

BATTERSEA POWERSTATION

The Transformative Power
of Iconography

Baya Imadalou



Battersea Power Station icon
© Liam O'Neill



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BATTERSEA

The Transformative Power of Iconography

Énoncé théorique | Master Architecture

Under the guidance of

Jeffrey Huang

Stefana Parascho

Georg-Christoph Holz

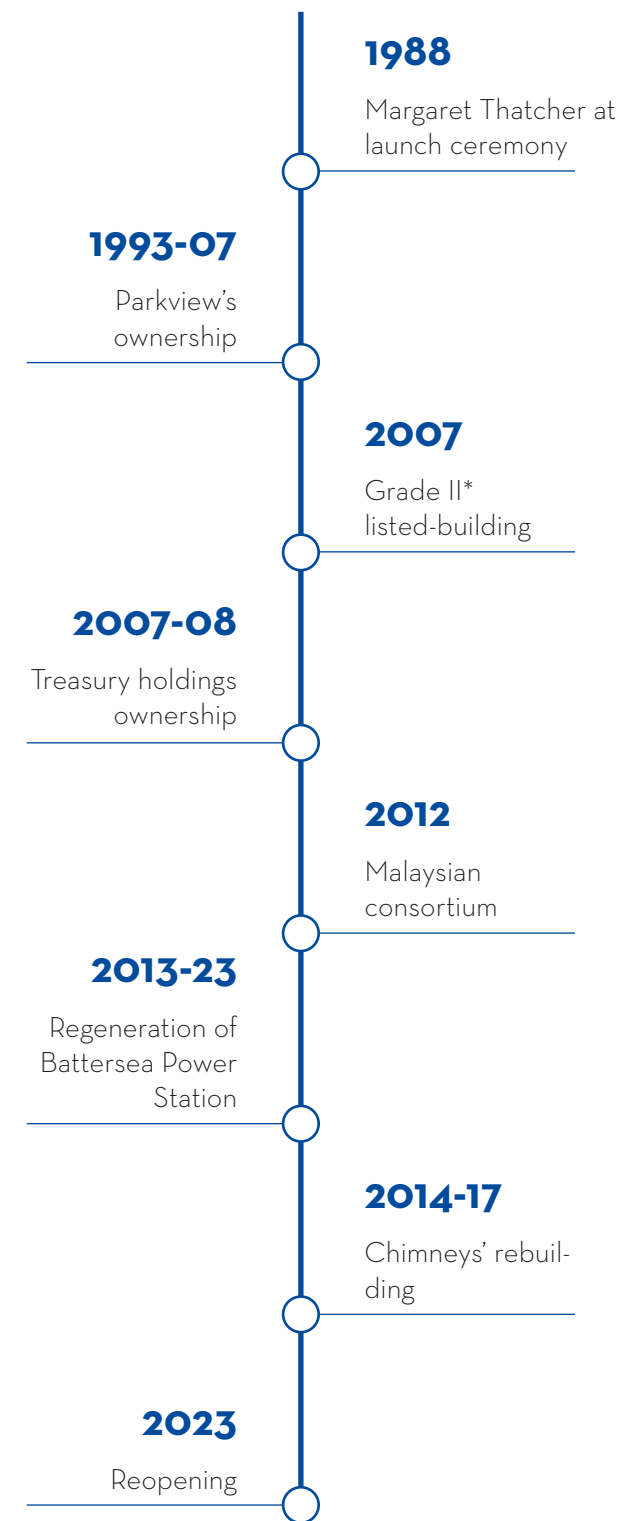
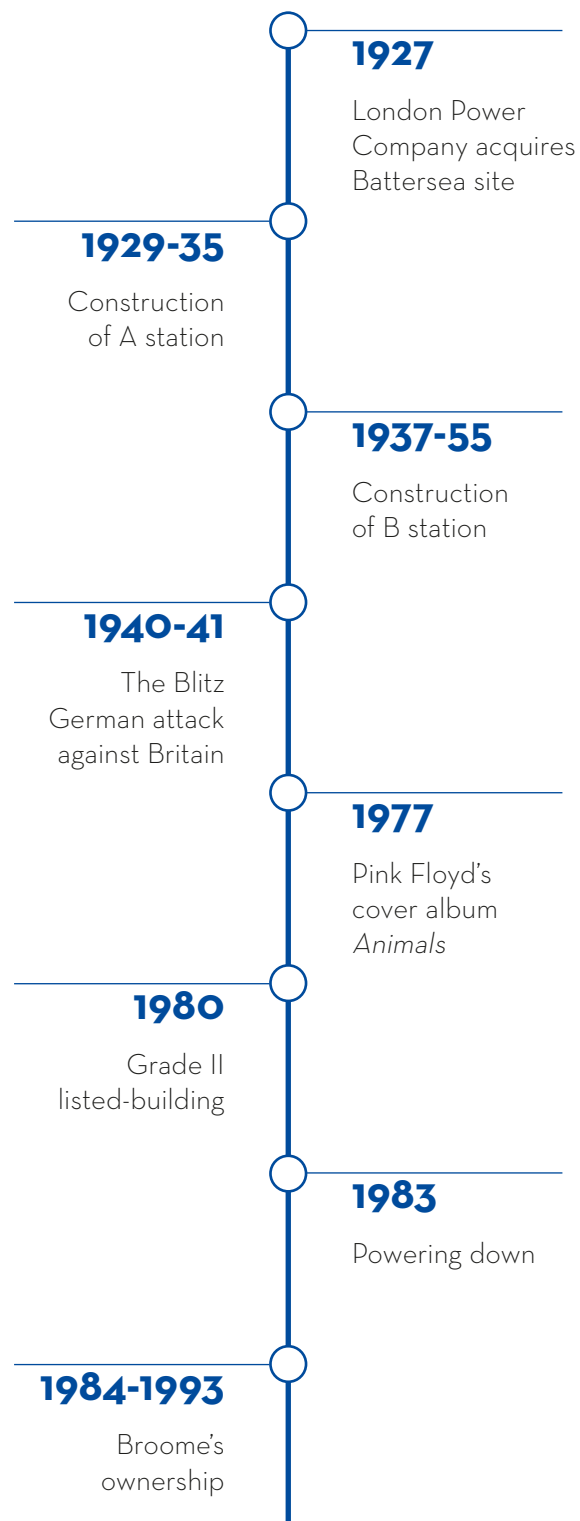
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POWER STATION

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CHRONOLOGY





INTRODUCTION

« There is a tendency to classify power stations with factories and to locate them in industrial areas, but they differ from factories in one important respect: they are public utility undertakings, marketing their product in a localised and centralised market and the nearer they are to that market the more economically and efficiently they function. »

Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke: The failed dreams of Battersea Power Station* (Paradise Road, 2016), 52.

Prologue

The British industrial landscape has been significantly shaped by the towering icon of the *Battersea Power Station*. In the twentieth century, the production of electrical energy emerges as a new transformative way of powering London. The increasing demand for electricity leads to the construction of a power station capable of supplying millions of consumers. Situated on the banks of the River Thames in South London, the *Battersea Power Station* is constructed in two distinct stages during the mid-twentieth century. In the first place, the engineer Leonard Pearce contributes to the overall design of the structure, while the exterior aesthetic is the expertise of the architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. The interior Art Deco style is achieved by Halliday & Agate architects. In 1960, the station plays an essential role, supplying twenty percent of London until it ceases operations in 1983. The Grade II listed-site reflects Britain's industrial years, from the Second World War to the post-industrial period.

