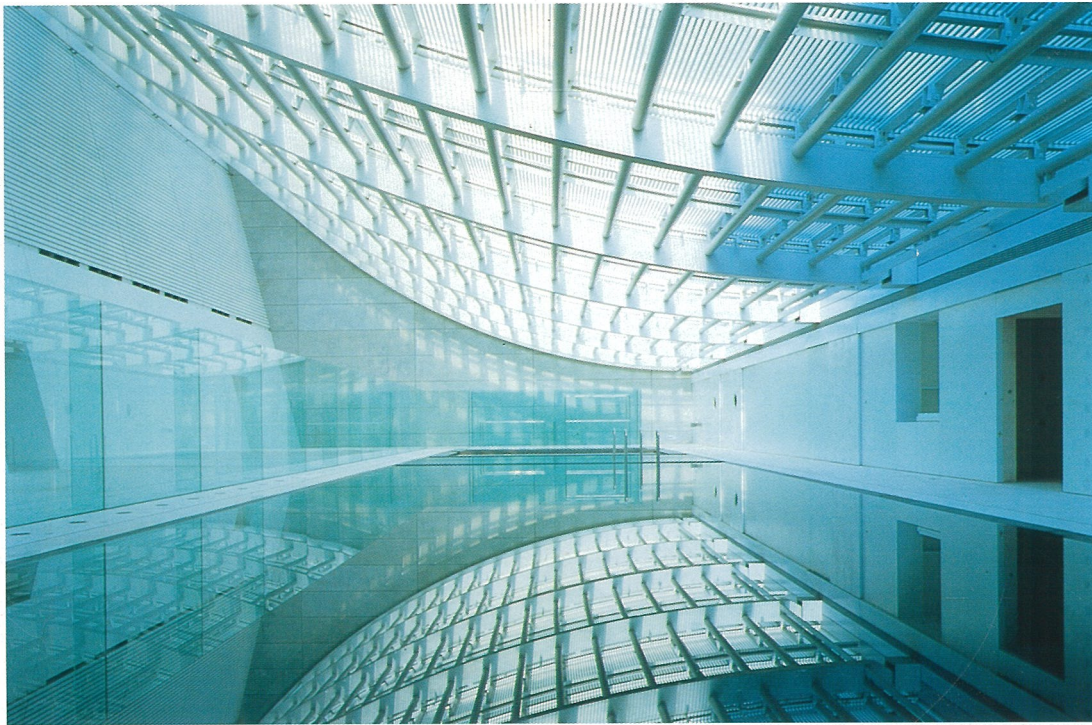
An Abstract Space for the Abstracted

This last observation brings us to the fundamental paradox of Modern architecture and its preoccupation with space. At the very point in history that architecture gave people all the space they needed, they suddenly became uncertain about what to do with it. This architectural tradition of creating space reveals a thirst for liberation. However,

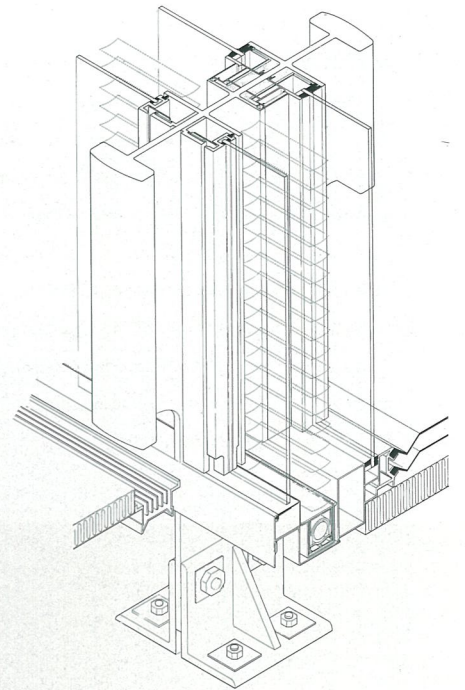
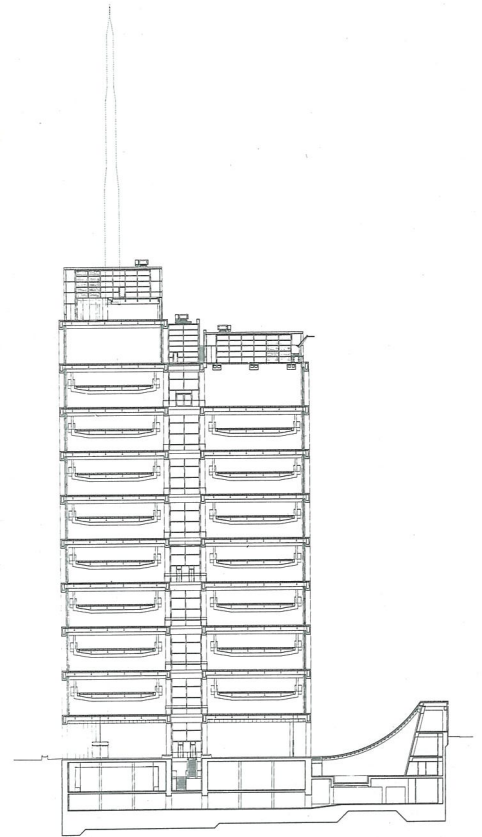
High-Tech promises a perfection which is religious at its core. The statement of Mies (...) that 'God is in the details' expresses the sentiment quite well, and anyone who is not inspired by the way a Foster or a Rogers will elegantly solve the details of a structural joint, is probably deficient in a higher spiritual faculty. The problem, however, is that High-Tech architecture is not presented as a religious or even stylistic mode. Rather it is justified for its supposed functional virtues and presented as a necessity - in short as the embodiment of a materialistic philosophy. This is stupid and a pity. (...) If only architects and critics would present this work as a matter of cultural and stylistic choice, rather than necessity, then its particular virtues

