

For Immediate Release

SUPERSTRUCTURES: THE NEW ARCHITECTURE 1960-90
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts 40th Anniversary Exhibition

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts Norwich, UK
24 March 2018 – 2 September 2018.

Madrid, 12 March 2018

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts presents 'Superstructures: The New Architecture 1960-90', marking the 40th anniversary of the opening of the gallery, the first ever public building designed by Norman Foster.

This exhibition will tell the story of architecture's fascination with technology in the post-war decades, and the drive to develop new architectural forms utilising lightweight structures, industrialised building techniques and innovative engineering solutions. In doing so, architects and engineers evolved a new typology of building or 'superstructure', rethinking the places and spaces of culture, work, travel and living in ways that have been globally influential.

Often referred to as 'High-Tech', this label is regarded unfavourably by some as misleading in its suggestion of a singular 'style'. The exhibition will evidence how this new modern architecture emerged from a generation of (largely British) architects who challenged convention. Immersed in the utopian and experimental ideas of late modernism, they shared a commonality of ideas, forms and materials.

Norman Foster's Sainsbury Centre building epitomises the new architecture born of this technological spirit: a 'well-serviced shed' with a lightweight and extendable steel structure wrapped in a 'skin' of glass and plastic clip-on panels, adaptable (and adapted) as the building's functions changed or grew over time. It quickly became a paradigm of new museum building, but the ideas of structural ingenuity and expression, appropriate technology and industrial materials were applied to projects of all types and scales including factories, offices, transport hubs and homes.

The exhibition will explore the seminal influence of figures such as Buckminster Fuller, Jean Prouvé, Charles and Ray Eames and Cedric Price. Examples of 'technology transfer' will show how techniques were adapted from the automotive, nautical, aerospace and information industries to create bold new materials and innovative industrial processes.

The show, open until 2 September 2018, will demonstrate how the most distinctive and experimental architectural idea to emerge from modernism at its end also became one of the most enduring and influential architectural languages of the late 20th century.

The Norman Foster Foundation is proud to collaborate on this exhibition lending several items from the Norman Foster Foundation Archive.

Norman Foster Foundation

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The Norman Foster Foundation promotes interdisciplinary thinking and research to help new generations of architects, designers and urbanists to anticipate the future.

We believe in the importance of connecting architecture, design, technology and the arts to better serve society and in the value of a holistic education that encourages experimentation through research and projects.

The Norman Foster Foundation holds the Norman Foster Archive and Library, which provide a window into the larger narrative and history of our built environment through the work of Norman Foster.

The Norman Foster Foundation is based in Madrid and operates globally.

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Sainsbury Centre

The Sainsbury Centre was established when Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury generously gave their art collection to the University of East Anglia in 1973. The building was designed by Norman Foster and opened in 1978. For over 40 years, Robert and Lisa Sainsbury collected works of art which ranged across time and place. They sought work both from major European artists, as well as art and antiquities from different periods and cultures around the world. The Sainsburys were equally radical in commissioning the young Norman Foster in 1974 as the architect for the new building to house their works. Robert Sainsbury saw Foster's innovative building as the great jewel of the Sainsbury Collection.

The Sainsbury Centre is one of the most prominent university art galleries in Britain, and a major national centre for the study and presentation of art. As well as housing the Sainsburys' art collection, one of the few intact modernist collections of the 20th century with many seminal works by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Edgar Degas, Francis Bacon, Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore, Alberto Giacometti, and Amedeo Modigliani, it also displays the Anderson Collection of Art Nouveau and the University's Abstract and Constructivist Collection. Alongside these permanent collections, it hosts a range of temporary exhibitions in the new galleries, which provide the largest climate-controlled exhibition space in Eastern England.

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