

## Renzo Piano's Shard is bookies' favourite to win RIBA Stirling Prize

Finalists for UK's most prestigious architecture award announced – but there's no cash prize for Stirling Prize winners until next year

**AWARD** The AJ can reveal the six contenders for this year's prestigious RIBA Stirling Prize.

The 'omnipresent' Shard by Renzo Piano is already bookmaker William Hill's runaway favourite (2/1) to win this year's prize.

Zaha Hadid is also hotly tipped to win her third Stirling Prize (5/2) with her practice's 'conceptually flawless' London Aquatics Centre.

The shortlist, made up of 'major new additions' to the urban fabric, also includes Mecanoo's Library of Birmingham, Haworth Tompkins' Everyman Theatre in Liverpool and the Manchester School of Art by multi RIBA award-winning practice Feilden

Clegg Bradley Studios.

O'Donnell + Tuomey Architect's student centre at the LSE completes the list. It is the fifth time the Dublin-based practice has been in the running for the accolade.

Speaking about the shortlist Stephen Hodder, RIBA President and first ever winner of the RIBA Stirling Prize (1996), said: 'Every one of the six shortlisted buildings shows what great public architecture can do: transcend mere construction to something poetic. The shortlist comprises no ordinary new swimming pool, office block, theatre, library or university – they are beautiful, inspiring new buildings their communities can be proud of.

'This shortlist sends a clear message that great buildings don't only need great architects and clients, but to be truly successful they need the patronage of the community they serve.'

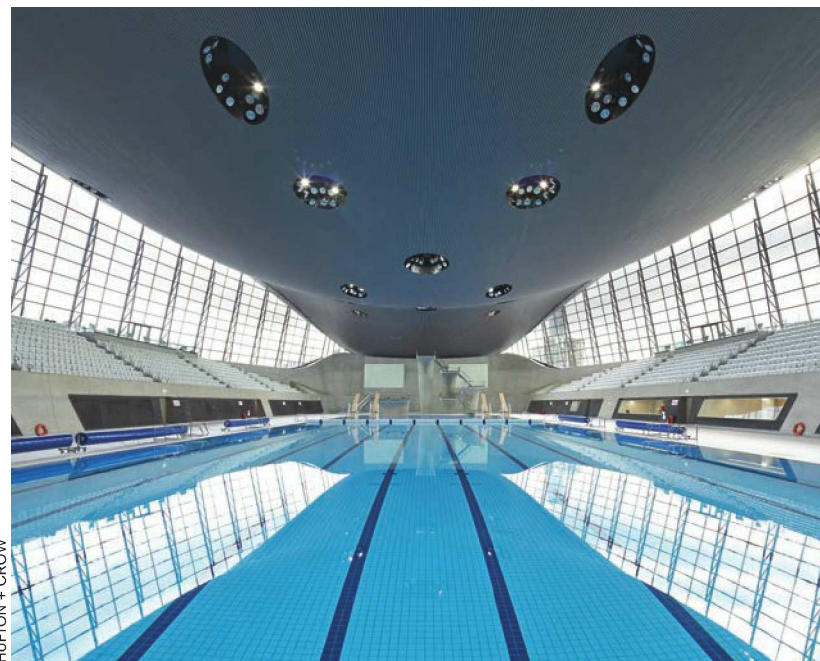
Although the institute has now found a sponsor for the award, the £20,000 winner's cheque will not return until 2015.

The winner will be announced the evening of Thursday 16 October at RIBA HQ, Portland Place in London.

This year's judges are: Spencer de Grey of Foster + Partners (chair), MJ Long of Long and Kentish architects, Cindy Walters of Walters and Cohen, Stephen Kieran of Kieran Timberlake and Timothy Sainsbury. *Richard Waite*



DENNIS GILBERT



HUFTON + CROW

### London Aquatics Centre by Zaha Hadid Architects

#### Judge's citation

This world-class building was a fitting backdrop for the 2012 Olympic Games. Inspired by the fluid geometry of water in motion, the undulating roof sweeps up from the ground like a wave to fold over the building and define two separate pools.


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.

LATEST ODDS

5/2



CHRISTIAN RICHTERS



**London School of Economics – Saw Swee Hock Student Centre**  
by O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects

**Judge's citation**  
This is an object lesson in creating a surprising and striking building on a difficult urban site. Formed as a continuous spiral rising upwards, the outer brick walls slope and twist, gouged with cuts and cracks that give light and form. The floors take up complex shapes, yet all the spaces feel natural and functional. This is a building showing a high degree of craftsmanship.

