

London Narrative



London's Millennium Bridge across River Thames

The basic mannerism of experiencing Architecture often elucidates the significance of totality, the integration of building with the streetscape – street scenery and street life. This perspective of appraisal of built form is relatively dynamic than static in urban context. Subconscious as well as rational interpretations together play a pivotal role in anchoring a position. City of London provides numerous revelations to the resurging traits of this proposition: depiction of Architecture in all its glory. Date back to the Roman intervention, subsequent Saxon inhabitation, later Norman Conquest to evolutionary chronological - iconic developments with time.

Londinium (ancient name: courtesy Romans) was ideally located for business. Situated on the banks of Thames, it soon established itself as an eventful and thriving Port. Tradesmen from various regions came together to form companies, as business thrived the City of London soon became a landmark for commerce. With passing time Merchant Venture Companies were established. The most famous among them being the East India Company whose power lasted until well into the 19th century. The legacy of entrepreneurship has elevated London as one of the pre eminent financial centers of the world and vies with New York City as the most important location for international finance. This position has over a period of time brought about significant infra structure developments and enhanced the quality of life.

YMCA STUDENTS HOSTEL - 41 FITZROY SQUARE



The seasoned facade of the Youth Hostel would definitely evoke nostalgia amongst many former Indian students at London. At some point of their initial tryst with London this building would have definitely provided haven for their ambitious journey in pursuit of higher aspirations. Even today the national council of YMCA provides service to the Indian Student Community to understand, appreciate and imbibe what is best in the tradition and culture of Great Britain and at the same time to prove to be worthy ambassadors of India.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The basic building layout was that of a quadrangle with four wings: the north, east, south and west wings, designed by Sir Robert Smirke in 1823. The Greek Revival style which emulated classical Greek Architecture was predominantly applied; the columns and pediment at south entrance are a testimony to this approach. Notable extensions in the past decades to this complex were the Weston Hall, White Wing, King Edward VII Galleries etc. The round reading room with its domed ceiling and the Norman Foster designed Great Court are the recent remarkable additions.

The Great Court is entered from the Museums principal level, and connects all the surrounding galleries. Within the space lies the largest enclosed public space in London made up of glass panels and fritting technique. At its heart is the magnificent space of the restored Reading Room, staircases encircle the Reading Room and lead to a gallery for temporary exhibitions with a restaurant above.



NATIONAL GALLERY

The basic building layout was designed by Sir William Wilkins in 1832, who envisioned erecting a novel museum for nurturing art. Alterations and expansion provided a positive outlook to the complex. Remarkable intervention by Sir Charles Barry provided a cross axial plan - chambers as well as landscaping of Trafalgar Square is commendable. This followed by several subsequent expansions brought about a symmetrical composition. The latest intervention being - Sainsbury Wing designed by architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott.



COVENT GARDEN

The historical lineage of revitalization of the area dates back to Charles I, a cause subsequently adopted by landowners and developers. The highlight being, Inigo Jones Market Piazza built in 1630's surrounded by various other prominent buildings. The whole zone is presently properly revitalized and refurbished for effective tourist attractions and effective commercial purposes.



PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

One of the most recognized buildings in the world. From its destruction in the 1834 fire to the present day, the complex has an epic tale. The Palace of Westminster owes its stunning Gothic architecture which symbolized Victorian era to the 19th Century architect Sir Charles Barry and Sir Augustus Welby Pugin.



The Palace contains a fascinating mixture of both ancient and renaissance buildings. Towering over the modest brick built Georgian terraces of Westminster; the new Palace had an enormous effect on the subsequent public architecture as well as imagination of the people. Another remarkable structure is the clock tower commonly known as Big Ben after its main bell.

ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Is a Church of England Cathedral, the seat of the Bishop of London and mother church of Diocese of London, its cited on top of Ligate Hill. The present church dating from the 17th century was designed in the English Baroque style by Sir Christopher Wren. The commission was part of major rebuilding program which took place after the Great Fire of London.



CANARY WHARFS



The Tower Bridge * Wharf Area Developments

The Wharfs and adjoining areas have seen tremendous revitalization projects being realized in the near past, thereby providing a new character as well as a new skyline. The Tower Bridge designed by Sir John Wolfe Barry stands testimony to the growth of the wharf and commercial trade across River Thames. The bridge is located close to the Tower of London from which it takes its name, and has become an iconic symbol of London. Technically it's a bascule bridge with two towers built on piers. The central span was split into two – which could be raised to allow river traffic to pass.

GOLDEN HIND

The Golden Hind was an English Galleon best known for its circumnavigation of the globe between 1577 and 1580 captained by Sir Francis Drake. The ship and crew were decorated with high honors for conquest over Spanish galleon Nuestra Senora de la Concepcion, largest ever treasure hauls is credited to this event. Replica of the Golden Hind is docked in St Mary Overie Dock.



CHANCERY LANE: OLD TIMBER BUILDING

The wooden building in the picture dates back to the architecture character that was existent prior to the Great Fire of London, September 1666. The streets of London are filled with historical projects that provide a visual narrative of evolution through time and associated achievements of the people of London.

