

Reconstruction, School Building and the Avant-Garde

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In the introduction to the first exhibition of post-war architecture, the Arts Council's *Ten Years of British Architecture, '45-55*, John Summerson identified school building as the most fertile field for the new radicalism he detected in British architecture, 'a tendency to go in search of principles. Not, it should be understood, theoretic principles, but principles embodied in actuality, principles announced as buildings'. In this emphasis on school building he was only reflecting the contemporary enthusiasm for the architectural qualities of the school building programme that was widely felt. J.M. Richards of the *Architectural Review* saw the new school architecture as defining the face of a new and especially English architecture: 'The newest schools illustrate the truth that good design is self-perpetuating; that the essential condition for producing better modern architecture is the existence of enough modern buildings to give modern architects a common fund of experience. In the development of modern school architecture...we can see at work the process whereby architectural style is created'.

Education and school building, quite as much as housing and town planning provides a field through which to study the terms in which reconstruction shaped the architectural agenda of the first pre-war decade. In education as in housing, the same combination of the destruction of the Blitz and the flying bomb attacks on the one hand, and the optimism that accompanied the debate about rebuilding on the other, created a sense of opportunity of what might be achieved when the war was over. In education the war created above all a determination to implement the reforms that had been held up during the 1930s for want of resources and for want of political will.

Reconstruction and Education

To understand the post-war programme of educational reform and the school building programme that accompanied it, we must start with the war. In London, for example, by the end of the Blitz around 10% of the county's primary schools had been destroyed or seriously damaged and in other towns and cities, too, school buildings were badly hit. And, as with housing and town planning, the linkage between educational reform and reconstruction is forged before 1942.

As people contemplated the destruction of the old they thought not only how to rebuild what had been but how to address the inadequacy of the old, the inequalities and injustice that had disfigured British society of the 1930s. Reconstruction would not only provide opportunities to rebuild but to address the educational agenda set, but not acted upon, by the Hadow Reports of 1926 and 1931 and the Spence Report of 1938. These had demanded the reorganisation of elementary schools and the establishment of some form of universal secondary education. To these urgent demands were now added other key educational aspirations: the replacement of the inadequate schools identified on the 'blacklist' by the local education authorities as long ago as 1925, and the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen.

With education, as with housing and town planning, and also with national insurance and

health, the war-time debates saw the establishment of what in the first post-war decade were to become the foundations of the welfare state. The educational plans debated from 1940 onwards were drawn up as a set of proposals published in 1942 as *Education after the War*, and were eventually to form the basis for the Education Act of 1944.

The importance of these proposals for post-war school building was recognised from the start. If educational reform was not to be held back again as it had been in the 1930s, then plans for a school building programme would have to be included in the plans for post-war building that were already being drawn up. Plans for a post-war housing drive were being discussed from 1940 onwards. By the spring of 1942 the Cabinet's key reconstruction committee, the IEP Committee, had agreed in outline the form of the post-war building programme. This allocated the lion's share of resources to housing, 60% of all building labour and the materials, leaving but 40% for all other forms of building, including schools. How this limited share might best be used needed to be considered as a matter of priority and by January 1942 Robert Wood, the Deputy Secretary of the Board of Education had established a committee to examine the problems of post-war school building. Published in December 1943, the final report of this committee was of considerable importance for the approach it took to post-war school building. Unlike the larger Burt Committee that had been established to look at non-traditional forms of construction for housing, had produced details of different forms of construction and even constructed a number of prototypes, the Wood Report said little about the actual form of school construction. But it did point up unequivocally the need for 'prefabrication of structural elements and the wide use of prefabricated materials' in school construction. With the clear prospect of keen competition between different sectors for scarce post-war building resources, traditional forms of construction would no longer do for schools.