LATEST ODDS  
**4/1**



**Manchester School of Art**  
by Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

**Judge's citation**  
The major refurbishment of a 1960s tower and new extension with open studios and workshops has been executed with great skill and innovation. Design excellence has been coupled with a visionary brief calling for staff and students to break traditional course divisions and work across disciplines. This is a building where the exploration of design and creativity will flourish.

LATEST ODDS  
**9/1**



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

**Judge's citation**  
1.2 million square feet of accommodation has been built on a small parcel of land directly next to one of London's major transport hubs. To make a tower on such a tight site a thing of great beauty is a rare achievement. Six uses occupy multiple floors: health clinic, offices, restaurants, hotel, residential apartments and public viewing gallery; to create a 'vertical village'. The building is omnipresent in London and has added immeasurably to the city.

LATEST ODDS  
**2/1**



**Library of Birmingham**  
by Mecanoo

**Judge's citation**  
Three stacked boxes adorned with a glittering filigree screen are the signature of this landmark, which makes a bold and transformative addition to the city. With formal and informal spaces for reading, relaxing, playing and participating in the library's programme of events, it has shaken the traditional perception of a library to one where families and readers can spend a whole day learning and engaging.

LATEST ODDS  
**5/1**



**Everyman Theatre, Liverpool**  
by Haworth Tompkins

**Judge's citation**  
After nine years gestation, Liverpool has a brand new purpose-built theatre of outstanding quality. The selection and use of materials has created an exceptionally tactile building. This is a building that will age gracefully, continually enriched by the patina of daily use. It will both reassure and delight its loyal audience and those discovering this gem for the first time.

LATEST ODDS  
**6/1**

FAR LEFT: HUFTON + CROW, LEFT: MICHEL DENANCE

PHILIP VILE



JOSEPH RYKWERT, CRITIC



Developers and investors promote the bulk of building in Britain. Of the six candidates for the Stirling prize, only one was commissioned by a developer however (and I have even been told that some shy away from design of over-high quality, since the building risks being listed); the sole one on the Stirling list is the Shard, the tallest building in the country, and something of a deviant anyway.

Of the others, two are civic buildings, two are academic commissions and one is an Olympic sports centre. That seems a fair reflection on the way the patronage of architectural quality is distributed round the country. How will the judges

rate them? I certainly hope that courage will be one of the criteria.

But courage comes in different forms – there is the brute kind of seeing how high you can go, and the more subtle variety, shown by O'Donnell + Tuomey, who devised a brilliant envelope by dovetailing discordant functions on an awkward site; or yet Mecanoo's bold assertion of surface by pattern. Or maybe they will prefer the figural urbanity of Haworth Tompkins, who create a structure of rescued original materials but make the street facade into a display of local worthies – or they may yet prefer the very sober but assured extension of the Manchester School of Art. For once, I can sympathize with the judges' difficulties.

JAY MERRICK, ARCHITECTURE CRITIC, THE INDEPENDENT



Three Goliaths, three Davids. A civil split, surely, between the marketable allure of deliberately iconic buildings and the virtues of admirable, relatively everyday architecture.

Yet I suspect the 'safety' and 'obviousness' of the selections are false. Mecanoo's Birmingham Library, Hadid's London Aquatics Centre, Piano's glinting Shard. Badda-bing! Except that the library has been criticised from within, as it were; the pools – cellutic exterior, sublimely beautiful interiors – need special blue film on the windows during televised events; and the Shard is a bolt-on landmark for the City of London.

Several practices must have been a whisker away from making the King Kong segment of the shortlist. John McAslan might feel that his King's Cross transformation is a more complete display of transport hubbery than the Shard. And Hopkins must be disappointed that Brent Civic Centre, a genuine innovation in local authority building design, didn't make this part of the cut.

