

# STIRLING PRIZE SHORTLIST 2014

One of these buildings will collect this year's Stirling Prize at Portland Place on 16 October. Here's what BD, the RIBA judges and other commentators have said about them



**1 Everyman Theatre, Liverpool, Haworth Tompkins**

**RIBA says:** "The selection and use of materials has created an exceptionally tactile building. This is a building that will age gracefully."

**BD said:** "The frustrations of the old venue were numerous but it was loved. Haworth Tompkins' design resolves the failings while preserving the productive idiosyncrasies: a theatre that the Everyman's loyal audience is still surely going to recognise as theirs."



**2 Library of Birmingham, Mecanoo**

**RIBA says:** "It has shaken traditional perceptions of a library, turning it to a place where families and readers can spend a day learning and engaging."

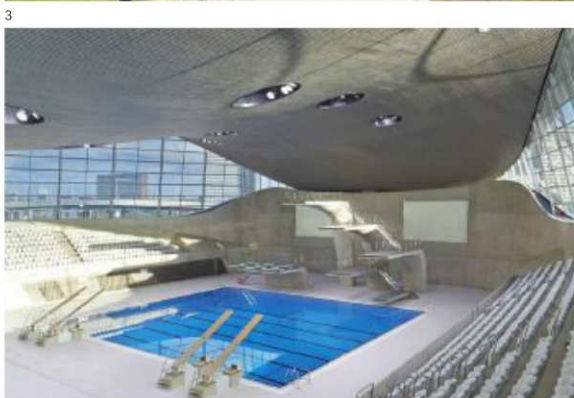
**BD said:** "Birmingham has acquired a taste for this kind of sparkly veneering. Future Systems' Selfridges and FOA's remodelling of New Street Station are all characterised by similar strategies. In the case of a department store perhaps the approach can be forgiven, but in a major civic building such clip-on iconicity grates. The disappointment would be less if the rest of Mecanoo's project were not as good as it is."



**3 London Aquatics Centre, Zaha Hadid Architects**

**RIBA says:** "It is very beautiful; sensual with a generosity of space. The pure and powerful form is conceptually flawless; it will be a favourite venue for Londoners for generations to come."

**BD said:** "For all the expense, delays, circuitous access and embarrassing temporary crutches, this will be one of the best lasting legacies of the London Olympics."



**4 London Bridge Tower (The Shard), Renzo Piano Building Workshop**

**RIBA says:** "The building is omnipresent in London and has added immeasurably to the city."

**BD said:** "The Shard is not the great symbol of towering ambition some have claimed. It's morally suspect, compromised, and a bit nutty (and in the wrong place) but it's brave and for that reason we can forgive it a lot."



**5 London School of Economics Saw Swee Hock Student Centre, O'Donnell & Tuomey Architects**

**RIBA says:** "An object lesson in creating a surprising and striking building on a difficult urban site."

**BD said:** "This may not be a perfect building but it is a fantastically individual one that offers proof of its architect's readiness to take heroic artistic risks. It fulfils the LSE's ambitions for a landmark but resists reduction to an iconic image. It is architecture that demands to be experienced at first hand."



**6 Manchester School of Art, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios**

**RIBA says:** "The refurbishment of a 1960s tower and creation of a building with open studios and workshops has been executed with great skill and innovation."

**BD said:** "This reworking of Manchester School of Art includes the refurbishment of its 1960s tower as well as a new extension conceived as a continuous series of open-plan studios and foyers dramatically linked by timber stairs and gangways."

## AN URBANIST'S VIEW OF THE STIRLING SHORTLIST

Hank Dittmar says Haworth Tompkins' Everyman Theatre best addresses its city location and deserves to win



Last year's Stirling Prize was viewed by many as a move away from icons, and Astley Castle a surprisingly good choice. This year, the shortlist is back to rewarding cultural and institutional buildings with large budgets. With one exception, all are buildings in infill contexts, so I thought an evaluation of their urbanism might be instructive.

The flaneur's view of the city is more demanding of architecture than the motorist's, as the city unfolds at 5mph and in finer grain. Buildings frame and define the public realm and good urban performance ought to be a prerequisite for a Stirling Prize winner. In addition to the core

Vitruvian triad of commodity, firmness and delight, an urbanist might add how the building addresses the street, how legible the relationship to the urban plan and how detailing stands up to scrutiny.

