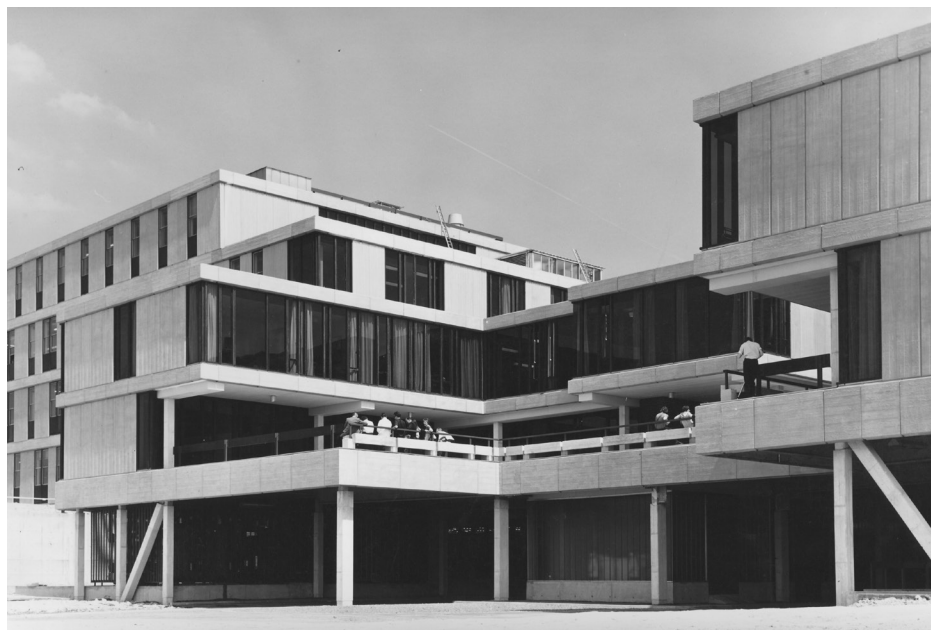


Concrete Bath

**A collection of Post War Architecture
1963–2019**



1963

Contents

Education

Bath Technical College	08
University of Bath	14

Commerce & Industry

Hilton Hotel	22
Kingsmead Telephone Exchange	26
Bath Cabinet Makers Factory	34
Herman Miller Factory	40

Residential

Riverside Apartments	46
----------------------	----

Education

The 1944 Education Act promised a free and universal system of education for all and by the mid-1960s the desire to have a non-selective system, the introduction of comprehensive schools and the creation of more university places saw a period of optimism in education. This optimism created the opportunity for new buildings where bold, avant-garde design could flourish.

Alison and Peter Smithson's 1949 design for Hunstanton School in Norfolk became a model on which many primary and secondary schools would be based. But it was in the design of further and higher education buildings, large in scale and complex in function, where striking combinations of materials, form and landscape emerged.

In heritage cities such as Oxford and Cambridge there had been a long tradition of stylistic change in educational buildings.

Built mainly between 1950 and the mid-1970s, these buildings coincided with the World War Two and the post-World War Two baby boom that created an explosion in college attendance.

With steel and concrete as the main construction material, these buildings were also inexpensive and relatively easy to build.

In Bath, where change had occurred mostly within the same stylistic idiom of Classicism, new educational buildings were a bold breakaway.

Due to the strict rules and regulations from Bath City Council restrictions such as building sizes and construction materials were put in place to try and combat Brutalist architecture, like having to use Bath stone instead of pure concrete or using beige cladding to cover the true building material, there was more of a challenge for Brutalist architecture but simple and efficient buildings have made their mark on Bath's skyline.

At Bath Technical College with great controversy, and at the University of Bath with great verve, the forms and ideals of Brutalism were combined with the materials and landscape of the city.

Bath Technical College

Designed by Architect Sir Frederick Gibberd during the years 1957-63. The city of Bath College building, previously known as the Bath Technical College, was one of the earliest examples of post-war architecture in Bath.

