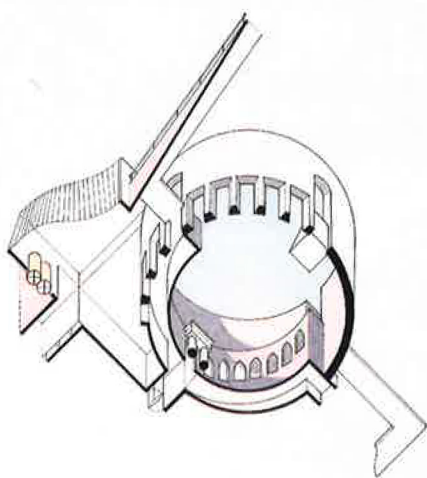


Below James Stirling, Michael Wilford and Associates, Neue Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (1977-1984)

Below right Aldo Rossi, Teatro del Mondo, Venice (1979-1980)



FONDS JAMES STIRLING/MICHAEL WILFORD



FONDS ALDO ROSSI

EXHIBITION

Nicola Homer confronts Utopia's Ghost at the CCA in Montreal

Utopia's Ghost: Postmodernism Reconsidered, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), Montreal, Canada. Until 25 May 2008. www.cca.qc.ca

Utopia's Ghost examines how Modernism continued to haunt the Post-Modern era in the 1970s and 1980s. The exhibition is the third in a new series at Montreal's Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) developed with university students – in this case, from an eponymous research seminar led by architect Reinhold Martin and conducted at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. Martin says: 'The rhetorical question that we're posing is: What if utopia is not dead?'

The exhibition opens with a black and white photomural of the 1972 demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, the Modernist St Louis housing project (1954). 'The mural is an allegory of what Modernism could do for the public realm and the masses, of all that was utopian and discarded as a project,' says Martin. It also provides an enigmatic backdrop for the range of drawings, models and renderings on display by leading innovators of Post-Modernism,

including Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, John Hejduk, Arata Isozaki, Léon Krier, Aldo Rossi, James Stirling and Robert Venturi.

Displayed in the CCA's Octagonal Gallery, multiple images of civic icons, such as Stirling's Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart (1984), orbit around five 'poles of attraction' – 'Roads to Nowhere', '(In)human Scale', 'Babel/Babble', 'Islands' and 'Worlds-within-worlds (Russian Dolls)' – which act as catalysts for intriguing cross-references. A self-conscious play occurs between the symmetry of the museum space and Rossi's Renaissance-inspired floating theatre of the Teatro del Mondo for the 1979 Venice Biennale (again echoed in Rossi's quirky concept for a coffee pot). Graves' sketch of the Portland Public Service Building (1979) accompanies Isozaki's early computer drawing for the Tokyo City Hall competition (1986), delineating the emerging rhetoric in which capitalism is reduced to pure surface.

Utopia's Ghost holds currency at a time when globalisation encourages a homogeneous approach to design; often removed from the reality of local needs. 'I hope contemporary architects will be embarrassed by the fact they've failed to maintain the spirit of utopia,' says Martin. 'I want them to hold on to the simple thought that things can be different.'

Resume: The ghosts of Modernism are stalking the Octagonal Gallery of the CCA. Be afraid, be very afraid