Of the Stirling shortlist, only the Aquatics Centre is an object in a park and Zaha Hadid is gifted at such objects. The ground plane is replete with blank walls and shopping mall entrances with all the love reserved for the shapes above. To award it the Stirling would be to vaunt object-making over city- and place-making.

The Manchester College of Art tries the old trick of transparency through glass and ends up in a sort of category confusion as to whether it is an office building or an art school. For an art school,

**"An urbanist might add how the building addresses the street, how legible entrances are to the pedestrian, the relationship to the urban plan and how detailing stands up to scrutiny"**

there is surprisingly little craft and no decoration and so it doesn't get better the closer you get.

The Shard fails the urban test by overwhelming the light industrial streets in which it is set. It will, if fully occupied, add stress to an overburdened public transport system and pavements. But opprobrium ought really to be focused on the abysmal way the Shard meets the ground, with no inflection save that required for loading and unloading and with blank walls greeting walkers. While it may add interest to the skyline it is destructive at the ground plane.

The new Birmingham Library is ballyhooed by its architect for responding to context in two ways: being on a walking desire line through the city and by using a tacky cladding over the glass boxes that is meant to evoke the city's jewellery-making heritage. Abstracting a metaphor to justify recycling a decorative motif that has naught to do with the buildings around stretches credulity. From a pedestrian perspective, the building is oppressive, the entrance neither legible nor uplifting and it fails

utterly to relate to neighbouring buildings or the gardens across Cambridge Street.

The LSE student centre extension is an infill building on a difficult site made more difficult by "right of light" limitations that together with viewsheds seem increasingly to dictate the shapes of London buildings. The LSE has gradually expanded to occupy a neighbourhood and the centre aims to provide a heart to the campus by framing a tiny plaza in front of the building and opening up inside.

Haworth Tompkins's Everyman Theatre fits thoughtfully into the street and references the city's built heritage in material and form in a way that is neither slavish nor obscure. It embraces the pedestrian with a lively street frontage, broken into a bottom two storeys, a middle section and a roofscape and has an inviting and legible entrance. This is all common sense, yet so few bother. My worry is the decorative steel panels illustrating Liverpool residents may not age well.

On urban terms, the Everyman Theatre would win because it gives so much to the city and the street.

### FEEDBACK



**"How is Zaha Hadid's rather crude Aquatics Centre ahead of Hopkins' astounding and intellectually elegant velodrome?"**

#### James Hockey

Have I logged into the Carbuncle Cup by mistake?

#### Michael Coxlonge

I don't imagine it will win but for me, from this list, it would have to be the Everyman. The charm of this building was always its accessibility to the public and not just to its performances but the cheap and rather good restaurant in the basement. The architects appear to have retained this quality whilst also improving upon it, the auditorium in particular looks great.

#### Timothy Kempster

How is it that, in any assessment of the Olympic Park, Zaha Hadid's publicity machine always manages to push her over-worked and rather crude Aquatics Centre ahead of Hopkins' astounding and intellectually elegant velodrome?

#### Urbanist

Only O'Donnell & Tuomey actually have any meaningful connection to Stirling. The Haworth Tompkins theatre in Liverpool is good, and quite Stirlingian, and Stirling was a Liverpoolian. Renzo Piano's approach

to architecture has nothing to do with Stirling. Mecanoo's library is horrible, especially from the inside. The Feilden Clegg Bradley thing is dull and oppressive. As for Hadid, how did she get shortlisted? Remind us again who were the panel members?

### WHO SHOULD WIN THE STIRLING PRIZE?

The bookies' favourite is Renzo Piano's Shard and the judges' decision will be announced on 16 October. But BD readers are the real experts, so we held a poll to see which building you think should win this year's Stirling Prize:

The Shard	7.4%
Aquatics Centre	15.4%
Everyman Theatre	14.6%
Birmingham Library	15.3%
LSE Saw Swee Hock	31.5%
Manchester School of Art	15.4%

The odds from William Hill are:

LSE Saw Swee Hock	11/8
London Aquatics Centre	7/2
The Shard	7/2
Everyman Theatre	9/2
Library of Birmingham	10/1
Manchester School of Art	10/1



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