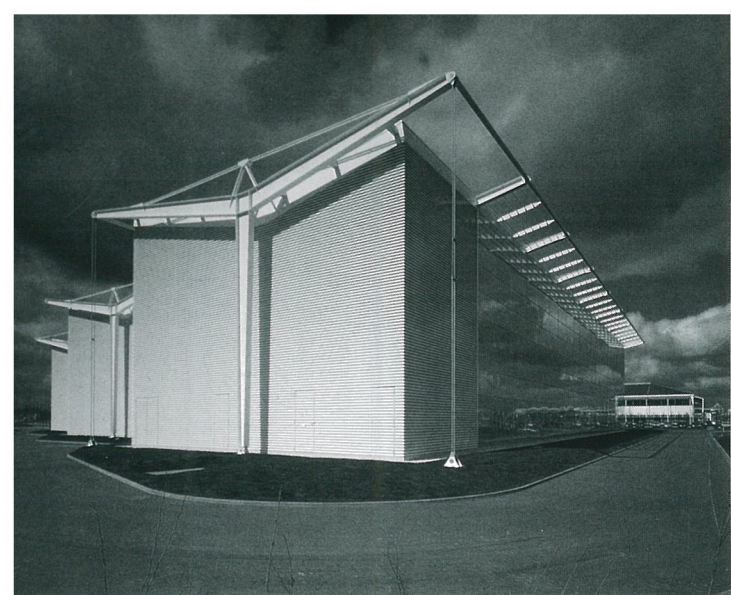
could be understood and improved. But virtually all the exponents of the style deny it is a style and admit only to a rational and utilitarian approach.

Charles Jencks



Century Tower, commercial building, Tokyo, 1991





Stockley Park B3 Building, offices, Uxbridge, 1991

there was no new purpose of life available, to which the new-found liberty could be applied. In this sense, we can construe Foster's ultra-Modernist design as an expression the bankruptcy of Modernism's pretensions to emancipation. Foster does not pause to reflect on this bankruptcy. Now that architecture no longer appears to serve as a social platform, Foster has decided to dress the platform up a bit. But however pretty it is, it remains a platform without a purpose.

It's really tragic. First people failed to get a grasp of Modern abstract space, owing to their incapacity to find a replacement sense of purpose after the disenchantment of the world. Then Modernism thinks of nothing better to use than 'design' to make this abstract space bearable. We can only console the new-born with the formal perfection of the forceps.