The projecting lecture theatre on the front was praised by some, but the height and size of the main building was a shocking intervention in the city.

Gibberd was always sensitive to context and the college design reflects this in several ways. Firstly, the accommodation is provided in a group of buildings in scale with the texture of the city as can be seen in the general view. Secondly, the decision was made not to expose the structural frame but instead to use Bath stone facing practically throughout. Thirdly, these Bath stone faced walls would be pierced by openings in scale with the neighbouring buildings.

Beyond these basic relationships to the context the design was freely developed; solid and void being disposed in ways dictated by the function of the buildings and expressive of the activities inside.

The tall two-storey library within the main six-storey building is given tall, narrow windows, and the small lecture theatre, which needs no windows but must have effective sound insulation, is boldly projected from it as a solid sculptural shape.

The technical college is a simple but bold example on how Brutalist architecture has been introduced to the city of Bath.







University of Bath

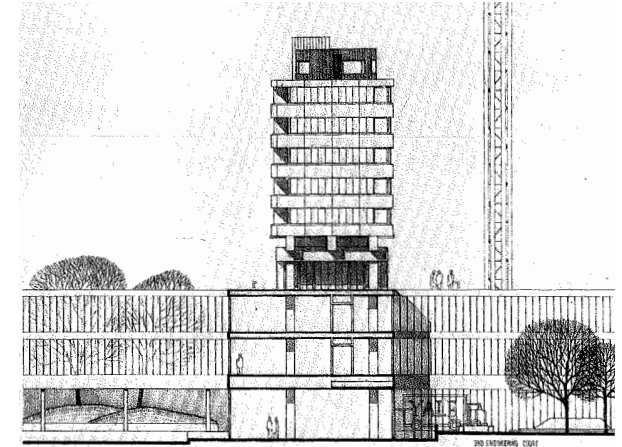
The 1965 development proposal for the University of Bath advocated a linear plan that could be extended on all sides as the institution grew. Fundamental to the design by RMJM & Partners was the elevation of people to upper 'decks', while all traffic and services were contained on the ground level.

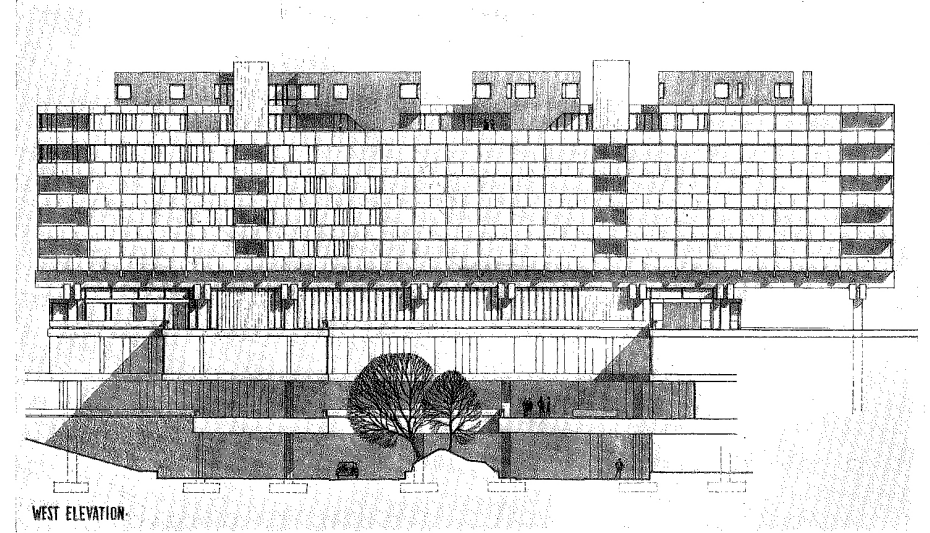
The spine of the complex is the Parade, a central walkway connecting all departments and accessed from various places. When constructing the campus buildings, it was all about efficiency and speed, local materials like Bath stone, concrete and steel were used throughout each build.