Non-traditional school building: Middlesex and Hertfordshire

But what was to be put in their place? Attempts by Wood to build an experimental school in conjunction with Kent County Council and thus to develop the ideas set out in the Wood Report came to nothing because of the shortage of resources in the South caused by the flying bomb attacks. As the war drew to a close, the choice for most local education authorities casting around for an answer to the pressing need for new school places was either to accept the prefabricated classrooms, the HORSAs, offered by the Ministry of Education or to find a non-traditional system of school building. For counties like Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Essex the issue was particularly urgent. War-time destruction had claimed many schools, at the same time population growth even before the war had created a rapid rise in the demand for school places, and to this had to be added the extra school places to be provided for the raising of the school leaving age. How were they to meet this demand?

At the end of the war the most clearly articulated views on non-traditional school building were those of G.C. Stilman, country architect of West Sussex until his appointment as

county architect to Middlesex in the spring of 1945. Drawing on his pre-war designs for schools like those at Selsey or Littlehampton Stillman proposed a prefabricated bay system for building classrooms. Based on a bay module of 8'3" to give a 24'x24' classroom, these classrooms were to be planned as a series of 'fingers' linked by lightweight covered walkways to the school's other buildings, the school hall, and the school's offices which might be made out of traditional construction.

These late 1940s Middlesex schools have a pinched, 'utility' look about them which even today serves as a reminder of the shortages and the difficulties of the time. With the bland repetition of the bays on the glazed elevation and the unrelieved run of the corridor on the other, they are very similar to the classroom blocks Stillman was building in the 1930s but built in less durable fashion and fitted out with cheaper components and finishes. But Stillman's hopes of large scale experimentation were frustrated by the particular nature of the Middlesex programme. The restricted sites for many of the County's schools favoured 'one-off' designs which precluded the use of mass-production on the same scale as Hertfordshire. By the beginning of the 50s Stillman's designs were beginning to look dated. As cost control of the school building programme became tighter from 1950 onwards, the inefficiencies of the 'finger' plan with its high proportion of circulation space seemed less and less defensible, and Middlesex eventually moved like other authorities to a more compact system of planning.

The other county that was involved from the first in trying to develop a system of non-traditional school building was the immediately adjacent county of Hertfordshire. Under the leadership of John Newsom, appointed Chief Education Officer in 1940, the County had set about planning for education after the war in 1943. In answer to government pressure to draw up a programme of post-war school construction which would show how the County would respond to the opportunities created by the 1944 Education Act, and taking account of the growth of population in the area, Newsom and his planning team had recognised early on that the County would need to provide for a massive increase in the number of school places. Rather than rely on Ministry of Works huts, Newsom was convinced from the start of the advantages of building cheap lightweight schools, along the lines suggested by the experiments in school design by Stillman and others just before the war.

Without an Architect's Department, the County was persuaded to establish a department large enough to take on the design of the 176 schools that it was calculated in 1946 would be necessary to meet the County's needs. Having failed to attract Stillman, their first choice, the County appointed Herbert Aslin, formerly Borough Architect at Derby. By the end of the year of 1945, Stirrat Johnson-Marshall had been appointed as his deputy and with his help a young hand-picked staff was attracted to Hertford, many coming direct from the services or from schools like the Architectural Association.

The speed of development of the Herts system was astonishing. From late 1945 when Johnson-Marshall was first appointed it took barely twelve months before the first school, Cheshunt Infants School started on site, and only two years before this school and the

school at Essendon were ready for occupation. How was the Herts achievement possible? Determined not to put their faith into a single proprietary system, the team chose to design a system for the County's use, as Andrew Saint puts it, 'they wanted to compose not an essay or a book but a language and vocabulary, and to write the first literature in it all at the same time'. The key to this was the successful collaboration between the County team and Earnest Hinchliffe of Hills and Company in West Bromwich who was already interested in the opportunities for post-war reconstruction. In 1943 Hinchliffe had designed and developed the Hills Pressweld House, built around a lightweight steel frame, and had approached the Ministry of Education to see if a comparable system of construction would be of interest to those responsible for post-war school building. By the time that the Herts team had made contact with him through the Ministry of Education, Hinchliffe had already erected an experimental classroom unit, based on an eight foot three inch bay, at his works at West Bromwich and was preparing to manufacture a series of standardised components, cladding slabs, roof and floor units, for this and his Pressweld houses.