416 From an Architecture of Opportunity to an Architecture of the Golden Opportunity

Technology is a threat to the social status quo, but of all imaginable threats it is probably the one which is most widely tolerated. Technology is the one area where the world may freely be turned on its head. After all, it satisfies human curiosity about the future and promises a fix for every problem (except ethical ones, of course). So everyone wants it. How remarkable it is, therefore, that behind the 'High-tech' façade there lurk such unrevolutionary institutions as banks, offices, air terminals and military functions. The design invariably makes a suggestion that is never redeemed. Foster's work is an out-and-out celebration of the possible, and that would be heartwarming if it were not that his rendering of the possible has an alienating effect on people. Owing to the character of the institutions that occupy Foster's buildings, we are left with an impression that the visionary updraught of the possible is under the control of people who are only aware of it when they perceive a golden opportunity to gain riches and power. And how could it be otherwise when the 'appropriate technology' carries such a hefty price tag? Technology has lost its Promethean heroics. The audacity of the inventor has long been a thing of the past; all that matters is calculation, profit, business. Some people find Foster's spaces fascinating, others find them tedious. In neither case do they

encourage the frame of mind and energy that traditionally went with Modernist space: wide awake and striving for a goal. In Le Corbusier's words, *'l'Homme marche droit parce qu'il a un but'*. In Foster's work it is mainly the labour and production processes that march onward. Thus this work pre-eminently expresses the monotony of a society that continues to applaud a rudimentarily utopian view to life. Utopianism is an endless postponement of enjoyment and fulfilment to the future. All we have for the present is the dull routine of labour – and that must not be interrupted, so everything must be smooth and undistracting. Dormant dissatisfaction must be not stimulated but sedated. For example, Foster's office building in Ipswich for Willis, Faber and Dumas (1976) presents an egalitarian, isotropic, homogeneous space which accords with a non-hierarchical concept of the office. It is a conflict-free soma vision, complete with swimming pool and roof garden. It is not designed for an awakening individual but for the Gammas of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Foster's forte is *machines à gagner*, machines to make money in.

All Power to Architecture... but Please Disinfect it First

We do not live in a technological era because we live in machines; on the contrary, we are machines because this is a technological era. The era has its own dynamic quality and its own laws, which affect us whether we like it or not. Foster's 'appropriate technology' is not so much a satisfactory solution to this problem, as a piece of technicist appropriation designed to impress.

True, we are very impressed. Foster actualises an exceptionally beautiful dream and displays consummate craftsmanship. The technology is so overwhelming that we keel over at the sight – despite the falsehood of the arguments repeatedly used to justify it.

But back home at the writing desk, another thought strikes. It is impossible to justify treating a single, isolated product of Enlightenment ideology – albeit a very important one, namely purposive-instrumental technology – as a solution to the problems that come from the dialectics of that same Enlightenment. At its best, the machine aesthetic has always been coupled to a consideration of these dialectics, and the same ought to apply to new versions of that aesthetic.

The transparent aesthetics of Foster's buildings tell us something about the workings of society; but what pleases his clients, it must be said, is being able to observe the behaviour of their staff and customers. While Foster has carved himself out an elbow room of mythic proportions in order to give architecture back its social value as a meeting place of aesthetics, technology and organisation, the architecture that emerges looks like a perfect machinery for the perpetuation of our present social condition. The omnipresent Teflon skin of this architecture gives the world a spotless, uncontaminated look. The architecture is immune to the dirt of real life. Never was architecture as antiseptic as it is here – and that just when the immunity of organic life itself is showing the strain...

When civilisation goes past a certain point it seems to become pathogenic. The mastery over nature which was the original goal of technology proves to have the destruction of nature as an undesired side effect.

At the risk of over-simplification, the designer's task could be summed up as analysing set problems in the widest sense and organising the best available resources to achieve the highest performance solution in the most economical manner. It follows that the end result will have accommodated and integrated often conflicting and competing requirements. The very core of the problems and the way they are resolved will largely generate the style.

Norman Foster

It is contemporary man's peculiar tendency to place economic and technological considerations ahead of more fundamental human values. As a result, technology itself has become alienated from us, and the world defined by technological evaluations has acted to alienate us from our fellow men. Our human relationships have progressively degenerated to the mere exchange of information, and our objects are increasingly determined only by their usefulness.

Robert McCarter

Flexibility for rapid and unpredictable change over time is becoming increasingly important. Therefore the context of people, place and time is the central theme of our work.

Norman Foster

Technology is the process of production and throughout history this has been in a state of continual evolution. We do not believe that our work can be categorised as high or low technology, rather it is whatever is appropriate to the context. Craftsmanship is about quality of that process of making and the pride of the individual in the process, whilst material and techniques change over time the ingredient of loving care remains a necessary constant.