Significantly, the powerhouse remains an important visual and cultural symbol of the British industrial heritage. The colossal structure, characterised by a symmetrical plan featuring two stations topped by monumental columns, has inspired numerous movies, photographs, music videos and popular visual arts events. From the station's cinematic apparition in the Beatles' 1965 movie *Help!* to the Batman trilogy *The Dark Knight* in 2008¹, the power station has played an important role in the expression of the twentieth-century cultural narratives.

Most famously in 1976, the building appears on the Pink Floyd's cover album *Animals*, symbolized by a pig flying through the air between the two chimneys. The icon has fuelled the imagination of artists and film-makers, but it has also emerged as a powerful emblem reflecting the changing history of British cultural identity. The station has served as the backdrop for many utopian and dystopian visions of post-industrial England. Consequently, the history of the building and the representation of its image in the media highlight an important question: How can a power station, through its iconic architectural elements, contribute to represent an understanding of the nation itself?

The powering down in 1983 has led to a series of unsuccessful transformation proposals, from Broome's project for a theme park to Parkview's scheme for a retail, housing and leisure complex, the power station has finally reopened in 2023. The new project is envisioned by the architecture office Wilkinson Eyre based on Rafael Viñoly's masterplan. Subsequently, the station has been rehabilitated into a new commercial and residential centre, with the participation of renowned architects such as BIG, Frank Gehry and Norman Foster. The evolving transformation of the old industrial architecture raises questions about the preservation of industrial heritage, the value envisaged for the ruins of the past and the role of iconicity in safeguarding historical heritage.

Overall, the old and new structures have provoked a wide range of opinions, from protests aimed at preserving the original site before the station was built to the golden age of industrialisation. The station has shift to the hands of investors and debates about the gentrification of the new site, now transformed into commercial establishments. The building, with its dual identity, has become a catalyst for both indignation and wonder. Notably, the thesis seeks to unravel the complex history of the station, tracing the arguments of the controversies that persist in shaping the current discourse.

¹ The Guardian, « From Monty Python to Children of Men: Battersea Power Station in Films. »

Lexicon

The current lexicon² provides the reader a comprehensive understanding of the four main ideas that contribute to the analysis of the *Battersea Power Station* representation.

² Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press

³ The Content Authority, « How To Use "Iconic" In A Sentence: Exploring The Word. »

01 Icon

(n.) « *a very famous person or thing that is used by society to represent a set of beliefs or a way of life.* »

Originally, an icon is a religious image³. The noun evolved to designate a symbolic representation of a concept, or an idea. An icon is depicted by a powerful representation that reflects a cultural, historical and ideological meaning, shaping the social imagination.

02 Iconic

(ajd.) « *very famous or popular, especially being considered to represent particular opinions or a particular time.* »

The adjective iconic refers to something recognized and characterized by its unique representation of a specific place, object or concept. In popular culture, an iconic figure is identifiable or memorable for its impact on the society during a particular era.⁴

⁴ Denis C. Meyer, « Icônes culturelles : lecture textuelle et contextuelle, » 223.

03 Iconography

(n.) « *the use of images and symbols to represent ideas, or the particular images and symbols used in this way by a religious or political group.* »

Iconography is used to the visual set of representation of a particular figure to illustrate an idea. It involves the identification and the interpretation of symbols and images to understand their associations with values and concepts.

04 Iconicity

(n.) « *the relationship between the form of a sign, such as a word or symbol, and its meaning.* »

The noun iconicity describes the characteristic of a figure and how the representation of the iconic element is distinctive and emblematic of a concept.

Hypothesis

Through a comprehensive analysis of the architectural elements of *Battersea Power Station*, the thesis aims to understand how these elements participate to the iconicity of the building in order to support an evolving representation of England over time. We posit that distinctive architectural elements have played a key role in both the establishment and perpetuation of the iconic status. Furthermore, we assume that these elements have been strategically used to express and influence the changing vision of Britain in each specific period. The research objective is to examine how the iconography of the power house contributes to reflect the changes in the nation's self-representation. In addition, the study explores how the iconography has played a crucial role in the preservation of the architectural industrial heritage by influencing the appreciation and safeguarding of the building as a cultural and historical symbol.

The research is structured into five distinct episodes, representing pivotal moments in the evolutionary process of the building from its construction to its contemporary regeneration.



Firstly, it aims to analyse the power station's construction and its critical reception in order to understand the metaphorical significance of the structure as a lighthouse in relation to London's industrial landscape.



Subsequently, the analysis delves into the peak of the stations' production, exploring its cultural impact, in particular its representation on the Pink Floyd's iconic cover album, criticising the post-industrial period of overproduction.



The narrative transitions from the powering down to John Broome's proposal for a redeveloped theme park. Significantly, the project is supported by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to promote her political campaign, using the power station as a heroic emblem of Britain's industrial heritage.



In the fourth episode, we will focus on the *Battersea Power Station* evolution under the ownership of Parkview, a Chinese investor. The episode highlights the emerging role of the structure's national and international dialogue with the economic landscape.



Finally, the thesis examines the Wilkinsons Eyre regeneration project, offering a critical analysis of the rehabilitation of the historical ruin. Through these pivotal episodes, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the iconography of *Battersea Power Station* from an industrial architecture to an iconic symbol and the use of the power station's image to narrate the evolving transformation of Britain's vision.



The theoretical research is complemented by a photographic exploration of the new site, allowing the reader to immerse in the current contemporary context. Both the narrative and the images employed in this thesis hold an intrinsic value in shaping the representation of the station.

Methodology

The main result of the thesis is a series of image analyses that support the building's representation in the media. Each episode applies a consistent methodological approach, involving four research phases:

01 Visual narrative description

Initiated by a visual narrative description, the first phase identifies the key elements and examines the subject matter illustrated by the media. The objective is to unravel the different layers embedded by the chosen media that participate to the station's symbolic narrative.

02 Contextualisation

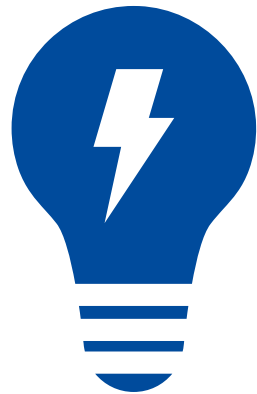
By establishing a relationship with the historical facts, the process provides an overall understanding of the historical, industrial, political, social, cultural and economic context. The research is informed by images sourced from archival newspapers, magazines and photographs from each specific period.

03 Formal composition analysis

The third part, namely the formal composition analysis, delves into the visual composition and deconstruction of the individuals elements in the image according four criteria; the format, the composition, the light and the colours. The analysis is supported by an illustrative drawing of the guiding lines and proportions, which highlights the precise arrangement of the figures. The formal analysis provides an understanding of the structural construction of the formal elements and their interaction in the composition.

04 Interpretation

The final part, the interpretation, synthesizes the insights from the visual narrative description, the contextualisation and the formal composition to present an evaluation of the image. The interpretation aims to reveal the signification of the building's image. By juxtaposing the four parts of the research, the thesis not only offers an observational and historical narrative but focuses on the construction of the iconography in each medium, emphasizing the symbolic representation of the station.



PREFACE

NEW SOURCE OF ENERGY

The preface aims to investigate the transformative emergence of a new form of energy in the twentieth century, enabling a shift in London's industrial economy. It unfolds a chronological approach, beginning with the analysis of the rise of electricity in London. Then it focuses on the strategic establishment of an administrative framework centralizing the demand for power supplies. Overall, it examines the development of the city's evolving energy needs towards a huge power station at Battersea.

