

SMITHSONS—TRAIL

Follow the routes in any direction to discover the buildings designed by Alison and Peter Smithson at the University of Bath.

- Step route ↯

= Level access route
- ◆ Edge Arts Theatre/Barn (original structure)

◆ (additional structure)
- University Hall Entrance (current location of sign)

□ (original location of sign)
- ☆ Amenity Building (6WS)

▽ Second Arts Building (1WN)

○ 6 East

▽ THE SECOND ARTS BUILDING [1 WEST NORTH] 1978-81

The Second Arts Building was designed around the movement of the sun. The delta plan admits as much natural light as possible into the most frequently occupied rooms on the east and west sides. In the 'v' of the delta are the larger teaching rooms, occupied for shorter periods of time. At its heart are unoccupied rooms that need little or no daylight. The elevations made of in-situ concrete columns and spandrels are fitted with aluminium framed double glazed windows that reach from desk height to the ceiling, further maximising daylight into the rooms.



We perceived our work as being to understand the existing built fabric and to weave onto its edges several terminating fringes.

Alison & Peter Smithson

○ 6 EAST, SCHOOLS OF ARCHITECTURE & BUILDING ENGINEERING, 1980-88

The wide ascending walkway of 6 East was designed to carry students arriving on campus up to its heart on the Parade. The Smithsons were determined that the building itself should be as much a lesson as the teaching that would take place inside it. The modern concrete forms of the roofline and courses between floors were all informed by the string courses and cornices of historic Bath. Studios were designed to have large glass windows, letting in light and ensuring the students inside had clear views out to the surrounding landscape.



! SERVICE ROAD

THE PARADE



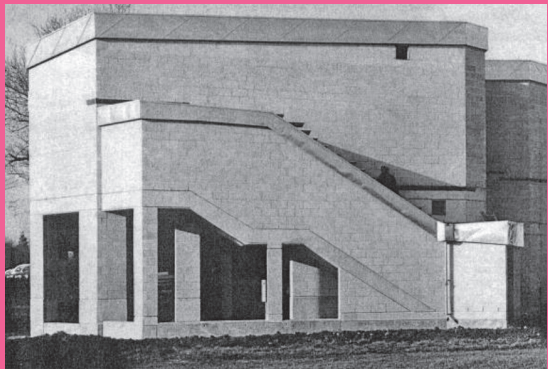
☆ AMENITY BUILDING [6 WEST SOUTH] 1978-85

Designed to accommodate staff social spaces, including a skittle ally, the Amenity Building faces out onto the green space on the south of the campus. The Smithsons designed it to take advantage of the landscape views from external terraces and the raised main floor. Built in two phases, it has a heavy load-bearing box construction onto which a lighter steel framed pavilion was placed.



■ □ PORCH TO UNIVERSITY HALL, 1983

With the social life of campus centring on the lake, in 1983 Peter Smithson designed a new lakeside entrance for University Hall, marked by a large cube sign at the door. The entrance has since been altered and the cube sign can now be seen fixed to the lakeside wall of 2 East.



◆◆ THE ARTS BARN & THEATRE, 1980-90

The Smithsons wanted to encourage creativity at the science-based university and imagined an arts complex of 14 component buildings that could be built in any sequence. They converted an earlier building into the Arts Barn (now removed) and added a new theatre creating workshops and performance spaces. They hoped to work with the University to realise their arts complex, but instead it wasn't until 2014 that the Smithsons' Arts Theatre was integrated into The Edge by architects Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, whose founding partners were taught by Peter Smithson in Bath.

Alison &

NEW LESSONS FROM OLD CITIES

Bath during the 1960s–70s was a city experiencing immense change through the large-scale demolition of its historic architecture. Entire streets of 18th and early 19th century architecture were destroyed during a period that became known as the Sack of Bath. In the middle of this systematic demolition Peter Smithson undertook a series of walks around Bath exploring the city and considering its architecture.

St Mary's Buildings, Bath, 1968



The Smithsons understood the importance of looking after and learning from the historic city, seeing Bath not as a place frozen in time, but as living breathing spaces. Losing Bath's historic buildings risked the loss of the lessons they could teach about form, materials, planning and landscape. To highlight those lessons and support the growing campaign to stop demolition in the city Peter Smithson published 'Bath: Walks Within the Walls' in 1969 in *Architectural Design* magazine (reprinted as a booklet in 1971, 1981 and 2017).

The unique language of Bath's architecture, both in detail and in its integration within the natural landscape, was key to the Smithsons' admiration of the city. They appreciated the skill of Georgian masons and designers in building on the steep hills of the city. Peter was fascinated by the changes in levels seen in string courses and cornices, referring to them as 'architectural gymnastics'.

The qualities of the historic buildings, streetscape and spaces influenced the Smithsons developing architectural ideas. It was these ideas that they applied and experimented with at the University of Bath.

Camden Crescent, Bath, 1989



&

Peter

BATH-AS-A-FRINGED-MAT: THE UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Alison and Peter Smithson admired the original University campus designed by architects Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners (RMJM). They recognised it as a 'mat-building', like a fabric laying on the sloping landscape of the hillside. The Smithsons wanted to understand and compliment that existing fabric and 'weave onto its edges several terminating fringes'.

The new buildings, or fringes on the edge of the campus, were informed by the lessons learned from historic Bath. Transitions between levels externally and internally were explored at the University as their concepts of conglomerate ordering were developed. Layers and cornices were considered in great depth, just as the masons had done in achieving the historic city's architectural qualities.

The Smithsons also perceived the University campus as if it was a historic village surrounded by a green setting. Understanding of how any new built work had to respond to that landscape setting was essential to their work. So too were the routes around the campus, and they aimed to create continuations and expansions of existing 'ways' through, and between, spaces and buildings.

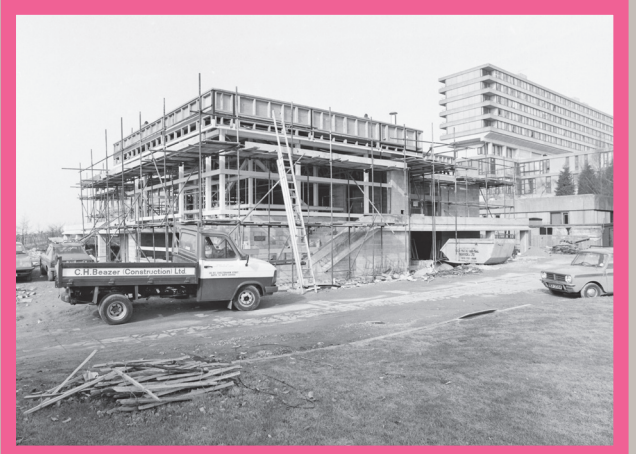
The point of arrival of students from the city to the campus was essential, and the Smithsons imagined the bus stop turning circle like a village green where people would meet and gather. The original Smithson designed entrance and information building is now demolished, but the space continues to function as the point of entry to the University of Bath. More recently the University realised its £11 million arts and creativity centre, The Edge, incorporating the Smithson's Arts Theatre and vision of establishing an arts complex on campus. The name of the centre reflects the Smithson's notion of adding to the edges of a fringed mat.

RMJM University of Bath Campus, 1979



in

Amenity Building under construction, c.1980



Bath

SMITHSONS—TRAIL

Between 1966 and 1990, influential post-war architects Alison and Peter Smithson spent time exploring the city of Bath. This trail highlights the buildings the Smithsons designed at the University of Bath where Peter Smithson taught students within the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