The team were thus able to start with a system on which considerable development had already taken place. But it was the foresight of the Herts group to see the potential of this system and, as the programme developed, to rewrite the grammar of Hills original design to produce a flexible yet coherent system that led to the success of the Herts schools. In many respects the original Hills design met the recommendations of the Wood Committee: it started with the officially commended eight foot three inches module and used a lightweight steel frame. But from the start the Herts group were certain that it could be improved. The first major improvement was to change from the 'bay' system used by Hinchliffe to the greater flexibility of a full modular grid system. It was the modular grid that made it possible to standardise and prefabricate not just the classrooms but all the accommodation required for a whole school. It was this, despite the cumbersome nature of the eight foot three inches module, that provided the key to the informality in planning that so appealed to the educationalists under Newsom. With this grid system it became possible in a way that simply was not possible with the rigidity of the bay approach to abandon the insistent regularity of the finger layout for a freedom of planning on different levels, with classrooms in echelon, or with classrooms and other spaces opening into one another. Here was the practical evidence of the superiority of the grid over the bay for school planning and a demonstration of the way in which prefabricated schools like those in Herts could meet the changing needs of educationalists in a way that traditionally constructed schools could not.

The first two schools built with the Herts system, the school at Cheshunt Infants School and the village school at Essendon show both the characteristic qualities of the system and the variety that could be achieved with it. The starting point for the planning of the two schools is the same but their appearance is very different. In both junior classrooms open off a corridor which houses coats and lavatories, in both the infants classrooms are treated as virtually self-contained pavillions complete with their own entrances, outdoor space and

cloakrooms. As a result the different proportion of infants to juniors in the two schools is reflected directly in their layout. At Cheshunt the staggered infants classrooms on the flat site give the impression of loose informality, of a blend of the open-air classrooms of the pre-war years with a Scandinavian holiday camp. At Essendon the school stands on a ridge overlooking a valley. It commands the site and its clearly visible form conveys the order of its organisation.

However much the two schools differ in their appearance, they are made with the same kit of parts. The same Meccano-like constructional system with its square fabricated columns and light steel trusses is used to make the classrooms and the hall, the corridors and the staff rooms. It easily accommodates all the major elements of school plans as varied as Cheshunt and Essendon. Contemporaries admired the potential of the system but were critical of certain details. The horizontal precast concrete cladding units, for example, attracted particular criticism for the way which they seemed to deny the lightness of the system. At Essendon the cladding gives the distinctly odd impression of a monolithic hall supported on spindly lightweight columns. And one of the Herts team noted of the early cladding system: 'there are, however, inconsistencies resulting from present-day conditions such as the necessity of cladding a very light frame with a clumsy intractable material which is neither a panel nor a wall permitting a clear expression of the structure'. But the strength of the Herts approach was that the design team could learn from its mistakes and the system did then improve. Thus later schools were designed with different cladding: at Croxley Green, the next school in the programme, the team tried vertical concrete cladding panels and, more successfully at Aboyne Lodge (1949-50) stove enameled metal panels.

Shaping the programme: the links between central and local government

Much of the success of the British school building programme by the mid 1950s was due to the work of the Ministry of Education and the relationship it had established with the country's 145 local education authorities. The contrast with the situation in housing could not be clearer. Here the Ministry of Health, after 1951 the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, had only loose links with the 1,500 local housing authorities. In contrast to school building, the majority of these authorities did not have a separate architect's department and most housing, was not designed by architects, or at best by those working in an engineer's or surveyors department. Authorities like the LCC with an Architect's Department employing over 750 architects - 300 in the Housing Division alone - and supported by 2,000 technical and administrative staff, was quite exceptional. Most cities did not have an architect's department in the 1950s. It was not until 1954 that Birmingham, the country second largest city, first established an independent Architect's Department, and a city like Cambridge had to wait until 1963.