Electrical power

During the 1890s, the Victorian era is characterized by the predominant use of gas power. However, in the twentieth century, a new source of energy emerges; the electricity. At that time, London's electricity supply is managed by approximately seventy independent local stations⁵. By 1920, the growing demand for electrical power necessitates a significant expansion of the infrastructures to meet the city's energy needs. Consequently, the government generates the *Central Electrical Board* (CEB). The objective is to enhance the efficiency of the supply by consolidating a restricted network of independent stations. It is during this period that Francis Fladgate⁶, a chairman of the *Charing Cross Electricity Supply Company*, comes up with the idea of bringing together ten small electricity producers to form the *London Power Company* (LPC). LPC quickly becomes a dominant leader in the power industry by managing the electricity supply across London. In the book entitled *Up in Smoke* written by Peter Watts, Fladgate describes the objectives behind the LPC's creation:

« The express object of the establishment of the LPC was to eliminate inefficient and uneconomical stations, to improve those which were reasonably efficient and economical, to provide new stations when and where required, and generally to promote economy, efficiency and reliability in the production of electrical energy in the metropolis. »⁷

The primary intentions include the removal of inefficient existing power stations in order to optimize the economy of electrical facilities. During this period, the stations supply only power to adjacent areas due to capacity limitations, resulting in the inability to provide electricity to specific parts of London. Fladgate is one of the first to declare the need for the construction of a new power station capable of serving the entire population of the city. LPC's initial ambition is to acquire the Brentford site, close to the gasworks. However, Battersea, located next to the old waterworks, presents an alternative possibility for setting up the new station.

⁵Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 31.

⁶*Ibid.*, 32.

⁷*Ibid.*, 32.

Battersea site

Battersea, positioned south-west of central London in the Wandsworth borough, along the south bank of the River Thames, is historically home to the manor houses of Westminster Abbey⁸ in the twelfth century.

By the 1850s, the district undergoes a transformation into an agricultural area, with the fertile land being extensively used for farming and market gardens. The Industrial Revolution leads to a significant transformation in the urban landscape, marked by the construction of gasworks, water treatments facilities, mills and breweries, enabling the development of the district's industrial economy. Simultaneously, the extension of railway lines from the south to Waterloo and across the river to Victoria⁹ allows rapid population's growth, exceeding 2.5 percent¹⁰ between 1841 and the 1900s. Despite these developments, Battersea remains one of the most polluted areas in London, contributing to the unfavourable reputation of the site. Consequently, Battersea Park is established in 1858 with the aim of sanitizing pollution in the district.

In October 1927, the *London Power Company* acquires Battersea site with the intention of constructing the largest power station, equivalent to the combined capacity of their nine existing stations. The *Southwark and Vauxhall Waterworks Company* occupies initially the building site, providing water to south London before relocating in Hampton.

Government approval is granted due to the site's central location adjacent to the gasworks, supplying the entire center of London without the need for extensive cabling, and consequently reducing the costs. Additionally, the proximity to the riverfront facilitates the delivery of coal that can easily be cooled in the water. Furthermore, the site's connectivity to train lines makes it an ideal location for the new power station.

⁸ Mike Fox, « Urban History, » 723.

⁹ Ben Pedroche, *London's lost power stations and gasworks*, 62.

¹⁰ Mike Fox, *op. cit.*, 723.

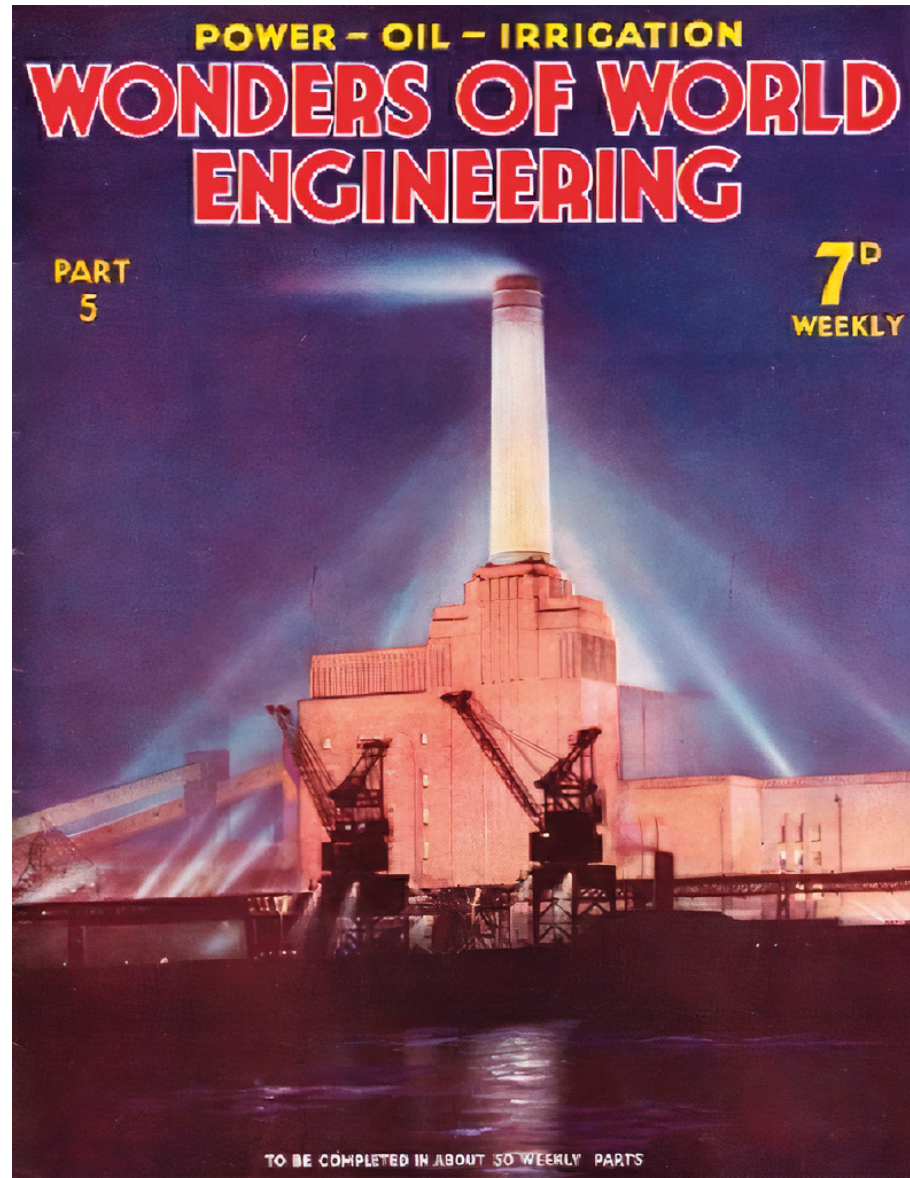


FIRST EPISODE

INDUSTRIAL PERIOD OF A STATION

The first episode delves into the initial concepts behind the construction of A station. On the one hand, it investigates the defined plan of the chimneys, contributing to the iconic characterisation of the power station under Leonard Pearce's leadership. On the other hand, the episode explores the exterior construction designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, highlighting his crucial role in shaping the station's distinctive façade. The examination extends to the interior design conceived by the architects Halliday & Agate. Ultimately, the first part aims to unravel the synergistic impact of these design elements, illustrating the collective contribution to the potential of the power station.

Fig. 1: Battersea Power Station for the cover magazine *Wonders of Engineering*, 30 March 1937. © Wonders of World Engineering.



Controversial start

Visual narrative description

On 30th March 1937, the magazine *Wonders of World Engineering*¹¹ publishes the *Battersea Power Station* for the cover of the fifth part, illustrated by the title: « Power - Oil - Irrigation ». *Wonders of World Engineering* is a weekly magazine published between 1937 and 1938 participating to the literature of engineering. The magazine is edited by Clarence Winchester and assisted by Thomas Walley.