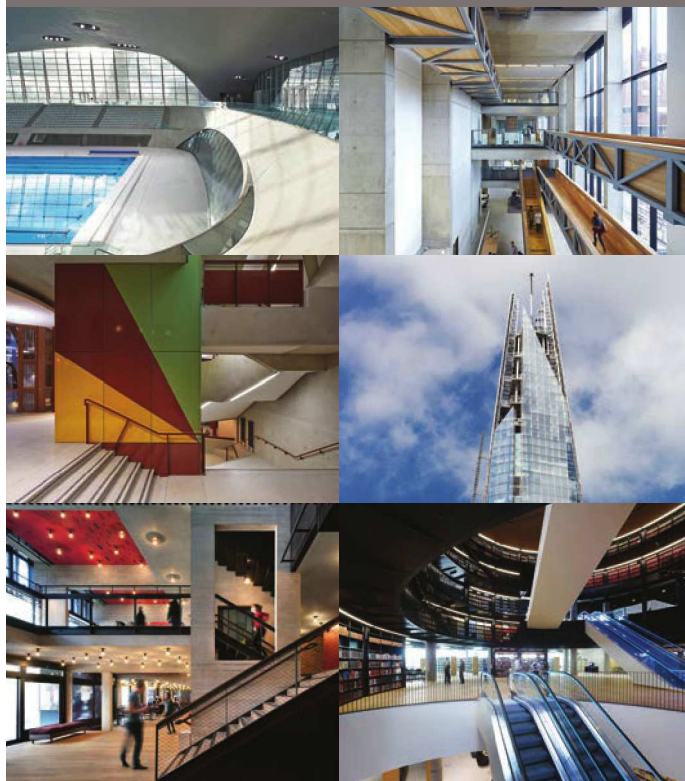
The non-iconic finalists are

particularly interesting. There can be no dispute about the inclusion of Haworth Tompkins' Everyman Theatre in Liverpool, an excellent demonstration of the practice's abilities in form-making, surfaces, and profoundly satisfying modulations of internal space and atmosphere.

The selection of FCB Studios' tautly composed Manchester School of Art is certainly deserved, but there must have been intense competition for this place in the shortlist. AHMM may think its Chobham Academy is more worthy; ditto Maccleanor Lavington and its fastidiously elegant Saxon Court and Roseberry Mansions.

The winner, for me, is O'Donnell + Tuomey's Saw Swee Hock Student Centre. The geometric and material response to a dreadfully tight lacuna site is not just bold, it absolutely works, both as a Soane-meets-Expressionist urban sculpture, and programmatically. The visual power of the exterior is, if anything, surpassed by the vivid human energies generated within this 21st century Academic Cabinet of Dr Caligari.

FAVOURITE Undecided



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HUFTON + CROW; HUFTON + CROW; MICHEL DENANCE; CHRISTIAN RICHTERS; PHILIP VILE; DENNIS GILBERT

FAVOURITE O'Donnell + Tuomey's Saw Swee Hock Student Centre



DENNIS GILBERT

ELLIS WOODMAN, ARCHITECTURE CRITIC, DAILY TELEGRAPH

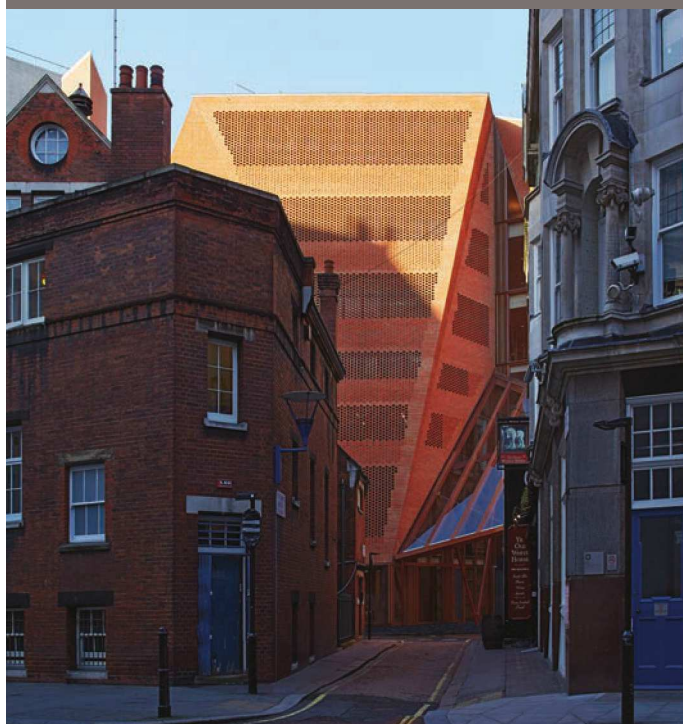


The announcement of the Stirling Prize shortlist is invariably greeted by wails of regret for overlooked candidates and this year I must voice some grievance on behalf of Duggan Morris's Ortus Learning Centre and Caruso St John's remodelling of Tate Britain. However, controversy should surely focus not on those buildings that have been omitted but on two that have made the grade. Constructed in a part of London that presents no obvious need for a structure of such exceptional height the Shard speaks to many of us only of the city's failure to direct corporate interests towards a considered urban outcome. Meanwhile, the objections to Birmingham Library are more squarely architectural, turning on