The 6 East building, by the celebrated British modern architects Alison and Peter Smithson, lays down a benchmark for architecture that combines concrete with the traditional

material of Bath. The Smithsons also designed a number of other buildings on the campus, including the unfurnished theatre in the grounds of the Arts Barn.

The University Library, still in the centre of the RMJM scheme, was extended in 1996 by the Alec French Partnership. Its fashionably applied tension structure dominates the axis down the steps towards the well-landscaped grounds and lake.







Commerce & Industry

As the second half of the 20th century progressed Britain became a consumer society and the world of business and high finance flourished.

Commerce and industry became dominant forces in towns and cities, expressed through new buildings that were modern in design and often expensive in construction.

One of the fundamental ideals of modernism was the need to strip away decoration and show the structural integrity of a building, in many ways following the same principles as the Neo-Classicists of the late 18th century.

Functionalism was essential, creating buildings that celebrated structure, showing the way a building worked and using materials that were innovative and adaptable.

The world of industry was ideally suited for such architecture, as industrial buildings by their very nature had their form dictated by their function. Bath was no exception and perhaps the two most successful buildings from the 1950-70s in the city are the two factories built on Lower Bristol Road for the production of furniture for the modern home and office

Hilton Hotel

As part of the Buchanan plans, the southern end of Walcot Street was to be redeveloped to include a multi-storey car park, offices, residential apartments, new law courts and a new hotel.

The Beaufort Hotel (now the Hilton) was built in 1972, designed by the firm of Snailum, LeFerve and Quick. It did much at the time to destroy Bath's confidence in the modern movement in architecture. It was a crass response to such a challenging site. Just to its south, a podium was left vacant for new development, and this was earmarked for a new courthouse.

Given the failure of its neighbour, here was an opportunity to do something really special. In the event, the courthouse was not built, and a retail development was put on the site. It has been organised into two zones - to the south, nearest to Pultney Bridge, a

covered mall with small shops and cafes leads to the riverfront, while to the north there is a supermarket at ground-floor level, with the city's main library above, both with access from the mall.