The cover represents an illustration of the station A lit up at night and surrounded by two construction cranes, viewed from the River Thames. The station is built in 1929 as part of the industrialisation of London. Initially, the powerhouse is the subject of many political and social debates. The primary environmental concern remains around the pollution released by the station's smoke, located in the heart of the city. Additionally, its close proximity to other historic landmarks poses a potential threat to the view of *St. Paul's Cathedral*¹². As the foundations are being laid, significant oppositions emerge in the influential magazine *The Times*. King George V and the Minister of Health are both concerned about the construction and their apprehensions are documented in the magazine¹³. Environmentalists and citizens come together, organising demonstrations and circulating petitions to stop the project.

In response to the raised objections, investigations are underway to develop a method for eliminating pollution from sulphur emissions in the chimneys. Planning permission for the second half of the plant is eligible once the first plant demonstrating its ability to control pollution. The task is assigned to Leonard Pearce, an electrical engineer¹⁴. The objective is to prevent sulfuric emissions from entering the Thames by including an initial treatment, instead of releasing them into the atmosphere of London. Based on a series of experiments, the proposed solution is a gas-washing system, including a sequence of processes designed to purify smoke through water sprays. The efficacy of the gas-washing system has played a crucial role in mitigating protests and facilitating the advancement of the station's construction.

¹¹ « Wonders of World Engineering : Part 5. »

¹² Ben Pedroche, *London's lost power stations and gasworks*, 63.

¹³ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

Architectural genesis

Contextualisation

Pearce has not only resolved the gas-washing system but he has planned the entire initial construction of the site. The *Battersea Power Station* involves two distinct and symmetrical sections; A and B stations. The building's organisation is divided in three main parts; the boiler house, the turbine halls and the switch houses, corresponding to the successive phases of electricity generation in a coal fired station¹⁵.

The first design is structured around sixteen small-sized steel chimneys arranged in two parallel and symmetrical rows, supported by cables. However, due to pollution concerns, the total number of chimneys needs to be reduced to eight taller chimneys. On the other hand, concerns about corrosion observed after five years of operation in Barton's power station chimneys¹⁶ raise questions about the durability of the steel structure. Upon revising the plans, he decides to reduce the number to six made of brick and concrete chimneys. At the end, the engineer concludes that four chimneys positioned at each corner offer the optimal solution, combining brick and concrete for durability and providing space for integrating the gas-washing system. In fact, the decrease in the chimney count is resulting in an oversized dimension, contributing to the distinctive and iconic character of the towering chimneys.

Regarding the structure of the power station, the framework is composed by an iron structure designed by Sir William Arrol & Co. Ltd¹⁷, as a symbol of the industrial design of the time. The structure is completed in three years between October 1930 and May 1933 and has required sufficient weight support capacity to accommodate the brick covering. The quantity of structural elements contributes to the station's solidity. Notably, the height of the spectacular metal framework accentuates the verticality of the whole building, reflecting the technical progress of engineering.

- 1 Switch House
- 2 Turbine Hall
- 3 Boiler House
- 4 Chimney

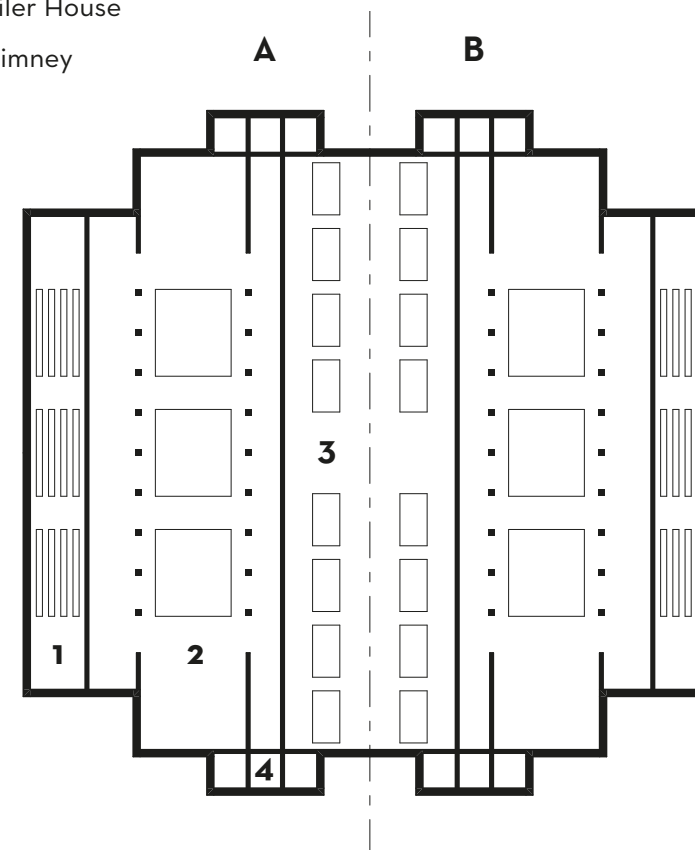


Fig. 2: Plan of the concept for the new power station, © Baya Imadlou.

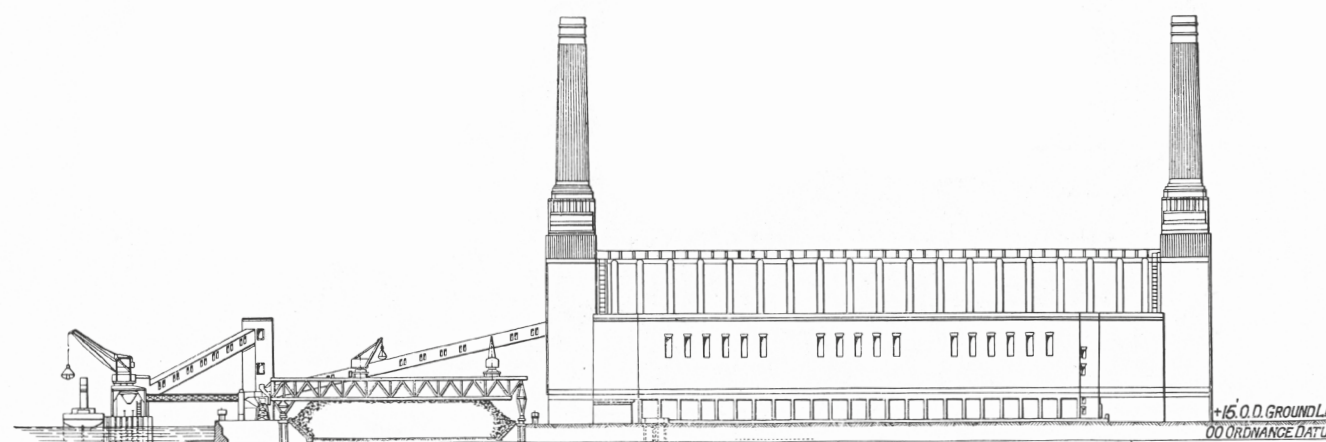


Fig. 3: Elevation for the new power station, © Leonard Pearce.



Exterior brick design

After establishing the initial plan, the necessity emerges for an iconic and distinctive exterior architecture that symbolizes technological and industrial progress of a new era. Francis Fladgate, the LPC chairman, commissions the expertise of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, one of the preeminent British architects of his generation¹⁸. The architect has the opportunity to concentrate on the building's facade, without the need to address the functional organization of spaces.

Scott designs a brick facade, inspired from the British constructive tradition, evident in various structures such as cathedrals, churches, and warehouses. The choice of brick is driven by its accessibility, the economic and functional advantages. He fosters a dialogue between the building and the urban landscape by accentuating the verticality of the facade through bands of bricks in relief and recesses, complemented by broader and deeper grooves at the top. The architect opts for *Blockley* bricks¹⁹ sourced from Worcester, characterized by a pink-brown colour. Significantly, Scott employs a technique of shade manipulation by incorporating tinted mortar, enhancing the visual aesthetics of the facade.

