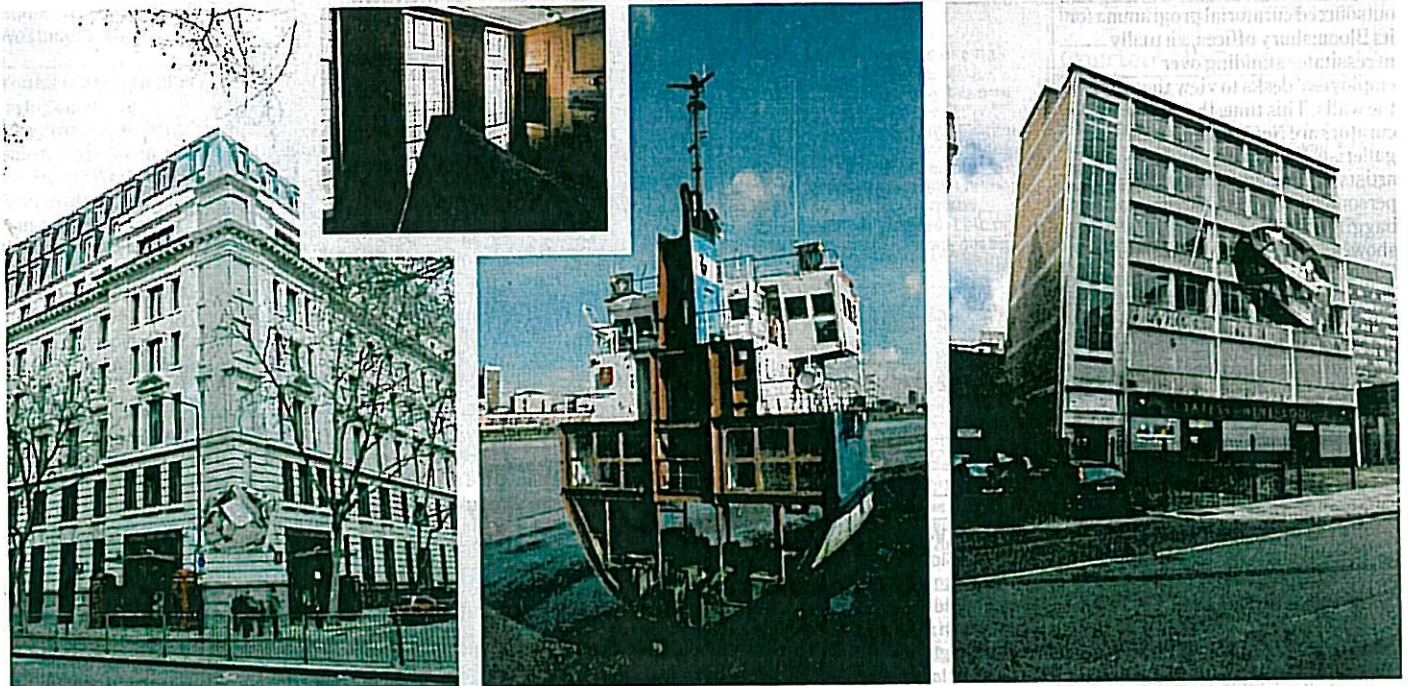


Richard Wilson: art on a grand scale



Arty-techtore From left: 'Square the Block' (artist's impression), '20:50', 'Slice of Reality', 'Turning the Place Over', Liverpool

Richard Wilson (no, not him) is known for filling the former Saatchi Galleries with oil for his seminal sculpture, '20:50'. His latest work adds a crunched corner section to an LSE building. **Helen Sumpter** catches up with the master of architectural spectacle

Your new work is appropriately titled 'Square the Block'. But why add a corner to a building that doesn't need one?
 'I was commissioned by the Contemporary Art Society and the LSE to create an artwork on that corner of the building. When I visited the site one of my immediate questions was why did it have a flat chamfered corner, at an angle of 45 degrees, rather than a corner of 90 degrees? One of the reasons for a chamfered corner is that it creates more pavement space. My idea was to add on a 90 degree corner cast from Jesmonite (an environmentally friendly resin) along the full 18.5m height of the building, but not to lose any of the pavement space by casting the section just above street level to look as if it had been crumpled up.'

Apart from its crumpled bottom, will your new corner blend in?
 'The Jesmonite will be treated to resemble the surface of the Portland stone the building is constructed from, but the corner is actually cast from two random sections of other parts of the building. So if you look closely it won't make any architectural sense—windows will be cut in half, for example. There will also be subtle lighting behind the corner that at night will give the impression that it's almost floating off the surface of the building.'

Your work can be costly to produce; have you been hit by the recession?
 'My sculptures take a long time to be realised, so a lot of them were commissioned before the recession—but it doesn't seem to have affected me yet. I do feel privileged that I still have opportunities to make work.'

Many of your projects are installed abroad, but you have a lot happening in London right now...
 'Yes, I'm also in negotiations to create a lighting work on two cranes on a building site near Tate Modern which will delineate the outlines of the cranes in a way that makes them appear to be jumping or bouncing. If that's successful it might lead to a larger version of the idea being commissioned for a new building

project. I also have a sculpture based on allotment sheds opening next year on a new development in Chelsea and there are plans to install '20:50' in the current King's Road Saatchi Gallery.'

Is '20:50' still your signature work?
 'It has become something of a party piece. And it will gain a new dimension in November when a version is installed in Saddam Hussein's former security building in the city of Sulaymaniyah in Iraq, as part of an art festival. Being the home of oil it will be a bit like taking coals to Newcastle.'
 'Square the Block' can be seen from Sept 14 on the LSE's New Academic Building, 54 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2A 3LJ. www.richardwilsonsculptor.com

www.timeout.com/art

Three to see

- '20:50'**
Saatchi Gallery (from 2010)
 A walkway into a room, half-filled with black sump oil, that cleverly bends the perception of the surrounding space.
- 'Turning the Place Over'**
Liverpool
 An attention-grabbing oval of office-block facade that rotates within the hole it was cut from.
- 'Slice of Reality'**
Greenwich Peninsula
 A section sliced from a 600-tonne sand-dredging ship that brings to mind absence and obsolescence.

Which is best: New York or London?

Ossian Ward Art editor

London

'With our strong art fair and some stable galleries, London overtook New York as the world's leading city for art sales last year. Take that, so-called centre of the art market!'