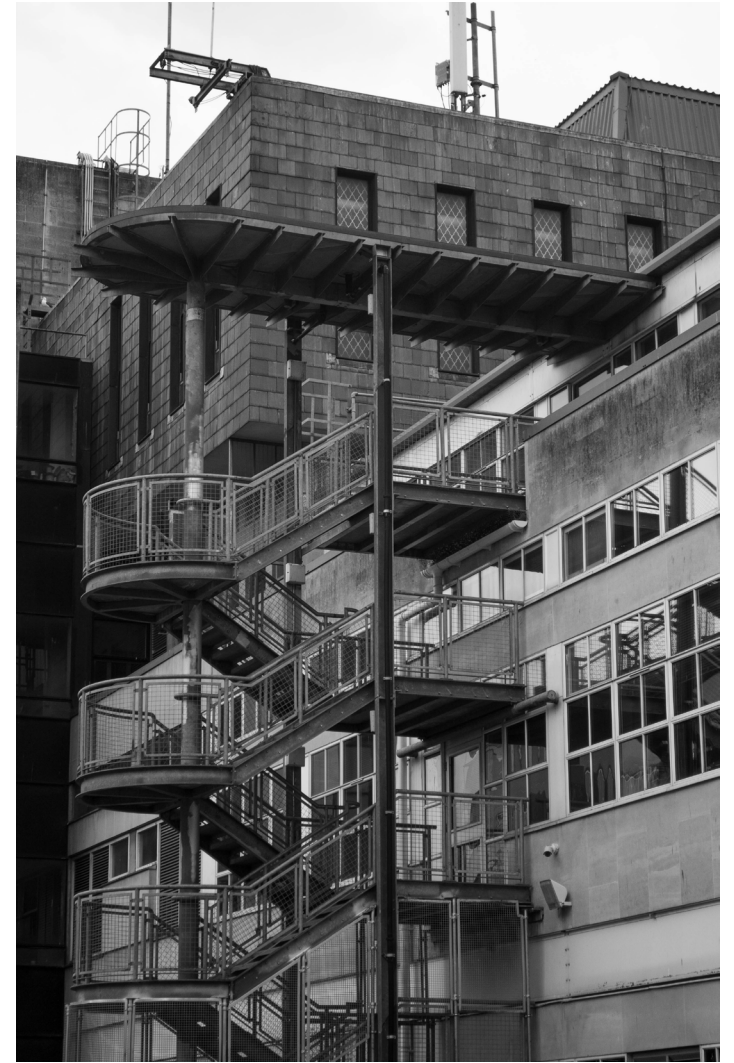
Kingsmead Telephone Exchange

Designed in 1963 by S. Frost for the Ministry of Works this building is basic in design, and hugely inappropriate in height, it was approved without question on condition that concrete panels on the elevations were replaced with Bath stone.

The slightly later neighbouring Telephone Exchange building on Monmouth Street attempted to use Bath materials but with similar uninspiring results.









Bath Cabinet Makers Factory

Planned as a single space so that a continuous flow of production from the factory to the loading bay could be achieved, the 1967 BCM factory by Yorke Rosenberg Mardell is comprised of a single flat roof slab supported by two grids interconnected by steel tubes.

The internal space created allows for great flexibility, while the low level of the building allows the factory to sit alongside the river without dominating its surroundings.