On the other hand, the architect is responsible for the design of the chimneys. The towers adopt a neo-classical²⁰ style, standing like a Greek column, constructed in reinforced concrete. The chimneys' shape is distinguished by the addition of fluting achieved through a mobile formwork system. In terms of dimensions, the chimneys have a base diameter of twenty-eight feet to twenty-two feet at the summit. The height rises from 300 feet to 326 feet²¹, achieved by adding a cap at the top. Initially, the chimneys are painted in an ochre colour to match the brickwork, but after the Second World War, they are finally coloured in white cream.

Consequently, Scott's involvement serves two primary purposes: firstly, it mitigates critics by selecting an architect of considerable stature. Secondly, it aims to transform the building's perception from an industrial structure to a symbol of technical and engineering advances.

¹⁸ Ben Pedroche, *London's lost power stations and gasworks*, 64.

¹⁹ English Heritage, « Battersea Power Station, » 11.

²⁰ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 54.

²¹ English Heritage, « Battersea Power Station, » 11.

Art Deco interior

The interior design is established by the Manchester-based office, Halliday & Agate. The space is organised in three main parts; the Boiler House, the Turbine Hall and the Switch House, containing the Control Room. Halliday & Agate develop an interior design inspired by *Art deco* style²², an aesthetic that emerges between the two World Wars period in the 1920s and 1930s. The style draws inspiration from artistic movements including the *Bauhaus*, *Stijl*, *Cubism*, *Constructivism*, and *Futurism*, with the integration of new technologies. In architecture, *Art Deco* is characterised by geometric forms featuring a symmetrical and classically ordered sense of composition with motifs inspired by ancient Egyptian and Greek cultures. The colour palette seeks interplay between the contrast of black and white, with touches of silver and gold.

First, the Turbine Hall A measures 475 feet long by 80 feet wide²³ and contains the two towering chimneys at the extremity. More importantly, the space accommodates two turbo-generators to operate the power station. The space is achieved through impressive arcades supported by fluted pilasters that organize the hall into two levels arranged with balconies. Different walkways are positioned strategically between the turbines to facilitate natural light at the lower level. The turbines are covered with cellulose paint to give a polished aesthetic appearance. The architects employ grey-blue faience tiles for the walls, accentuated by a black finish at the base of the pilasters. While the slabs are composed by prefabricated terracotta materials.

The Boiler House constitutes the largest surface for a dimension of 494 feet in length (following the construction of B station) by 104 feet in width²⁴, and a height of 150 feet. The space accommodates the coal installations including the conveyers and the bunkers, but also the mechanical apparatus for the Turbine Hall functioning. To the north section, the space contains toilets and offices, while to the east, steel reservoirs facilitates the transmission of high-pressure steam to the turbo-alternators located in the Turbine House.

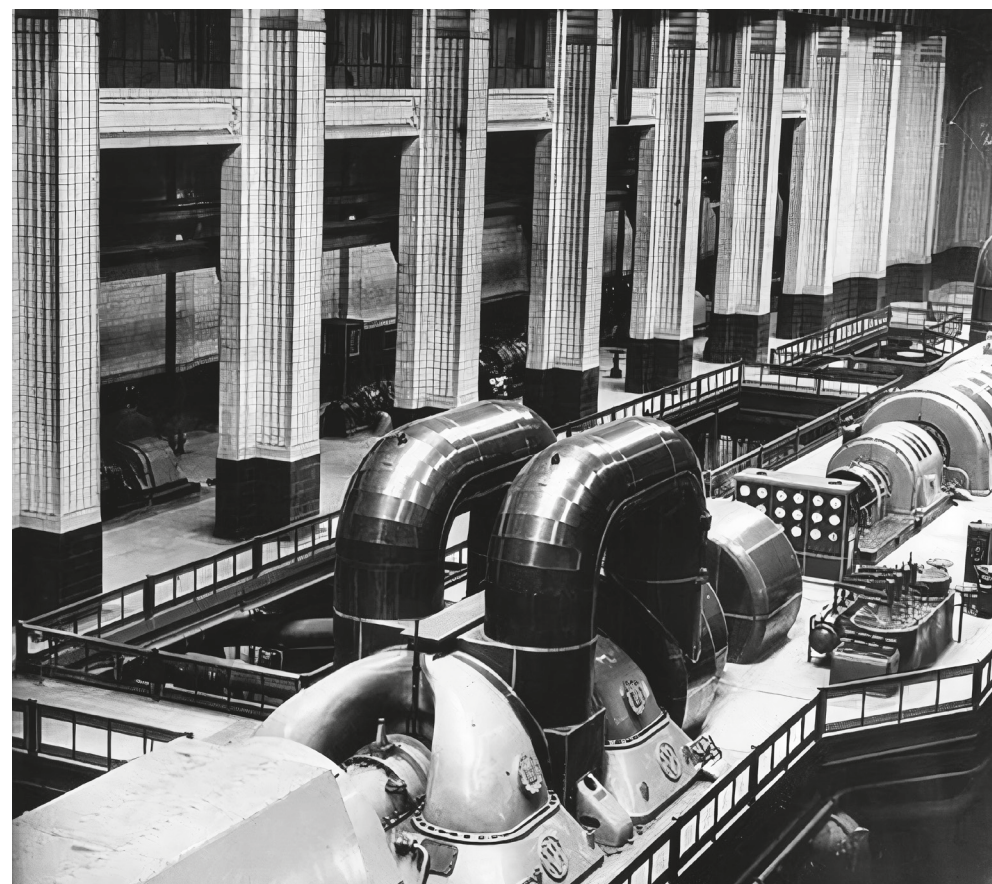


Fig. 5: Turbine Hall A, 1948, © The Northcliffe Collection / Associated Newspapers Limited.

The Switch House contains the Control Room in the upper level, alongside the Turbine Hall. The walls are covered with grey Italian marble²⁵ mixing black Belgian marble. The switchboard is painted as the same colour as the walls to achieve uniformity. While the floor is characterized by polished teak blocks. The ceiling is partitioned into height glass and steel bays to invite natural light into the space. The Control Room is punctuated by L-shaped panels covered by switches, added by hand-operated telegraphs facilitating the transmission of operational commands to the turbines.

²⁵ English Heritage, « Battersea Power Station, » 15.

²² Purcell, « The history and significance of the Art Deco movement in the UK. »

²³ English Heritage, « Battersea Power Station, » 13.

²⁴ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 57.

Fig. 6: Control Room A, © James Parsons.