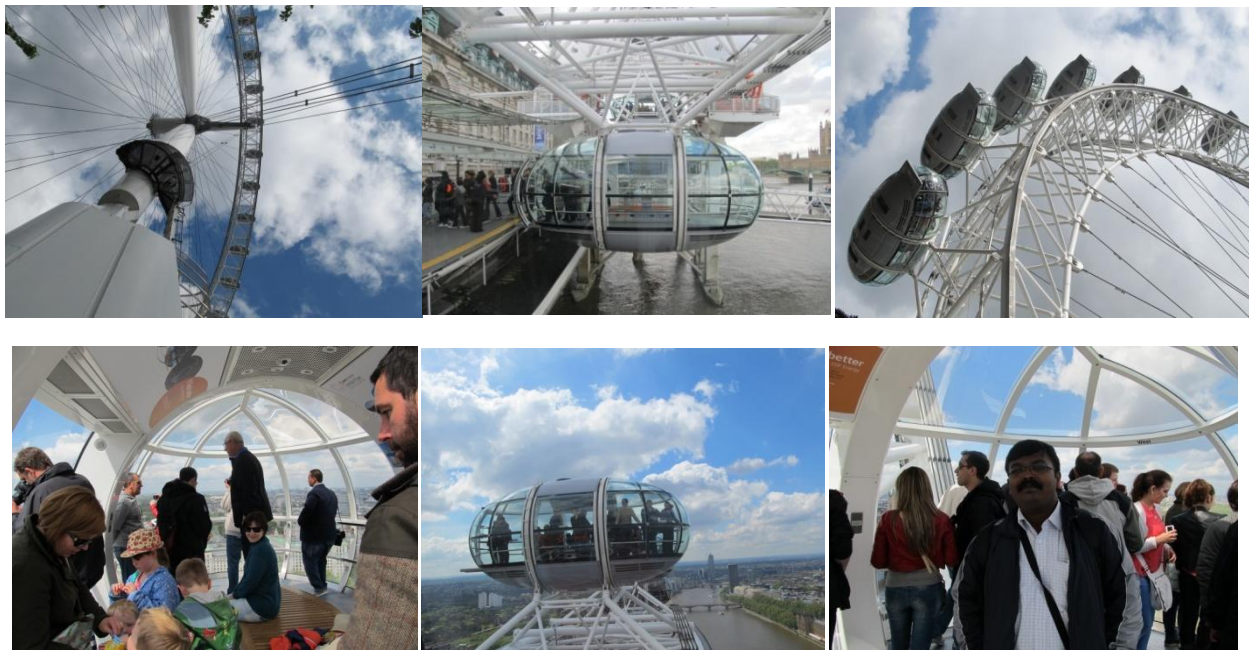


LONDON UNDERGROUND

The London Underground, commonly referred to as the Tube plays a significant role in providing accessible transportation network to almost in excess of one billion passengers a year. The history dates back to 1863 with the Metropolitan Railway, the world's first underground railway network. Advancements in tunneling shield durability and advents in electronic locomotives have driven the transport network of London under the Greater London Authority to iconic proportions in the present era. Major renewal as well as revival commissions of prominent stations and adjoining areas elevated the urban character.

LONDON EYE

Architects David Marks and Julia Barfield, products of AA School of Architecture got selected based on the open competition (1993) hosted by the Sunday Times and the Architecture Foundation to commission a unique structure for the Millennium. They envisioned a hi-tech Ferris wheel which would become one of the major tourist attraction as well as the tallest in Europe. On completion the whole structure stands whooping 137m tall, rim of the wheel is supported by tie rods and looks like a bicycle wheel. It is well known as the world's largest cantilevered observation wheel, supported by an A – Frame on one side and goes by the name of The London Eye. Each of the 32 ovoidal air – conditioned passenger capsules weighs 10 tonnes and can carry 25 people. Symbolically each capsule represents one of the London Boroughs.



Skyline



Present City of London – Skyline is dotted with new high-rise structures, symbolic gestures of transition of London and embracement of new world order of architectural manifestations.

LLOYDS BUILDING

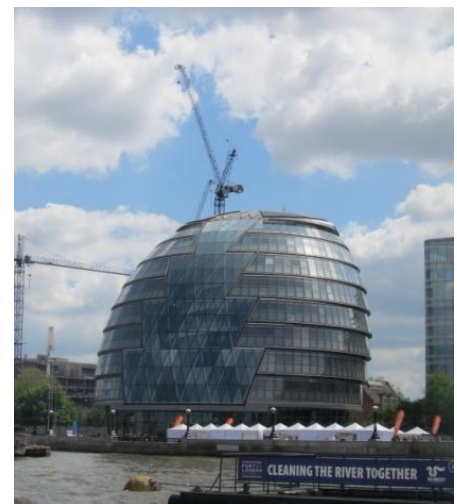
The building, a prominent commission of Ar. Richard Rogers, built between 1978 - 1986 exhibits a remarkable transition in built form approach. Services of the buildings, such as, lifts, staircase, ducts, electrical power conduits and water pipes are located on the exterior to maximize uncluttered space in the interior. The building consists of three main towers and three service towers around a central rectangular space.