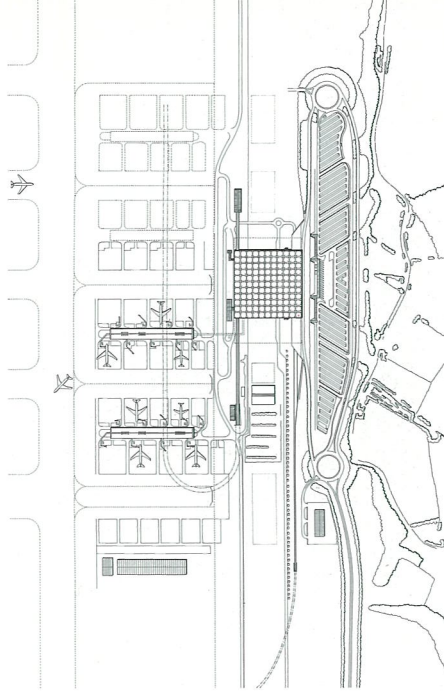
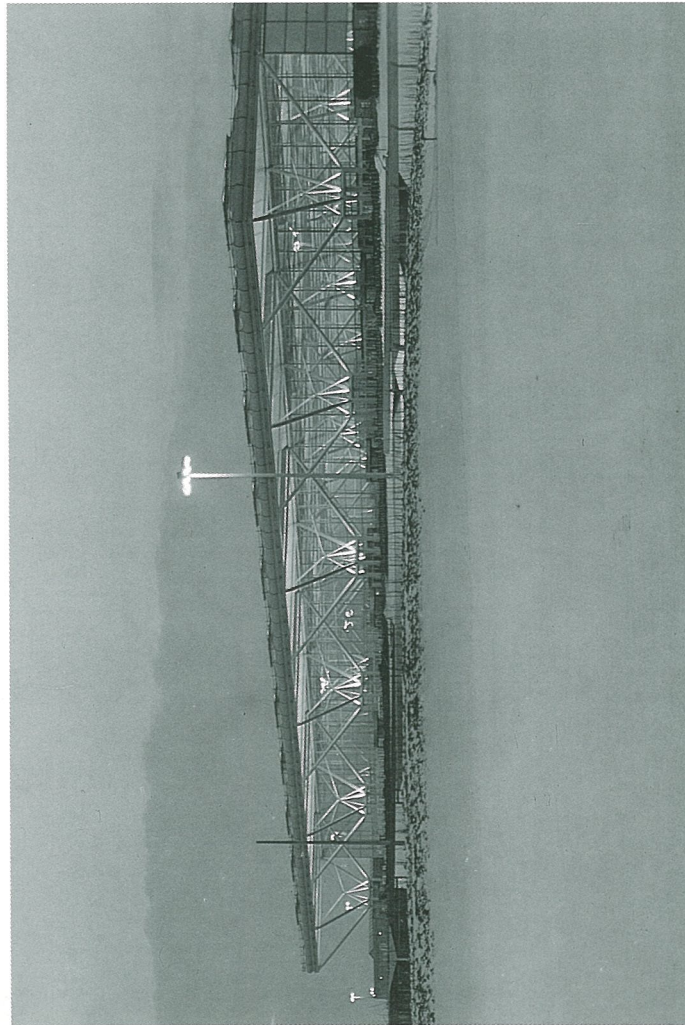
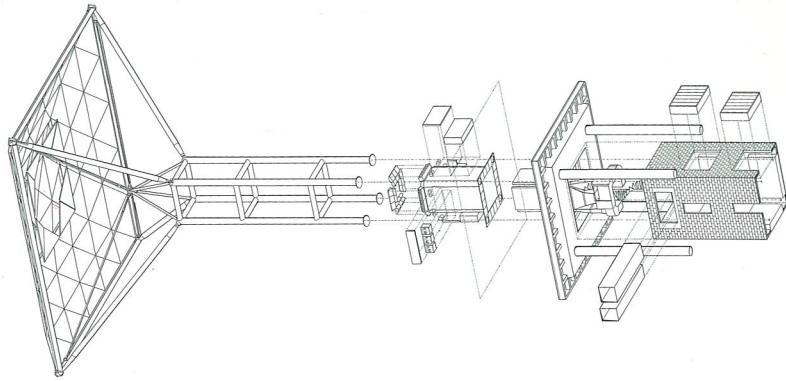
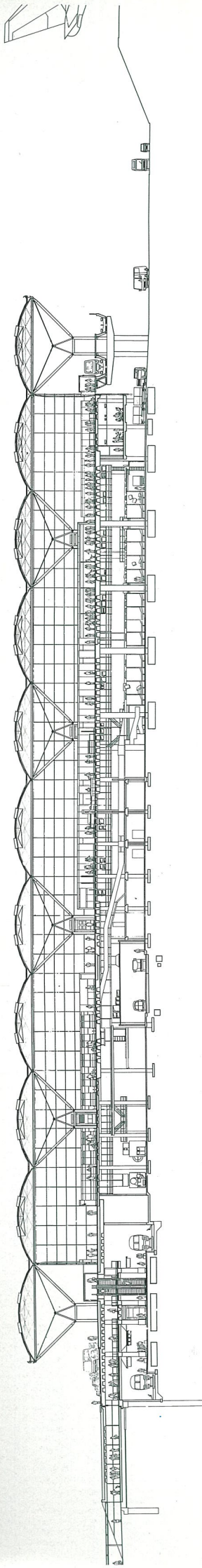
Norman Foster