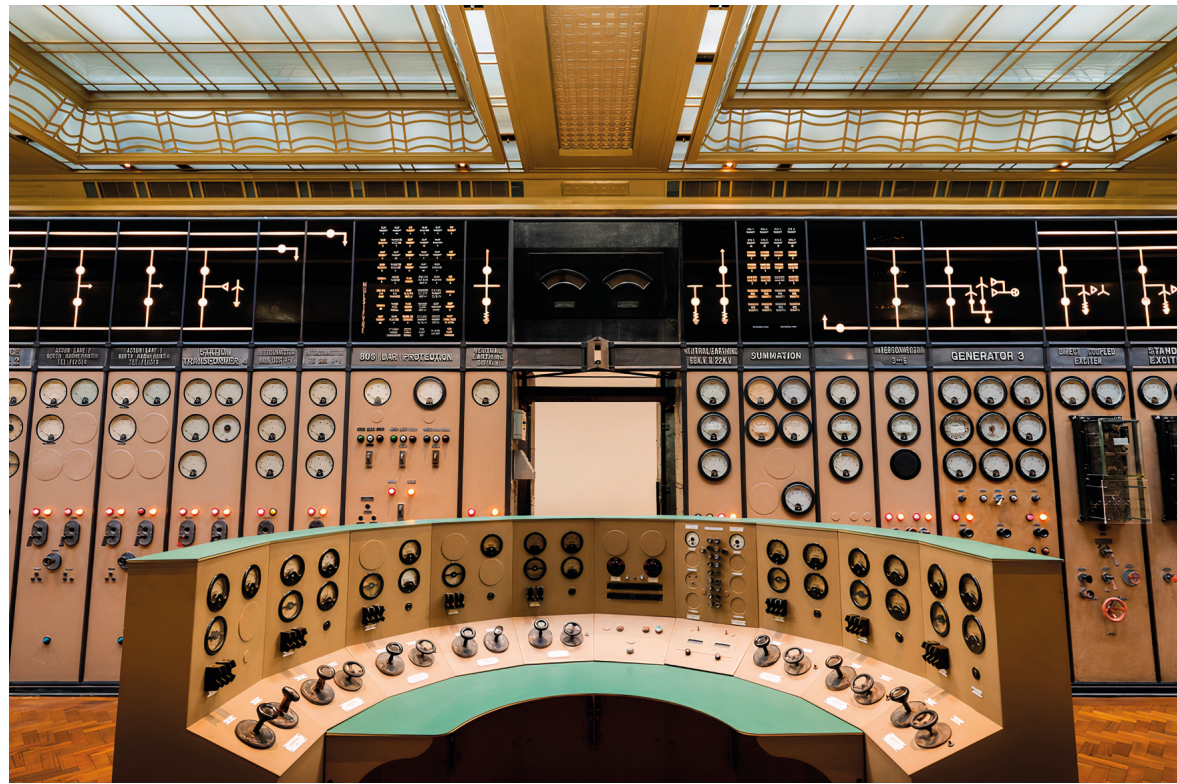


Fig. 7: Switch House A, © Ian Lidell.

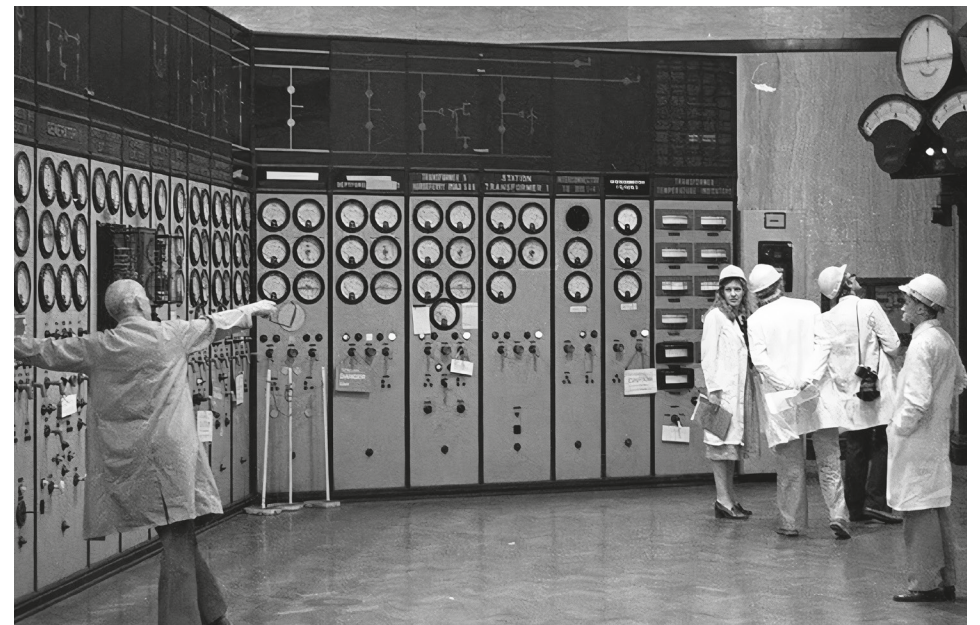


Fig. 8: Switch House A details, © Ian Lidell.



Fig. 9: Station A completed, 1937. © Getty Images.

Energy generation

The River Thames plays an essential role to transport the coal from Barry in Wales to the *Battersea Power Station*. The boats are specially conceived to navigate under the bridges. Upon arrival, the coal is discharged by cranes and directing to jetty's conveyors. From there, the coal is leading either to the control tower for the boiler house, or to the coal store for storage. The A station consumes 4000 tons of burnt coal per week. The coal is used to fuel the process of heating water. The Boiler House transforms 250,000lb of water into steam, reaching a pressure about 625lb per square inch²⁶. The next phase involves the activation of the turbines with steam, driving the alternator to produce electricity. At the end, the steam is cooled into the river, while the smoke from the Boiler House ascends through the chimneys.

²⁶ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 67.

The A station is completely finished in 1935, but is officially commissioned by June 1933. The east side is temporarily recovered with a protective sheet until the construction of the B station. In May 1939, the building acquires the rank of the second most popular modern building in Britain, voted by a jury of sixty people²⁷. Despite concerns at the start of construction, the station is acclaimed on opening for its architectural prowess, as well as its proper operation to supply electricity to the different needs of the city. Renowned newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* or the *Daily Herald* acclaim the station, describing respectively the building as « extraordinary mixture of massiveness, delicacy, industrial grimness, artistry, commercial expediency and beauty » or « flaming altar of the modern temple of power ».²⁸

²⁷ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 61.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