CITY HALL

Is the headquarters of Greater London Authority which comprises of Mayor of London and the London Assembly. The project was visualized by Sir Norman Foster and Partners in 2002. It forms the focal point of the More London Development – a new working community on the south bank of Thames between London and Tower Bridges. It occupies a strategic position on the cultural route featuring Tate Modern, Globe Theatre, Southwark Cathedral, Tower Bridge and the Design Museum. The project was designed using advanced CAD techniques, providing a radical proposition to new outlooks and sustainability.

30 St MARY AXE

It is an environmentally sustainable skyscraper in London, designed by Norman Foster and Partners towering 41 floors (2000 – 2004). The outside of the building consists of 4,000 square meters of glass arranged in diamond shaped panes. The floor plans are shaped like flowers, with circular perimeter indented by 6 triangular courts. The indentation remain a constant size at each level, while the space between diminishes. Openings in the light wells unwrap automatically to augment the air conditioning systems with natural ventilation, an occurrence anticipated to save energy. The atria are arranged in a spiral so that air drawn into the tower via the light wells circulates around the building due to difference on external air pressure. The curved form is realized through the use of a diagonal steel structure called a diagrid, made from intersecting tubular steel sections which give vertical support to the floors, rendering them column free.



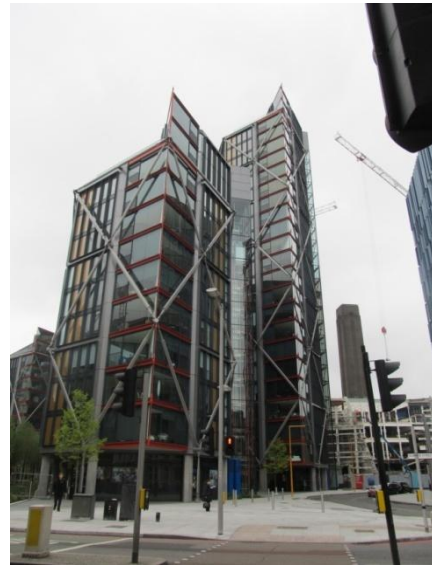
CENTRAL SAINT GILES

The St Giles area was earmarked for regeneration in the London Plan. This commission was given to Renzo Piano & Fletcher Priest Architects. The building complex was successfully realized by 2011. Basic approach was for the transformation of an existing single – use office building into a genuinely mixed use development incorporating office, retail, restaurant and residential use. The architects choose to situate the buildings around a new courtyard in the center of the site, which is connected by a publicly accessible route. The overall scheme is composed of complex volumes blended with combination of gleaming facets, which are integrated into the context.



NEO BANKSIDE

The new commission Neo Bankside, a set of six sided apartment blocks beside the Tate Modern art gallery provides a divergent outlook. Like the Centre Pompidou and many other buildings designed by Studio founder Richard Rogers, the four towers feature external bracing systems that form a steel diagrid across the glass facades and glazed lift towers. The development provides 217 apartments in total and is surrounded by gardens and pathways designed by landscape architects Gillespies.



THE SHARD

Renzo Piano, the designer conceptualised the Shard as a spire like sculpture emerging from River Thames. The highrise tower at 306m is western Europes tallest habitable building. The building's façade is double skinned and ventilated, thus reducing solar gain whilst maximising light intake and frame system provides the structural stability. The internal areas are mixed used: zoned as per client requirements. The project was succesfully completed in 2012.



No 1 Poultry



A postmodern building (1997) clad in pink and yellow limestone planned around an atrium, erected on a wedge shaped site speaks volumes about the approach followed by Architect James Stirlings. The rooftop provides an excellent view of Bank Junction with various significant projects like Royal Exchange, The Bank of England, Mansion House, London Stockexchange, Tower 43, Lloyds Building, 30 St Mary Axe and prominent highrise on going projects like Cheese Grater and Walkie Talkie as commonly called due to the peculiar built form.



The spatial cognition and the ecstasy related with experiencing built environments provokes ideation. The appraisal of few buildings in this write up would definitely stimulate creative minds to pursue meaningful research and spatial realization of human needs in an utopian manner. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to AA School of Architecture, London for inviting me to be a part of the Visiting Teachers Program and for providing me with an unique platform for sharing my experiences on Architecture Education.



AA School of Architecture

Is located on the west side of Bedford Square, London's last remaining intact Georgian Square since the early years of twentieth century. The AA School is not only the world's most influential and well known school of architecture, but also provides unrivalled learning environment.



View of St. Paul's Cathedral

< 23 Watling Street

One New Change >

Jean Nouvel & Sidell
Gibson Architects



Images – Courtesy Author during visit to London & AA School of Architecture: Visiting Teachers Program: 20th May
– 7th June 2013

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