

Urban landscapes

The RCP was a great success for Lasdun, and firmly established his international reputation as a leading British architect.

The commission helped Lasdun create his own unique 'language of architecture'. It united his earlier interests in ritual spaces and classical architecture, and gave them a modernist twist.

A key theme to emerge from the RCP is 'urban landscape' – where architecture is seen as an extension of the city or landscape, connected by bridges, platforms and terraces. Buildings should take in 'the whole of human experience', by extending relationships and creating a sense of belonging and participation. This idea can be seen most prominently in Lasdun's university designs and his National Theatre on London's South Bank.

Architect's models

Models are powerful tools for architects. Before computer-aided design, they were the most effective way for architects to visualise and experiment with volumes and voids. Their captivating miniature worlds persuade clients, planners and the public of the value of even the most controversial schemes.

Lasdun used models to present new designs to clients. Unusually, from the mid-1960s, they were also used as a main design tool. Lasdun's model makers created quick, rough models from balsa wood based on Lasdun's pencil sketches.

'Wren said there are two types of proportion, mathematical and customary. I use customary. That is, I work by eye. I make models, and experiment.'

Denys Lasdun, 1997



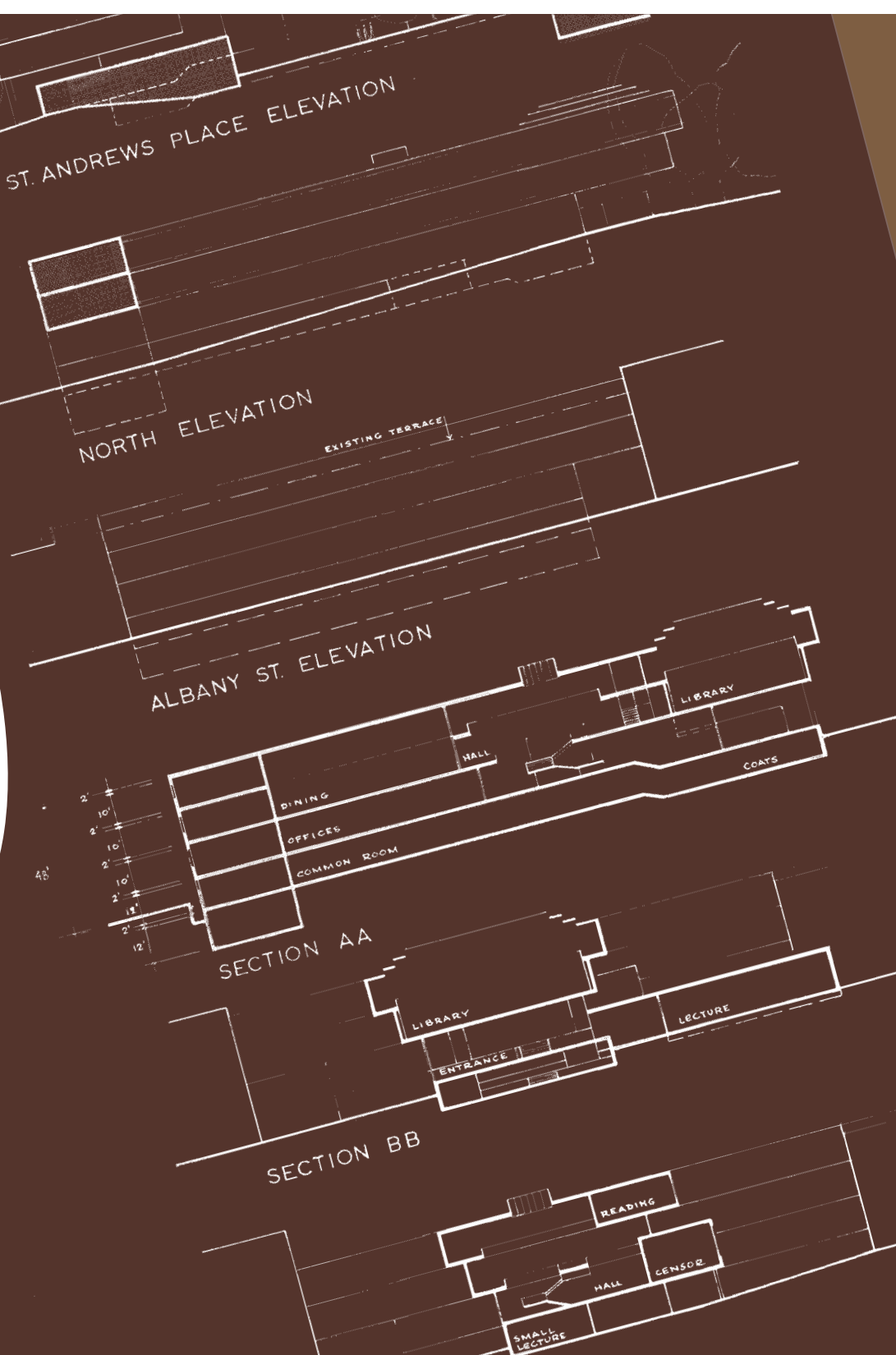
ST. ANDREWS PLACE ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

ALBANY ST. ELEVATION

SECTION AA

SECTION BB



The anatomy of a building: Denys Lasdun and the Royal College of Physicians 8 Sept 2014 – 13 Feb 2015

Lecture evening: Lasdun and the RCP – 50 years in Regent's Park
5 November 2014

Celebrate the 50th anniversary of our iconic building with an evening of lectures on Lasdun's work (advance booking only).