Light is a good example. Any engineer can quantify and produce enough light to brighten a passage with or to read a book by. But what about the poetic dimension of natural light – the changing nature of an overcast sky – the discovery of shade – the sunlightness of a patch of sunlight?

Norman Foster

If the spaces that we create do not move the heart and mind then they are surely only addressing one part of their function?

Norman Foster



The terminal design seeks the simplicity and convenience of the earliest flying era. All public facilities are provided on a single concourse floor. The design gives a compact building which reduces walking distances for passengers and enables them to move through the building on simple linear routes. The terminal is very closely integrated with all transport links to Stansted. The landside vehicle forecourt and passenger set-down are constructed at the same level as the main concourse. The short term car park and coach station are situated to the south of the forecourt set at a lower level to minimise visual impact and give easy access into the terminal.

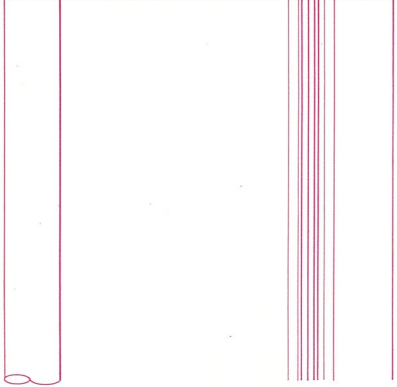
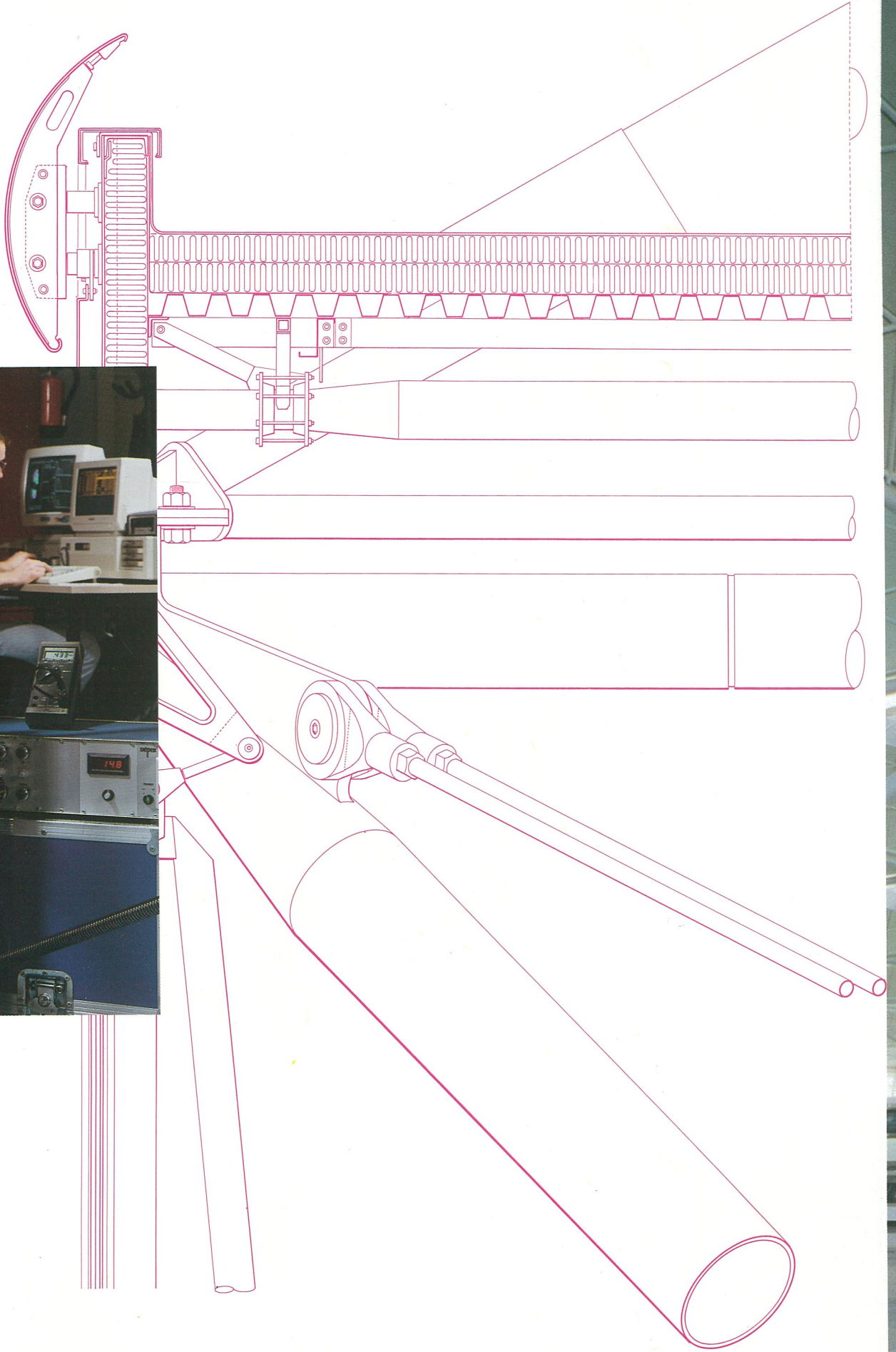
The British Rail station is located below the landside forecourt as an extension of an undercroft. Lifts, escalators and ramps bring passengers from the railway station, coach station and car park, directly up to the concourse level. Passengers then proceed through the check-in area, security and immigration controls and departure lounge to a tracked transit station. From here automatic tracked transit vehicles transport passengers to satellite buildings from which they board their aircraft. In addition to containing the proposed British Rail station, the undercroft serves the main concourse level above with baggage handling systems, the environmental engineering plant for the building, a service road with associated service areas and related commercial storage. The structural