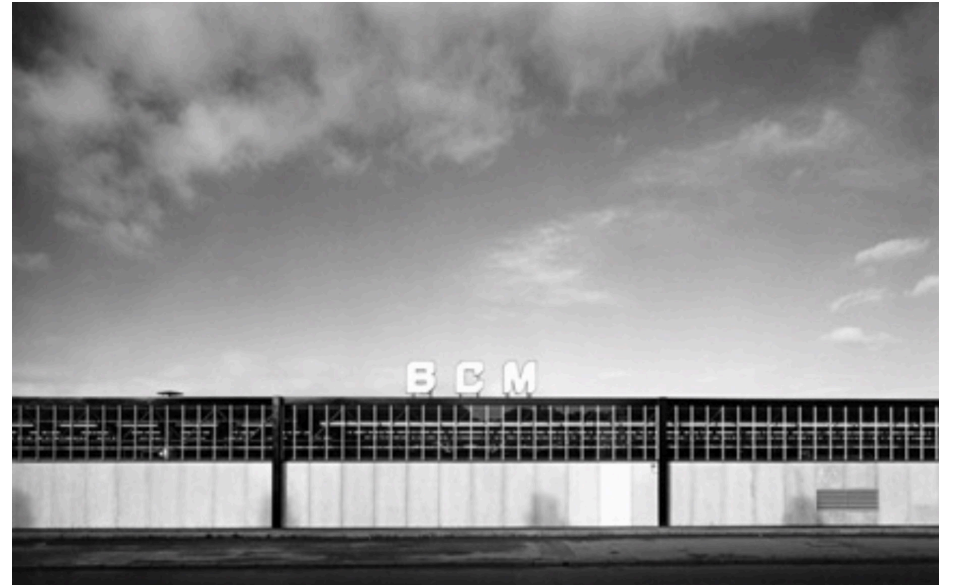
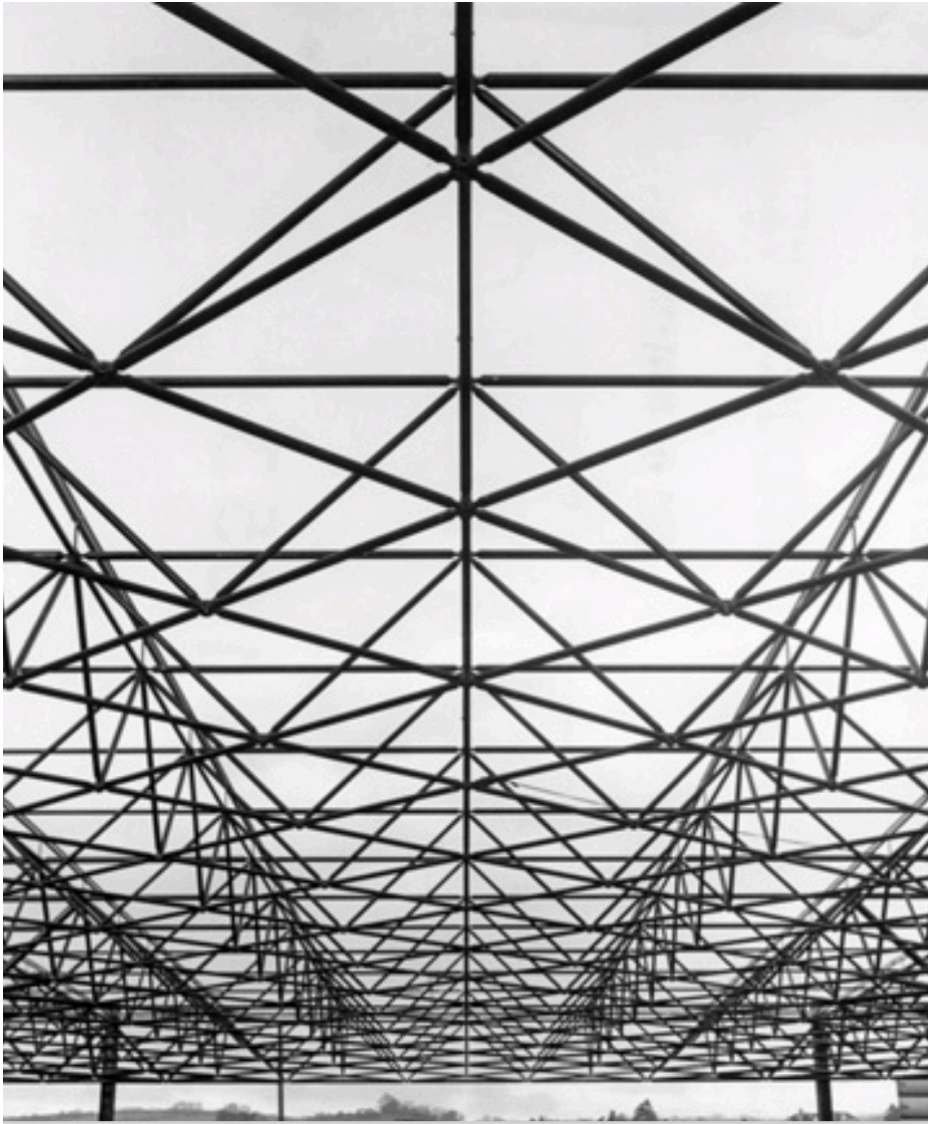
The Bath Cabinet Makers Factory was listed in 2008. It was the first building in Britain to use Mero space frame technology, one of the first widely commercially available space grid systems invented in Germany in the 1940s. The building is also an example of the early use of neoprene in parts of its external cladding and pre-fabricated patent glazing.

The innovative, cost-effective, functional design and architectural detailing of the BCM factory, influenced by contemporary American industrial architecture and adopting the style and idiom of the architect Mies van der Rohe, was very well received and awarded at the time.

Its social historic interest lies in the fact that the design and layout of the factory, which is flexible, light and moves away from the historic separation of workers area and managers office, is a clear expression of the general post-war search for better working standards.







Herman Miller Factory

The 1977 Herman Millar factory designed by Farrell Grimshaw Partnership is perhaps one of the most successful of Bath's post-war buildings. The hollow steel frame is clad with panels of glass reinforced polyester, which along with doors and window panels can be moved around easily making the building extremely flexible and adaptable. It was listed grade II in 2013.

The GRP panels of the facade are arranged in two tiers, surmounted by a curved parapet. Each of the panels is joined to its neighbour with a flexible Neoprene gasket, so that the configuration of the wall can be changed easily by rearranging the doors and glazed or blank panels.