Weekend exhibition tour

X October 2014, X December 2014,
X February 2015 (dates to follow)

Enjoy a curator tour of the RCP building and exhibition (advance booking only).

Lasdun study walk

25 September and 15 October 2014
XXXXXX – text to follow from Berwyn (advance booking only).

Free first Friday

Museum and architecture tours
Join us on the first Friday of every month for a 30 minute tour of the RCP (booking not required).

Free first Wednesday

Medicinal Garden tours
Join us on the first Wednesday of every month (March to November) for tour of our acclaimed Medicinal Garden (booking not required).

www.rcplondon.ac.uk/RCPLasdun

Royal College of Physicians, 11 St Andrews Place,
Regent's Park, London NW1 4LE.

Open Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm, free entry.

Library, Archive and Museum Services
Tel: +44 (0)20 3075 1543
Email: history@rcplondon.ac.uk

www.rcplondon.ac.uk/museum-and-garden

Step free access. Closed: weekends, public holidays and for RCP ceremonies – call us or see website for details.

Location: 5 minutes walk from Great Portland Street and Regent's Park, 10 minutes walk from Warren Street underground stations.



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The anatomy of a building: Denys Lasdun and the Royal College of Physicians 8 Sept 2014 – 13 Feb 2015

Anatomy of a building
50 years in Regent's Park



In 1958, architect Denys Lasdun was handed an impossible task: design a radically modern building for a 500-year-old institution. The bold new construction must 'harmonise' with one of London's most admired Georgian terraces and the landscape of Regent's Park.

Whether you love or loathe modern architecture, discover the fascinating story of Lasdun's challenge, and how he succeeded in creating the finest building of his career.

Opening in 1964, the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) is a complex blend of art and engineering, elegantly enclosing ancient ceremonial history and tradition within a white-tiled casquet of concrete and glass.

50 years on, our exhibition tells the building's story and celebrates the centenary of Lasdun's birth. On display are rarely-seen original models of Lasdun's best-known buildings, including the National Theatre and Keeling House, alongside contemporary drawings, photographs and letters from private collections, the Royal Academy and the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Visit: www.rcplondon.ac.uk/RCPLasdun

A perfect building?

In 1964 the RCP moved into its fifth home, a modern building in Regent's Park designed by renowned British architect Denys Lasdun (1914–2001).

Today our headquarters is one of only a dozen post-war Grade I-listed buildings in the UK, and is considered one of the finest examples of Lasdun's work, and of 1960s' architecture in London.

Most avant-garde architecture of the 1950s and 1960s was designed to be big, with a limited life, cheap and 'of the people'. In contrast, the RCP asked Lasdun for a mid-sized, lasting, luxurious home, in which the institution could retain a constant connection with its distinguished history. Lasdun's building had to 'match and rhyme' with Regent's Park's grand early-19th century terraces built by John Nash.

An elegant solution was to divide the building into distinct areas – ceremonial and everyday. Lasdun covered the historical ceremonial spaces in porcelain mosaic tiles which matched the stucco colour of Nash's terraces. The functional rooms, lecture theatre and offices, were built from dark blue engineering bricks which echo Nash's slate roofs. The enormous Marble Hall windows were as large as possible so that Nash's terraces are clearly visible, and drawn into the RCP building.



Lasdun considered the RCP to be 'by no means a perfect building – that would be boring'. It is however undeniably unique, a 'one-off' creation combining the specific needs of the client, the modernist design choices of the architect, and the creative solutions of the engineers. Lasdun was also inspired by the RCP's rare set of anatomical tables, and described the building's central staircase as an 'artery', linking important ceremonial areas.

The briefing and design processes of the RCP building lasted for several years, and Lasdun's lively and opinionated memos on client discussions are preserved in the Lasdun Archive at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and create an exceptional record of the day-to-day business of producing serious architecture.

'How do you put a building of today next to a focal point of memory and history without lapsing into some form of romanticism or historicism?'

Denys Lasdun, 1966



Critically acclaimed constructions

Denys Lasdun is one of Britain's most eminent post-war architects. His work cannot easily be categorised as 'modernist', because he developed his own architectural 'language'. He blended classical tradition with inspiration from architects as diverse as Nicholas Hawksmoor and Frank Lloyd Wright, combining them with contemporary philosophies and cutting-edge methods to create his buildings.

Early in his career Lasdun worked for Tecton, the most exciting British modernist practice of the time. In 1960 he set up his own architecture practice, Denys Lasdun and Partners, which produced some of the most innovative, and controversial, British architecture of the late-20th century.

Lasdun was a private man, yet his critically acclaimed concrete constructions attracted national recognition. He was knighted in 1976, and made a Companion of Honour in 1995. Lasdun's most treasured award, his RIBA Royal gold medal, was presented after the completion of the National Theatre on London's South Bank.

The journey that led Lasdun to the South Bank, by way of a series of 1960s and 1970s high-profile commissions, began with the RCP.

In his RIBA Royal Gold Medallist Address in 1977, Lasdun remarked:

'Architecture, for me at any rate, only makes sense as the promoter and extender of human relations, but it has to communicate through the language of form and space if it is said to be considered an art. And it is unequivocally an art.'

'Lasdun is a very individual designer, not one who can be pigeon-holed, and one who would fiercely resent being pigeon-holed.'

Robert Maxwell, Architectural Review, 1965

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