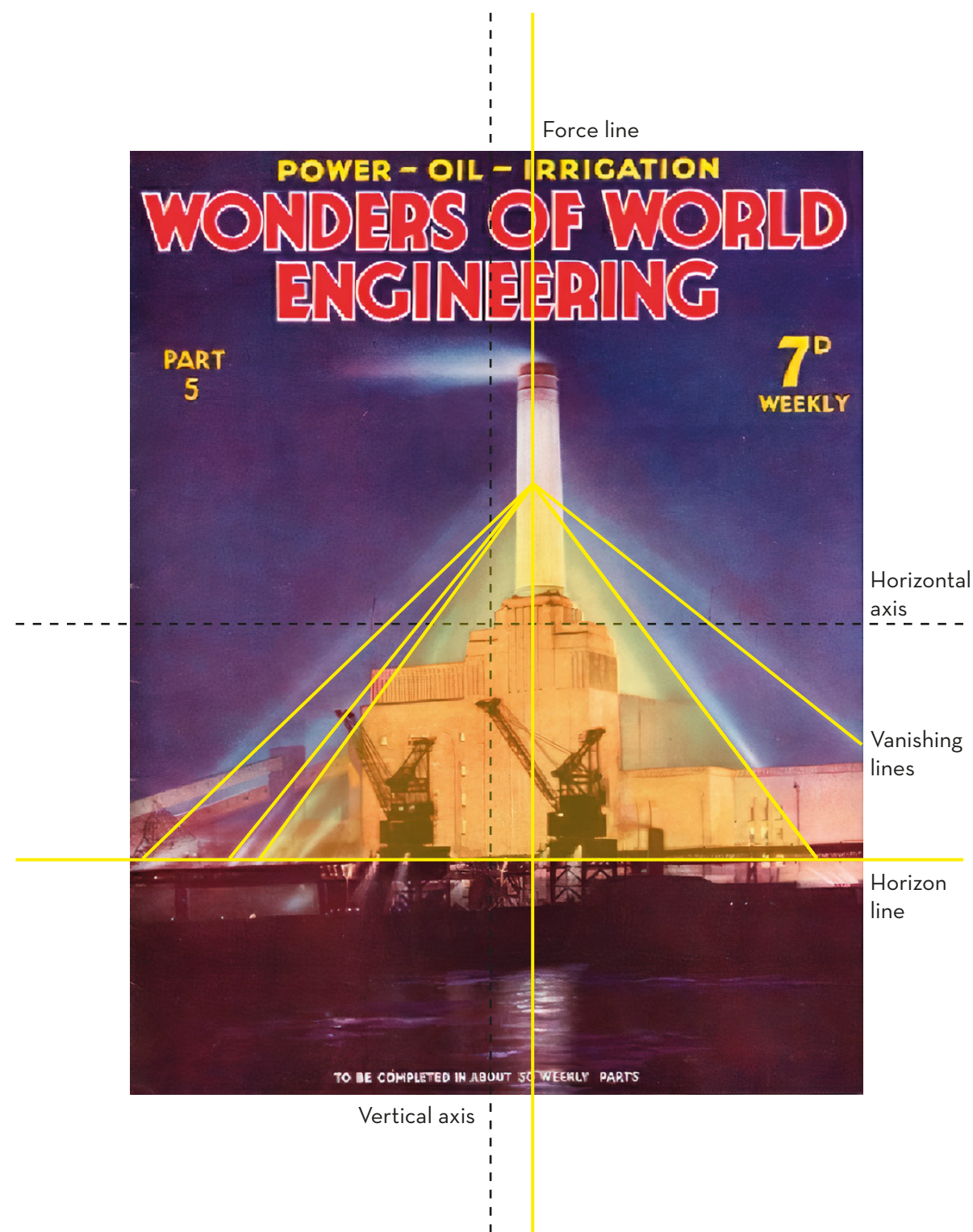
The lighthouse symbol

Formal composition analysis

It is now interesting to deconstruct the individual elements of the illustration to understand the visual composition. First, the cover adopts a rectangular portrait format, including a medium plane that presents the A station in the first plan viewed from the Thames. In particular, the building site background offers an insight into the ongoing construction of the B station. Additionally, the presence of two cranes in front of the station participate to the narrative history. The use of different planes allows the viewer to understand the pivotal role of the building in the broader context of London's industrialization. Significantly, the choice of a low-angle viewpoint contributes to accentuate the chimney's verticality, reinforcing the symbol of power of *Battersea Power Station*.

Concerning the visual composition, the station occupies the central position in the image, focusing the viewer's attention. Indeed, the building is positioned at the center of the horizontal axis, with the chimney slightly off-center along the vertical axis. The centrality of the powerhouse is reinforced by the placement of the title in the upper centre, as well as the subtitles placed on either side of the chimney. In terms of proportions, the illustration is divided in four parts: one-quarter for the river, half for the building, namely a quarter for the station's base and another for the chimney. The remaining quarter is depicted by the magazine title. While the sky occupies a third of the cover. In contrast to the verticality of the illustration, the composition of the force lines forms a triangle²⁹ in which the building and the cranes positioned on either side of the chimney are inscribed. The summit of the triangle is symbolized by the chimney, where the diagonals formed by the beams of light converging at the same point. Consequently, the pyramidal composition reinforces the sense of solidity, power, and the affirmation of the architectural identity.

²⁹ Jacques Tcharny, « Léonard de Vinci. Composition pyramidale, respect dû à la divinité, jeux de mots picturaux. »



To delve deeper into the visual analysis, we can focus on the technical use of light. The power station is illuminated by an artificial lighting, emanating behind the structure, directing the viewer's focus toward the chimney. Additionally, the diagonals of the composition are represented in the form of spotlights projecting an intense light towards the tower. Notably, the chimney itself symbolizes a luminous source, with the smoke transformed into a luminous beam. The artist uses the metaphor of a lighthouse to attribute a powerful symbol to the chimney; it becomes a focal point of light essential for guidance in the darkness. Furthermore, only one chimney is depicted on the cover, even though in 1937, both chimneys of station A are constructed. Consequently, it attributes the symbolism of a rising tower towards the sky, adding an important significance to the narrative of the chimney itself.

Significantly, primary colours dominate the scene with the magazine title presented in red, while the article title is in yellow. These elements are contrasted by the blue sky background, which changes towards a violet hue as it extends behind the building. On the one hand, the station is portrayed in orange; the colour of the construction bricks, creating a significant contrast with the blue-violet sky. On the other hand, the chimney adopts a gradation of colours, from yellow at its base and gradually becoming white as it rises, fading into the colour of the sky. Additionally, the white light emitted from the chimney strongly contrasts with the plan of black cranes, contributing to the dramatic scene of the urban context. The use of black colour intensifies the industrial ambiance, while the *Battersea Power Station* becomes a focal point, illuminating the dark scene. Regarding the techniques used, the subject of the illustration is represented very detailed; highlighting the fluting of the chimneys and the building's vertical lines of bricks. While the background, as well as the construction site, is of the same dark colour, reducing the visibility and focusing the viewer's attention to the powerhouse.

Glorius time

Interpretation

We can conclude that the chimney plays the essential role in the illustration. The architectural element of the tower participates to create an iconic building. The metaphorical element of the lighthouse attributes the role of a powerful tower to the chimney, contributing to the distinctive visual role of the station, rather than its function of releasing smoke. On the one hand, the distinctive character of the chimney is inspired by the Greek Doric column, becoming a glorius element referencing the ancient architectural heritage. Beyond its historical inspiration, the chimney symbolizes a universal familiarity, allowing the public to identify with a recognizable architectural feature. On the other hand, the chimneys' height contributes to the distinguishable form of the station, visible from the Thames. In fact, the building is among the tallest structures from its opening in the urban landscape of London. The prominence of the chimneys solidifies their key role as iconic elements in the city skyline.

The artist portrays an optimistic vision of a capital city advancing towards a glorious and promising future. The building's orientation to the left, as well as the light beam emanating from the chimney directs the viewer's attention towards the construction site of station B in progress. Additionally, the white text at the bottom of the image provides an essential context: « To be completed in approximately 30 weekly parts ». The illustration invites the viewer to take part in the city's development, underlining the dynamic and evolving nature of London's industrial landscape during that time. Overall, the metaphor of the lighthouse glorifies the representation of the *Battersea Power Station*, transforming it into a symbol of profound technical progress. The composition of the lines of force, which focus on a heroic representation of the building, and the artificial lighting contribute to create a strong and powerful iconography. It is interesting to focus on the text quoted in the magazine to support this argument:

« The power station is one of the most advanced of the great generating centres now in the service of the electrical engineer. The great power station at Battersea has become one of the

30 « Wonders of World Engineering. »

landmarks of London. Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, Battersea Power Station, whether seen by day - when the tall, severely-designed chimneys dominate the river - or by night when the station is floodlighted, is among the finest of the many fine buildings that have been built on the banks of the Thames in recent years. »³⁰

The passage highlights the significance nature of Battersea Power station as a major electricity generation infrastructure. It is one of the most advanced power generation centres, underlining the Great Britain technical advances in the field of engineering. In fact, the cover is inspired by the real situation of the construction site, according the picture below. At this time, the power is lit by spotlights to illuminate the site, but above all to celebrate the potential of the nation's achievements in electrical engineering and architecture. The aim is to portray a glorious and admirable vision of England as a pioneering nation in the industrialisation of technical development.



Fig. 10: Station A illuminated, 1950, © Val Doone / Hulton Archive / Getty Images.



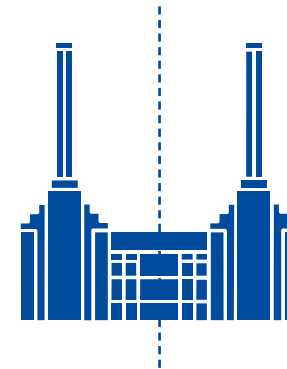
1. Industrial landscape

Industrial period of technical and engineering advancements.