The most successful external feature of the building is the full-height glazed area facing the river. Immediately in front of this is a well-land-scaped seating area for

staff - a delightful spot in summer. On the other side of the river just over the footbridge, the other Herman Miller building is by Yorke Rosenberg Mardall, 1967. Still on the riverside, but further downstream (or west) off Brassmill Lane, is the Rotork Controls Factory by Leonard Manasseh Partnership, 1966.





Residential

One of the most emotive and often divisive issues of the modern age has been that of housing. During the twentieth century in Britain the key demands that faced successive governments, town planners and architects alike have been rebuilding after war, meeting the needs of a growing population and keeping in step with the rapidly changing social, cultural and recreational needs of the nation. These were, and remain, tough and exacting circumstances to deal with successfully in a medium that is, by its very nature, static and enduring. Little wonder then that the shape of domestic architecture in Britain has seen so many changes in the last hundred years.

The quest for the ideal housing type is one that the Modernists wrestled with from the outset,

but it was in the designing dwellings primarily that the Modernists found the most accessible form with which to test their theories, aesthetics and structural integrity.

For some, like Le Corbusier, housing was an integral part of their vision for developing urban spaces, and higher-density social housing was a utopian goal to which they aspired, planned for a theorized about. In its early stages, Le Corbusier's vision was realised in his building for the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Artes Decoratif et Industriels, the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau.

This small building was the embodiment of a design he referred to as the 'Immeubles Villa' or 'luxury apartment', which was designed to be a mass-produced and infinitely

repeatable housing unit that could be slotted together to form large blocks of communities.

Le Corbusier's ideas were far ahead of their time as they broached the issue of urban 'grain'. This concept, which was debated in the post-war period in relation to town planning and mass housing, suggested that the 'grain' or density of functions within a built landscape had a direct impact on the efficiency with which these spaces were used.

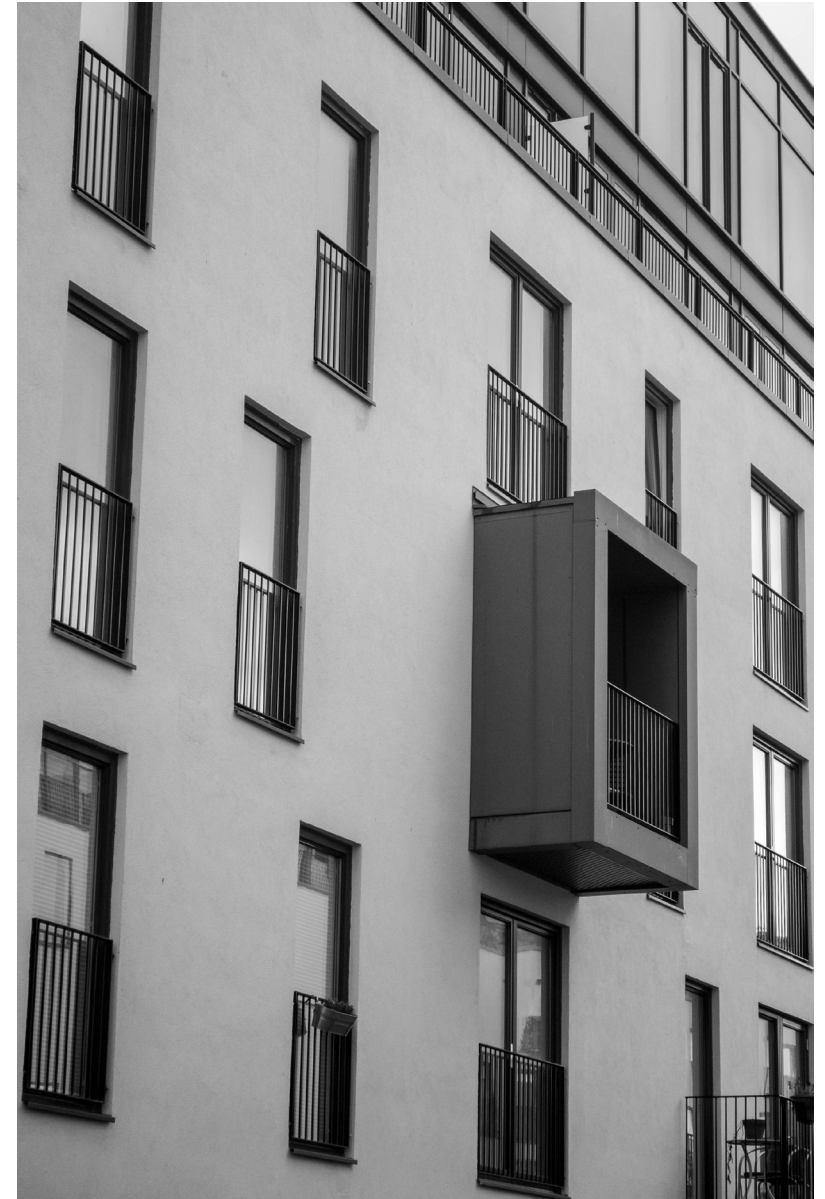
For example, a fine grain indicated a good blend of domestic, recreational, civic and commercial building, meaning shorter travelling distances and a much greater use of the local structures and amenities by the communities living there. A broader grain would result in the opposite effects for the city.