Mecanoo's woeful attempts to doll up vast swathes of floor-to-ceiling glazing with visually inert and functionally redundant aluminium hoops. FCB Studios and Haworth Tompkins' entries are altogether stronger but – if past recipients are anything to go by – too unassuming to win.

Hadid's is a more obvious contender, but can the jury really overlook the building's eye-watering cost and structural inefficiency? No, ultimately there is the only one horse in this race. O'Donnell + Tuomey has been shortlisted four times previously but the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre is its strongest entry to date – a beautifully built public building designed in a language that is highly individual and deployed with fantastic conviction. It will be a worthy winner.

FAVOURITE O'Donnell + Tuomey's Saw Swee Hock Student Centre



DENNIS GILBERT

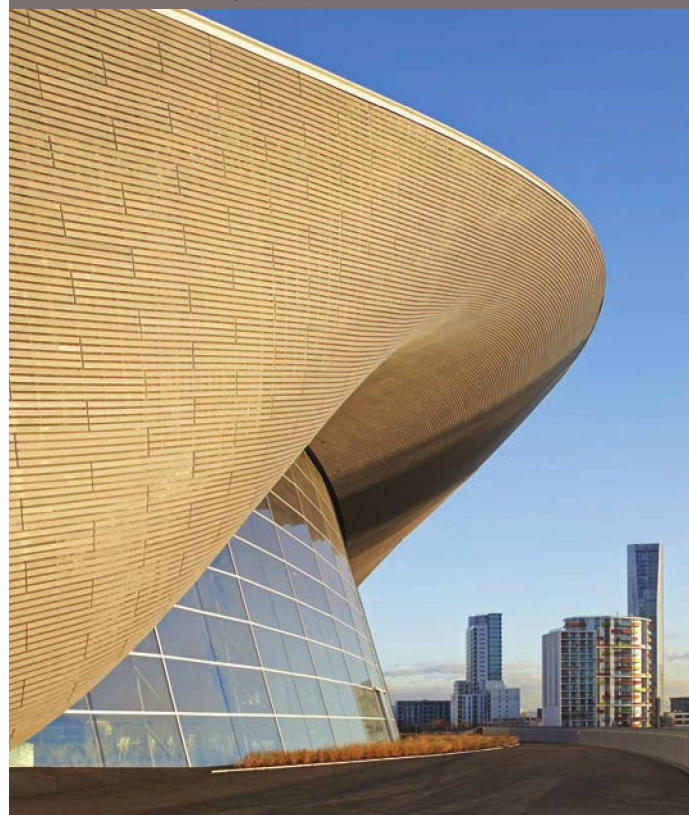
CATHY SLESSOR, EDITOR, THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW



If last year had the sense of a set of introverted guests hiding in the kitchen at the Stirling party, this year it's back to the waving and smiling business with an array of pushy personalities preening fit to bust at the cocktail hour. Decisively leading the charge is The Shard, Europe's tallest building, which I can actually see from my desk in the AR's Shoreditch eyrie. As an utterly remorseless extrusion of capital it has very little to do with architecture, but as an urban signifier intruding balefully on every horizon like the Eye of Sauron it has no equal. Now shorn of its ungainly Olympic water wings, Zaha Hadid's Aquatics Centre is now

brilliantly reincarnated as Stratford's local pool, but a sense of déjà vu and post-Games ennui prevails. Two years ago it would have been different. Mecanoo's library is essentially a clever modern mashrabiya – but are facade mechanics enough at this level? Its fiddly filigree is all a bit Blanche DuBois when compared with the doughty brick heavyweights of O'Donnell + Tuomey's student centre for the LSE and Haworth Tompkins' gutsy and poetic Liverpool Everyman. And though they triumphed in 2008, with their well-mannered Accordia housing, Fielden Clegg Bradley is probably this year's dark horse. Who will win – Zaha Hadid, despite the déjà vu.

FAVOURITE Zaha Hadid's Olympic Aquatics Centre



HUFTON + CROW