function. The planning programme had produced something very unique in that respect, and we tried to recognise this complexity in the seemingly random positioning and size of windows. Which appearance, I thought, had to be counterbalanced by the completely different appearance of the entrance.

MD
I've been through the building, including all the service zones, and it's certainly impeccably planned. The private realm seems very well served from the planning and conceptual points of view, but I do have concerns about the relationship of the institution to the public realm. I think the decision to put the staff/teaching rooms on the outside, so that people in the offices overlook the street, rather than the courtyard space, created a problem.

JS
It was our feeling that these rooms should have a view of the street and an involvement with campus activities around the building. On the other side they would have overlooked the service yard—which might have been rather insensitive, especially as the galleries could not have windows. Maybe we're doing the obvious and then designing a very out of the problem it creates. So the galleries became wrapped by the offices and were not exposed to the street. They rely on the interior and the staircases for their presence, which relates to the problem of where to put the public entrance. The notion of having the entrance face forwards on to the back of the fire station always seemed a bit crazy to me. There were really only two possibilities: either on Gund corner looking towards Memorial Hall, or the other corner looking towards the Yard and the Fogg, which we chose. An entrance by Gund Hall would have been too far from the Fogg and in the wrong direction for the centre of Harvard. Then, having concealed the museum behind a wall of academic rooms, we had to announce on a short elevation that, within, this was a public museum.

MD
For me the most beautiful facade is on the inside facing the service yard, the one with the galleries and the protruding box for the little Asian rock garden. That wall facing the apartment houses is a tough, raw, and beautiful design.

JS
But it's a straight . . . one might almost say . . . 1950s functional facade. It's almost like Walter Gropius at that point.

MD
Oh, I don't agree, to me it's not just a simple wall. It actually has a presence as a wall and as a facade. It's both abstract and representational. However, I do find the abstraction of the two street elevations a bit odd with the urban role of the buildings. At Rice University, and in the German museums—both at Düsseldorf and at Stuttgart—you had a certain flexibility—room to manoeuvre. Facade issues were not critical. With the Salkior the constraints of programme and site meant the buildings envelope had to be filled, thus defining and enclosing the street. Didn't this demand a representational facade, not an abstract elevation?

JS
I think one sets up certain straights which have then to be corrected. There's a change in throwing the gestures so far apart, as it depends on one's skill in bringing them back together again. In this building, we hope it is achieved by the experience of the entrance hall and staircase: it's essential to enter, otherwise the building may not be entirely understandable. I think the entrance facade is respectful to the Fogg (and to Harvard) and I think the Cambridge Street elevation is supportive of Gund. All the movement of Gund Hall is horizontal, and I think our elevation to Cambridge Street makes a step-and to this movement, giving the architecture school an urban stability it previously didn't have.

MD
There is an interesting phenomenon on the Harvard campus viz-a-viz the use of brick. To the best of my knowledge there have been three cases where the material conventions of the Yard have been interrupted or violated. The first was Bulfinch's University Hall, a grey stone building built in contrast to the brick buildings that existed because it was opposite the main gate. The next was Richardson's Sever Hall, which is a very beautiful, odd, and almost perverse building on the outside. He built it in brick even though the other buildings at the time were in grey stone—the old chapel and library. The logical thing would have been to make a stone building so that there would have been a brick quay and a stone quay. But Richardson went against the grain and made a different kind of building. Then, when the chapel and library were rebuilt, they were built in red brick—to unify the whole. The next violation of convention (both type and material) was the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts designed by Le Corbusier. He did not want to make a brick building, but rather to relate back to the idea of a unique building such as University Hall. Your building seems to be the fourth in this series of "violations." It is unique not only in its abstraction but also in the materials, and the colour of its materials.

JS
We could have tried for a balancing act either side of the Fogg, with Carpenter Center on its right in concrete, and the Salkior on the left in concrete—two modern concrete pavilions either side of a Georgian brick Fogg. Corbusier was able to make a pavilion of Carpenter Center but that was never likely with the Salkior due to programme requirements and site limitations. Furthermore, Gund Hall is in concrete, and if we had also built in concrete, it might have overwhelmed the character of the street, changing Quincy Street from a brick promenade into a concrete alley. My greatest suspect is for Sever Hall and I would have preferred the horizontal bands of the Salkior to have the light and metallic resonance of Sever, but we just couldn't get those bricks as they were made within the budget constraints.

MD
What about the stripes going around the corner, not the stripes themselves, but the actual corner? Why did you leave the building on a continuous facade, not articulating the two sides?

JS
Well, the speedy corner is meant as a deference in passing to Memorial Hall. With a small building you can't play all the steps out at the same time. Instead of trying to be everywhere original, it's necessary to have neutral areas offsetting the unique and particular, to have both high pitches and low notes.

MD
We know that the programme required the building to fit the site envelope. Is this why the steps go down into the entrance rather than up?

JS
Maybe it's like stepping into an archaeological dig: here the up flight of steps associated with a monumental building is reversed. Lately I have begun to feel it's equally monumental to go down as to go up. But the functional answer is that we wanted the bridge overhead to connect the Salkior and Fogg galleries at the same floor level, but then when the required programme was fitted underneath, the entrance level was more into the ground than out of it.

MD
We didn't talk earlier about what the facade represents.

JS
Well, there's a big cleft or opening, an entrance; or there's a head with a face, a visage overlooking the campus. Maybe it has a slightly—i.e., to say it—eastern or unique gaze, ambiguous as to its origin, not exactly a Western face. Perhaps I was trying to make a face which was, shall I say, not British.

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