Bath Riverside

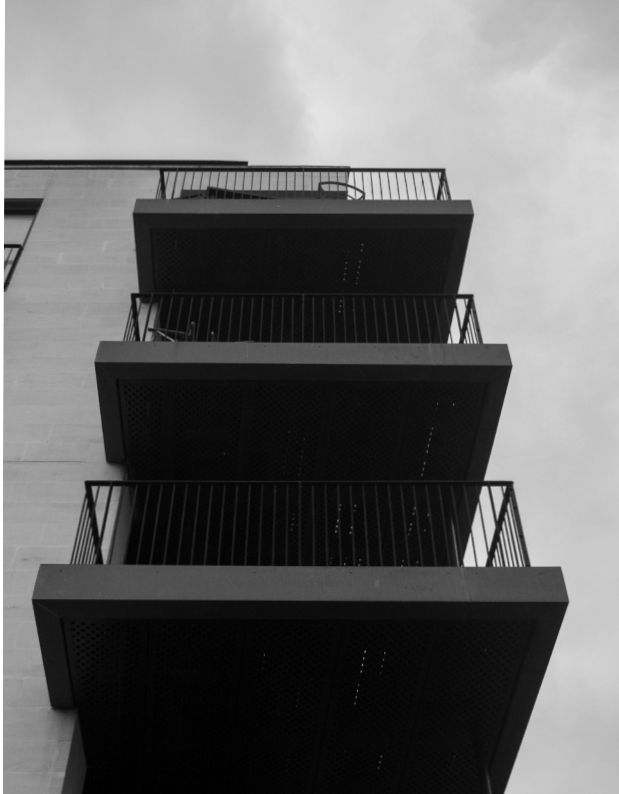
Today in Bath new apartments and housing communities are being built every day on the riverside. Even though they may not be seen as traditional Brutalist architectural structures they still have a post-war, Modernist aesthetic to them, which is still foreign to the city of Bath.

Like all the other buildings in Bath they have had to be created using only Bath resources, Bath stone, Slate and glass but these buildings resemble and showcase how those old traditional and somewhat overused materials in Bath can be used to create interesting and contemporary structures.

These buildings carry the mindset of Brutalism, they are future thinking structures that surround the residents with sustainable and desirable living quarters.







Notable Mentions

**Lizzie Richmond - Univeristy of
Bath Archive Department.**

**Amy Frost - Senior Curator at
Museum of Bath Architecure**

**Bath An architectural guide by
Thom Gorst**

Brutal Bath Exhibition

RIBA Photo Library

**Brutalsim Post-War British
Architecture by Alexander
Clement**

2019