The Ministry of Education established a very different pattern of working. Through its Architects and Buildings Branch, A&B Branch, the Ministry of Education was in the position not only to advise local authorities on school design and to comment on their proposals for new

building, but crucially, with the establishment of the Development Group in 1949, to build new projects. By building a series of experimental schools in conjunction with different local education authorities, A&B Branch were able to influence the form of the modern school, to show by example the way forward to new developments. Local authorities were not coerced into adopting the views or the advice of the Ministry of Education, they retained their individual identities and approaches and many went their own way. But at least those who wished to do so could call on the assistance of central government.

The way in which A&B Branch and the Development Group worked in the early 1950s owed much to the Hertfordshire schools programme. In August 1948 Johnson-Marshall left Herts to join the Ministry of Education as head of A&B Branch, where he worked alongside Anthony Part, a progressive civil servant of outstanding ability, under the informed guidance of John Maud, the Permanent Secretary at Education.

By the time Johnson-Marshall left the Ministry of Education in 1956, A&B Branch had already begun to affect the form of school building in three important ways. First, it was responsible for circulating information on the most successful new developments and their costs among different education authorities and their architects everywhere in England and Wales. Following the success of the *Post war Building Studies* series, the Ministry of Education in 1949 began to publish a series of *Building Bulletins* in which current thinking was set out by those directly involved in the work. *New Primary Schools, Building Bulletin No 1*, by David Medd, one of the first to join from Hertfordshire, provided a summary of the Herts experience; *Building Bulletin No 2* set out the thinking on secondary schools. Later bulletins addressed questions of cost, primary school layout, as well as described some of the Branch's development projects.

Second, the way in which the A&B Branch affected the form of school building was through the politically delicate, but critical task of securing better value for money in school building. The arrival in 1951, of the new Conservative government was met by loud calls for cuts in government expenditure and the Ministry of Education was faced between 1951-54 with the imperative need to reduce costs without compromising the school building programme. This was a new departure. In the first years after the war when the immediate priority was to increase the number of school places, costs had been less pressing than solving the shortages of manpower and materials. In place of the ad-hoc methods of controlling cost used before the war, the A&B Branch had instituted in 1950 a means of control based on the cost per place. But to meet the call for cost savings involved calculating how much a school actually cost to build and whether the newly established cost per place was reasonable.

Central to this inquiry was the attempt to examine the wide variation in the costs of schools built in different ways in different parts of the country. For the first time the separate elements of a building, the foundations, steelwork, cladding and roofing were costed independently. This form of comparative costing was of no great value where a building was designed and built as a singular, one-off assignment. But given the system of organising the

school-building programmes and the increased use of prefabricated or rationalised building methods, the value of this approach to cost analysis was greatly enhanced. An elemental analysis of cost made it possible for the first time for the architect, and the client, to understand how the overall cost of the school was allocated across the different elements of a school and thus to determine at the design stage priorities for expenditure. This pioneering system of cost control developed by the Branch's senior quantity surveyor, James Nisbet, was described with exemplary clarity in *Cost Study, Building Bulletin No 4*.

