

PREFACE

It is often said that religious beliefs are much more difficult to hold and represent from the middle ground than from the fundamental extremes. There is an analogy here with architecture. Fundamentalism in architecture takes one into a world of burgeoning technology at one extreme, to figurative classicism at the other; both have a predictable single minded prejudice, popularly received by a hungry media eager for the extravagances of any extreme. But there is an insinuation that the extremes assume all conviction, commitment and passion. Nothing could be further from the truth. The architecture of MacCormac Jamieson Prichard bears witness.

To successfully exploit the cultural diversity offered by context, history and craft, without being labelled a purveyor of superficial pastiche, one has to possess the talents, intellect and attributes of the practice of MacCormac Jamieson Prichard. This practice has dominated the intellectual middle ground of architectural practice in this country for well over a decade. No other practice has so sensitively and rigorously demonstrated an ability to interpret historical motifs without resorting to superficial figurative reference. It has created an architecture informed by the past that enriches the present and anticipates the future. It displays an acute awareness of the possibilities offered by tradition while also being of its own age. To hear Richard MacCormac eulogise over the staircase, gallery and towers of Hardwick is to experience a form of architectural levitation.

Richard MacCormac is a product of a Cambridge genre. He is perhaps the living proof that Schools of Architecture should be located in cities that have been buried beneath centuries of words, pictures and traditions, all celebrating architectural wisdom and beauty, and yet have the intellectual response to sustain their own vitality. Through his writing and publication, he inspires a belief in 'the City', in its values and its traditions, the City that in the 20th century has been eroded and diminished by the pressures and forces of

uncivilised greed and which, with the approach of the Millennium, harbours uncertainty and almost a sense of close down. The architecture of MacCormac Jamieson Prichard makes those vital connections which restore our faith in what the City has always promised. It is the richness of the intellectual transaction that contrasts so dramatically with the cultural and economic meanness of current political thinking.

The practice of MacCormac Jamieson Prichard has earned a distinguished reputation. From modest beginnings the integrity and flair of its own architectural ambition has won continuing patronage from a privileged clientele. These programmes are exceptional in themselves. Their work at Worcester, Fitzwilliam, Wadham, St John's and Trinity College, reveal those influences that come from Frank Lloyd Wright, Alexander Greek Thompson, Robert Smythson and the more contemporary Louis Kahn. But it also exposes the confidence to engage in a dialogue with a resourceful client who promotes their artistic ambition and their need to satisfy a deeper poetic meaning. The occasional excursion into the more urbane or commercial project sharpens their collective resolve never to compromise their standards or their integrity and their experience in Spitalfields was typical and salutary.

MacCormac Jamieson Prichard have found a way of using historical precedent and reconciling it with the demands of contemporary building types and with the opportunities offered by modern building technology. History for this practice is a repository of inspiration and previous generations of architect's work offer a rich array of solutions.

Not surprisingly, MacCormac Jamieson Prichard's architecture remains quintessentially English and an essential part of our contemporary scene.