building's dominant formal themes, eg the round-
dopped window, the hovers, the strip-windows at the
back, the 'High-Tech' continent jewellery' (to re-use
a phrase). Stirling has left himself with the almost
impossible task of cooking up a new ornamental
system, so it is scarcely surprising that there are
new and false notes. But little seems 1 and irons
attached to the building do not add much to its far
more fundamental wit and irony. None of the
decoration disguises, in the handling of
apertures, if Stirling were not yet sure of an
inclusiveness or vocabulary appropriate to his plan
intentions.

Of course it is the obvious aspects of the
Staatsgalerie's historical gymnastics that will
confirm the architect's continuing place in the
Gothic Post-Modernist mode. But there is absolutely
no one in that camp that can touch this building's
sculptural skill or historical wit. Stirling is more
comfortable at a formal level and his roots are deeper.
Moreover, despite the posing, he would be nowhere
without the inherited schema of modern
architecture. These give the means for
transforming earlier types and precedents. One
suspects that it is the most fashionable and finish
aspects of Stuttgart that will date the most quickly.

The Staatsgalerie's stance towards urban design
surely have long-range relevance. Stirling's
building gives a civic place to Stuttgart. The raised
ground of the terraces (loosely recalling the urban
landscape idea of London's National Theatre)
supply a visible social stage that turns into a
veritable performance in the spatial drama of
the drum. Volumetrically (though not always in
smaller parts) the contextualism is handled with
assurance. But the setting is not simply mimicked in
plan or elevation as is often the case. The Neo
Chardin neighbour and the historic memories of
the place contribute a level of meaning to a
three-dimensional idea that lives from many other
impulses.

Stirling's continuing commitment to the
enrichment of architectural vocabulary is on the
whole admirable, but his desire to be inclusive,
combined with his commitment to collage
may lead him to a facility that is not underscored
by principle. From the outset of his career he has
delighted in plastic and iconographic adventures
into architectural history and this has sometimes
taken him to the brink of formalist caricature.
Modern quotations were then the most obvious; now
the appearances include a wider historical
range; and at a deeper level there has been the
capacity to penetrate and transform types. But
even this typological approach runs the risk of a
sort of deductive architecture: at Stuttgart the
disposition of the Atlas Museum diagram with the
free plan and the stepped section does not always
achieve a tight fit.

Ivery an easy becomes the mask for a retreat
from commitment just as operatic aesthetic
features may disguise a basic cynicism. But ethical
vision may be a pre-requisite of profundity in a
work of art. The Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart hangs
many occasions for aesthetic delight and is one of
the most amazing buildings since Le Corbusier (Cote
was written by not as funny), but despite occasional
brilliance it still lacks a certain profile. One drives
away thinking that Stirling finds neo-social vision
or institutional ideal worth celebrating. Whether this
imagination is the architect's or the society is less
certain. Stirling's own words, written nearly 30
years ago about Reichshof, focal back: an appeal
that is 'entirely visual', 'a sensation', not
sustained for any length of time', derision of 'the
schematic basis of modern architecture', turning
a tradition upside down. Perhaps Stirling's aesthetic
always lurks as a danger in Mannerism.

From the central drum the priests have now
departed leaving a void around which the high
architectural game is performed. The forms gyrate
in their own ballet without choreography, oscillating
between memories of past modern architectural effervour
and a collapse into the false comfort of mere
revivals; both positions are mimicked but
neither is embraced. The proselitising between
present idenities is performed with uneasy
virtuality but it is still a dance around a void.

36. entrance to chamber theatre
opens (right) off arch which leads to
entrance level terrace. Big window
is at back of theatre.
37. the administration block, with its
Corbusian overtures, is at back
(arch)side of site.
38. views on the east side recall
Stirling's earlier work in England.

35. design sketch for log window at back of theatre - critics indicate that Stirling has approved an edition's detail