The third way in which A&B Branch was to influence school building came as a complement to its increasingly sophisticated control of costs. To demonstrate that the cost targets being recommended could be met in practice the Development Group built a number of prototype schools to show local authorities, who were generally too short of design staff to experiment on their own account, how they might set about the design of the new secondary and the new comprehensive schools called for by the 1944 Education Act. From 1949 to 1957, the Development Group was to develop five different school building systems. All were of lightweight rather than traditional construction: two of the systems were in steelwork, one was in aluminium, and two were in precast concrete, all were based on the 3'4' horizontal module adopted by the Ministry in 1948. The five development schools were St Crispin's School, Wokingham, designed in 1949-1950 as a further development of the Herts system based on the Hills light steel frame; the Parks Secondary School in Belper 1953-1955, based on a hot-rolled steel frame and later developed further to form the basis of the system used by the Consortium of Local Authority Schools' Programmes (CLASP); Limbrick Wood School, Coventry 1951-52, with an aluminium system developed from the Mark I Bristol Aircraft Company; the Arnold Grammar School, Nottingham in 1957-59, with a Laingspan prestressed and prefabricated structure, and finally Worthing Technical Secondary High School, 1953-55, built with the Intergrid prestressed and prefabricated system.

Local Authority School Building

Schools built by the Local Education Authorities with the advice and encouragement of central government are still seen, as they were at the time, to have been a success. True, the principle proponents of this view have been the educationalists and the architects closely engaged in their creation. But notwithstanding the changes in educational ideology since their construction, the reputation of the school building programmes of the 1950s remains largely untarnished. In *Education*, the national, weekly journal of record in education in the 1940s-1950s, teachers and educationalists praised the new primary schools, and the smaller number of secondary schools, for the sympathetic environment they provided for new developments in teaching. The architectural press, too, feted the new schools as the most successful and the most familiar face of modern architecture. The *Gran Premio con Menzione Speciale* which went to the small CLASP primary school at the Milan Triennale in 1960, is a reminder of the way in which English school building was viewed in Europe, a token of the international recognition of their qualities.

This success was due in part to the way the new schools answered the needs of teachers and pupils. The approach to the planning of the primary school in *Building Bulletin No 1, The New Primary School*, drew together the ideas of child-centered teaching practice that had already gained momentum in the 1930s and emerged as the dominant educational ideology by the early 1950s. To Christian Schiller, Chief Inspector of primary schools at the Ministry of Education and a champion of these views, it was important that school buildings should serve the child. The child and its education was central, and any investment in building should serve this focus. In architectural terms liberation was as necessary from the inhibiting effect of the inflexible buildings and rigid class layouts of the pre-war years, as was a shift away from formality and architectural display.

The overlap of educational and architectural ideas is evident from the start of the series of *Building Bulletins*. *The New Primary School*, the first bulletin written by David Medd fresh from Hertfordshire, opens with a discussion of the new approach, 'How can the architect make his best contribution to the creation of this [school] environment? The basis of the school design is not only a schedule of areas and building regulations but the needs and activities of growing children and their teachers.' In place of the conventional illustrations of school architecture, it offers a series of hand-drawn diagrams of site layout, classroom layout, equipment for playing, and different ways of using the building and using its spaces. How successfully were the ideas of A&B Branch translated into practice? The overall impression given by the eighty schools built by different authorities and shown in March 1953 at the 'Britain Builds for Education' exhibition arranged by the Building Centre, is of the extent to which these values had penetrated the designs of private practice and the County Architects who might, for other types of buildings, still be producing designs of pre-war monumentality. In place of the axial symmetries and the self-conscious display of architectural features, classical, arts and crafts, or 1930s moderne, the schools exhibited at the Building Centre and those frequently illustrated in *Official Architecture and Planning*, the *Architects' Journal*, and the *Builder*, share an informality of layout and simplicity of purpose that established, despite varieties in the configuration of plans and different approaches to construction and detailed design, an overall impression of a common approach.

This resemblance was in part a reflection of common educational priorities and partly a result of the way in which designers of schools, the LEAs and central government adopted common responses to the need to reduce the cost of school building. The reduction in funding begins in 1949 with the introduction of a cost limit per place. This was followed by a succession of annual reductions in which lead to a halving of the real cost per place between late 1949 and 1953. More effectively than was the case with housing, the damaging effect of these cuts was countered by the changes made in the design of schools, not in the standards of construction or in the overall quality of school buildings.