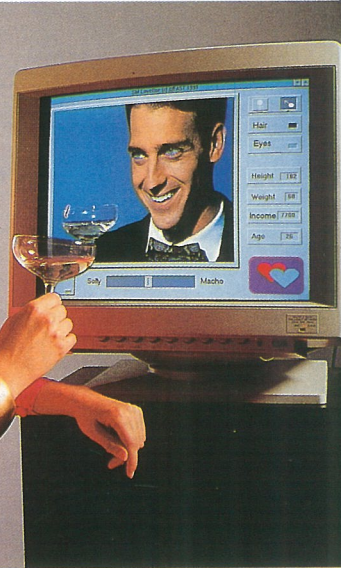
columns at concourse level are set on a 36 metres square grid, generated by the functional requirements of the terminal – in particular the check-in – and the need to provide maximum layout flexibility. The supports for the roof form tree-like structures comprising clusters of four tubular steel columns. All equipment for heating, ventilation, air conditioning and lighting serving the concourse is contained within these 'trees'. There are no engineering services at roof level in the terminal. To allow the airport a high degree of flexibility for growth and modifications, all passenger facilities at concourse level which require enclosure have been designed as free-standing enclosures or cabins, which can easily be dismantled. Internally there is natural light throughout the concourse, provided by both the fully glazed cladding and the roof lights in the lattice domes. This emphasises the feeling of calmness and airiness. After dark, the concourse is lit indirectly by light reflected from the roof; from the outside no harsh light sources are seen. The building gently glows. The form and external appearance of the terminal are designed to have an assertive but low profile. The main floor level is set at existing ground level. The overall height of the building is similar to that of trees in the surrounding landscape. *Norman Foster*

Location Stansted, Essex, Great Britain **Assistants** S. de Grey, C. Chabra, J. Silver and others **Client** British Airport Authority/Stansted Airport Ltd **Design** 1981-85 **Completion** 1991

Sir Norman Foster and Partners **Stansted Airport Terminal**

Biomechanical research





Rendezvous with the future