To meet these targets school architects and the architects of A&B Branch explored a number of ways of reducing costs, the two major savings were to be found in reducing the size of the building, and in cutting the costs of construction. Prompted by government's

general encouragement of non-traditional construction, many education authorities had high hopes that lightweight construction and the extensive use of prefabrication would lower costs. But in practice major savings were difficult to achieve. In 1955, despite the work of the Development Group, the Ministry of Education estimated that only twenty-five percent of schools were built using a complete system of prefabrication. The authorities who favoured this approach were widely scattered. They ranged from the home counties, where Herts with a rapidly rising school population regarded prefabrication as the only means of meeting its targets for new school places, to rural counties like Cornwall where the lightweight aluminium BAC system offered advantages of speed and cost over traditional construction in an region short of materials and labour. For most authorities complete prefabrication was not cheaper than traditional building. The Hills and Intergrid systems, for example, cost about the same as first class traditional building and offered the same degree of durability and performance. Their principle advantage was that both were faster to erect and needed less site labour than traditional building.

However these complete systems did not represent the sum of all non-traditional school building. The publicity that the Herts achievements attracted has overshadowed the history of widespread experimental work carried out by other authorities. Even at a time of steel shortage, as at the start of the 1950s, local authorities across the country continued to engage in an impressive range of experiments with different approaches to non-traditional construction. Lancashire, a large authority, had the advantage of a big programme with which to develop alternatives to traditional building. Smaller counties like Northampton were also keen to experiment. Here, the County Architect opposed the use of a proprietary system and his department was encouraged instead to use readily available prefabricated components, RSJs and metal windows, alongside traditional materials like brick. In general however, by 1955 the majority of education authorities were making extensive use of prefabricated components, if not of whole proprietary systems, as a means of meeting the reduced allowance per place or speeding construction.

Even more successful as a way of cutting costs was to reduce the size of school buildings and architects, encouraged by A&B Branch, looked intensively at ways of doing so. To reduce the cube of the building, for example, ceiling heights were trimmed, a limited though relatively pain-free way of reducing cost. By far the most effective way to cut costs was to reduce floor area, and to do so by reducing the amount of space used solely for circulation. In secondary schools the use of double rather than single-banked corridors offered immediate savings. In primary schools real savings were made by the shift from the 'finger plans' of the late 1930s-1940s to more the compact layouts of the 1950s, a shift made possible by the double use of the hall as dining room and circulation space. The Development Group estimated that this reduced the proportion of the area given over to circulation from twenty-three percent to seven percent, and in non-teaching accommodation from thirty-eight percent to twenty-five percent. Overall, these new compact plans made it possible to reduce the area per place by nearly forty percent in under five years without cutting the areas

available for teaching, thus enabling architects to meet the demands for economy without compromising quality.

One result of this pressure to reduce costs was to encourage a convergence on successful solutions to the layout of schools. With a large number of architects working on the design of schools and with information on new buildings and new design ideas rapidly circulated by the Ministry of Education and through the architectural press, a common approach, a familial resemblance, though not necessarily a common 'style' for the design of the modern school soon evolved, winning approval from professionals and public alike. Differences between the approaches of individual authorities remained: in Herts schools built under Aslin looked very different from the schools built in the two neighbouring counties. Schools built in Middlesex under Stillman and in Essex under Connolly differed from those in Herts - and each other - in construction and in appearance. But schools in all three counties reflected the same pressures to cut circulation and to replace the loose layouts of the late 1940s with the more compact plans of the early 1950s. With flat, or gently sloping roofs, their modest 'domestic' scale, large windows, the frequent use of lightweight and prefabricated construction, bright colours, and with their generally light and spacious appearance, the architecture of the new schools had much in common. It was this generic quality that was recognised in the editorials and reviews of school building in the pages of *Official Architecture and Planning*, *The Builder*, and the *Architects' Journal*.

The Avant-Garde and School Building

Can we use this understanding of the school building programme to read the Smithsons' achievement at Hunstanton? First a grasp of the contemporary debate on schools may help us to see why two unknowns came to win the competition. Dennis Clark-Hall, a figure whose reputation as a leading modernist school designer had been established as early as 1936 with his first prize in the News Chronicle's School Competition and his design for Richmond Girls Grammar School, was sole judge of the Hunstanton competition and had just finished the design of the Cranford Secondary Modern School, Middlesex, with the accommodation arranged around a covered court and with all the classrooms on the first floor. Rejecting the finger plans as wasteful of space he had expressly commended the Smithsons' plan for its compactness in planning, an issue then at the heart of the discussion of how best to reduce the cost per place in school building.

But if the Smithsons won the competition because of the apparent relevance of their design for current issues, they then turned their back on the contemporary debate on schools to concentrate on the eternal truths of architecture. Indeed we can point this up by comparing their design on two key issues with one of the first Herts schools at Essendon, designed at just about the same time: first on the critical issue of construction at a time of severe shortages of manpower and materials; second, on the building viewed as a school rather than as an architectural monument.

Peter Smithson used to say with a kind of pride that their school took so long to build because it swallowed the whole of Norfolk County Council's steel allocation for four years. True, the structure, designed using plastic theory, was as efficient and economical as a frame might be. But how does it compare with the amount of steel used in a Herts school? The Herts system may have a measure of redundancy that comes from using a mass-produced system in which the same section may do a different amount of 'work' in different conditions. But overall it is my firm impression that the Hunstanton school uses more steel than Essendon. Was this appropriate at a time of an acute national steel shortage?

In talking about the method of construction the Smithsons likened the way in which the builder was being asked to treat the steel in the manner that a medieval carpenter might treat wood: it was to be sized and cut to suit the particular context, the very antithesis of system building, perhaps a suggestion of continuity to a rugged tradition of English building. But what did this mean in practice? This and the complete absence of applied finishes made the school's construction particularly taxing, a challenge willingly met perhaps, but one requiring extra time and a continuous exercise of a high level of skill, not to mention curious activities such as the cutting of storey height rebates in the brickwork so that the steel and the brickwork might remain in the same plane. Here was a clear contrast with the ease with which Essendon and other schools were built by semi- and unskilled labour after the precision required for setting out the column bases. Keenly engaged with the making of their particular monument and the integrity of its construction, the Smithsons' approach nevertheless exhibited a carelessness to the pragmatics of building in the 1950s, to the larger imperatives generally shared across the school building programme to address non-traditional construction as a way of keeping down the cost per place.

What then of the second point of comparison, the view of Hunstanton as school rather than as monument or an act of homage to Mies van der Rohe? Amongst the hagiographic outpourings on Peter Smithson's death in March this year, there was at least one former headmaster of the school who remembered the terms in which the building seemed to inhibit education. He recalls wrestling with its obstinate inflexibility and its insensitivity to the needs of those teaching in it. Nowhere that I know is there any reference by the Smithsons to the educational debates of the moment, or of the terms in which their design would address the questions of teaching and education. Indeed lest the sight of the school in use subvert the architectural order they had contrived, the Smithsons banished teachers, children and all furniture from the published photographs of the building, a decision pointedly noted by even the *Architectural Review*.

At a time when the schools built by Herts and many other local education authorities were beginning to develop a radical form of building ordered around the processes of education, an approach to architecture which was in some relatively unselfconscious way 'other', the Smithsons appeared to cling to an old-fashioned view of the architect whose prime responsibility was to the art of architecture and to the integrity of their work in these terms. They may have talked later about drawing inspiration from the rugged qualities of the everyday,

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from the rush of urban life around them. But their engagement with the everyday remained essentially aesthetic. Their's remained a special everyday which spoke of an indifference to the workaday world of everyman. At the very time when reconstruction was beginning to change the old order of British society around them, they remained indifferent to the nature of the new.