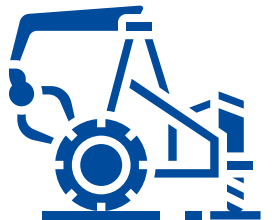
2. Station A

Completion of the half and symmetrical A station.



3. Cranes

Presence of two cranes in front of the station, participate to the narrative construction site history.



4. Lighthouse

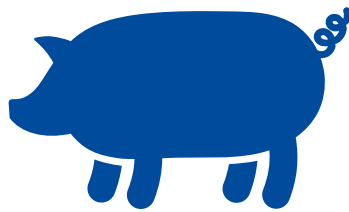
The chimney is depicted as a lighthouse tower, participating to the iconic symbol of the building.



5. The Thames

The river plays an essential role in the coal transport to the power house.





SECOND EPISODE

POST-INDUSTRIAL CRITIQUE

The second episode focuses on the construction of B station, from the Second World War to the peak of production of the complete station. Significantly, the episode delves into the representation of the powerhouse into the popular culture with the Pink Floyd's cover album *Animals*. *Battersea Power Station* emerges as a powerful symbol reflecting societal, economic, and political conditions of the post-industrial London.

Popular culture

Visual narrative description

On 21st January 1977, the Pink Floyd, the English rock group, releases their music album called *Animals*. The *Battersea Power Station* is photographed for the album's cover. Roger Waters, Pink Floyd's bassist, has designed the cover inspired by the novel *Animal Farm*, written by George Orwell³¹. The design team Hipgnosis composed by Storm Thorgerson and Aubrey Powell are in charge of the production. The concept illustrates a view of the *Battersea Power Station* with a pig flying above the chimneys. The pink balloon, named Algie³² represents an aggressive and expressive face. The photoshoot has taken place on 2nd December 1976 and lasted three days. It involves a dozen of photograph to capture the spectacular moment.

Pink Floyd is not the first one to use the iconography of the *Battersea Power Station* for representation. The first one is Alfred Hitchcock for his movie *Sabotage*³³ in 1936. The two chimneys of the A station illustrate the dramatic beginning background for the enemy attack scene. Later, the plot has inspired the producer Roy Boulting in 1951 for his movie *High Treason*³⁴. This time, the interior Turbine Hall is the background for a shootout between a policemen and a communist adversary. Furthermore, the interior station is used by another famous rock music group, the Beatles, in 1965, in their movie *Help!*³⁵.

Battersea Power Station provides an important backdrop for the cinematic depiction of the Machine Age, symbolizing the technological advances. The Control Room is equipped with innovative machinery in power generation and has inspired many filmmakers. Consequently, the powerhouse takes part in the discourse on the impact of the industrialisation of mass production on society.



Fig. 11: Pink Floyd, *Animals* album cover, 1977, © Pink Floyd Music, Art by Hipgnosis.

³¹ Harry Warwick, « Cathedral of Power: Battersea Power Station in Dystopian Visual Culture, » 128.

³² Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 87.

³³ The Guardian, « From Monty Python to Children of Men: Battersea Power Station in Films. »

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Fig. 12: Switch Room B, 1953, © The Bohemian Blog.



Fig. 13: *High Treason*, 1951, © ITV / Rex / Shutterstock.

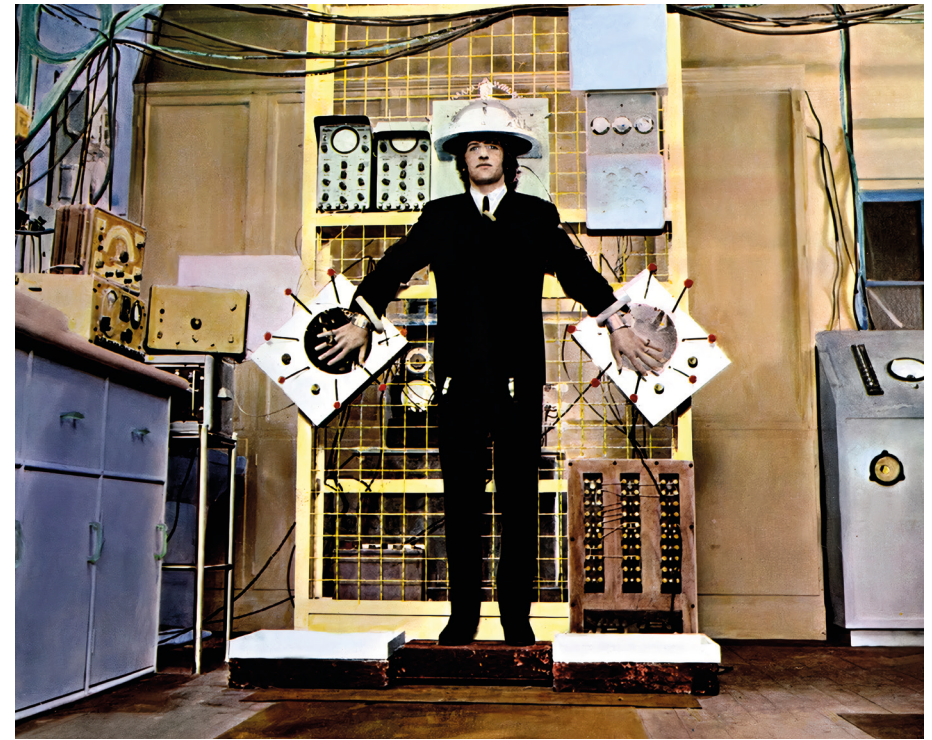


Fig. 14: *Help!*, 1965, © Alamy.

Fig. 15: Construction workers, 1932, © Fox Photos / Getty Images.



World War II aftermath

Contextualisation

The album cover represents a portrayal of the *Battersea Power Station*, captured from the opposite side from the Thames during the daylight. The cover is divided into two parts, with the square page on the front depicting the building, while the back reveals the London cityscape linked to the railway station. The station is represented by a dramatic sky symbolised by a heavy black smoke emanating from the chimneys. In fact, during the construction of the B station, the building has intensified the production of smoke, as a consequence of the Second World War. During the Blitz in 1940, the German air force attack against the United Kingdom, the minister for home security has encouraged the Battersea and other power stations to intensify the

production of smoke to dissuade air attacks³⁶. Despite damage from bombings, including a hit on the Switch House, the power station remains operational. Significantly, the *Battersea Power Station* plays a crucial role as a symbol of resistance against the enemy attacks during the World War II.

Peak of production

During the Second War World, the development of the B station continues. The structure is the symmetry of the A station, including technical improvements. The first differentiation is marked by the boiler house, where the roof is built five meters higher³⁷ than the A station, according to new boilers designed by Pearce. On the other hand, chimneys linings structure is replaced by steel instead of using bricks due to the nuisance of the gas system. The result is that Station B is more efficient thanks to the improved corrosion resistance of the system and chimneys.

Moreover, fenestrations and doors present variations, and even the façade employs different sized, coloured and textured bricks. The third chimney is up by 1941, and the final one is completed in 1955. The station reaches its peak of production in the 1960s, a period marked by the introduction of household appliances such as fridges, televisions and electric heaters. *Battersea Power Station* plays an important role in powering one-fifth of London³⁸. However, the 1970s open a new chapter with the introduction of nuclear power, coupled with the oil crisis. These changes alter the British post-industrial landscape, leading to the cessation of the A station, that had become obsolete.

³⁶ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 70.

³⁷ English Heritage. « Battersea Power Station, » 17.

³⁸ Peter Watts, *op. cit.*, 75.

Fig. 16: Aerial view from the completed station, 1957. © Simmons Aerofilms / Hulton Archive / Getty Images.

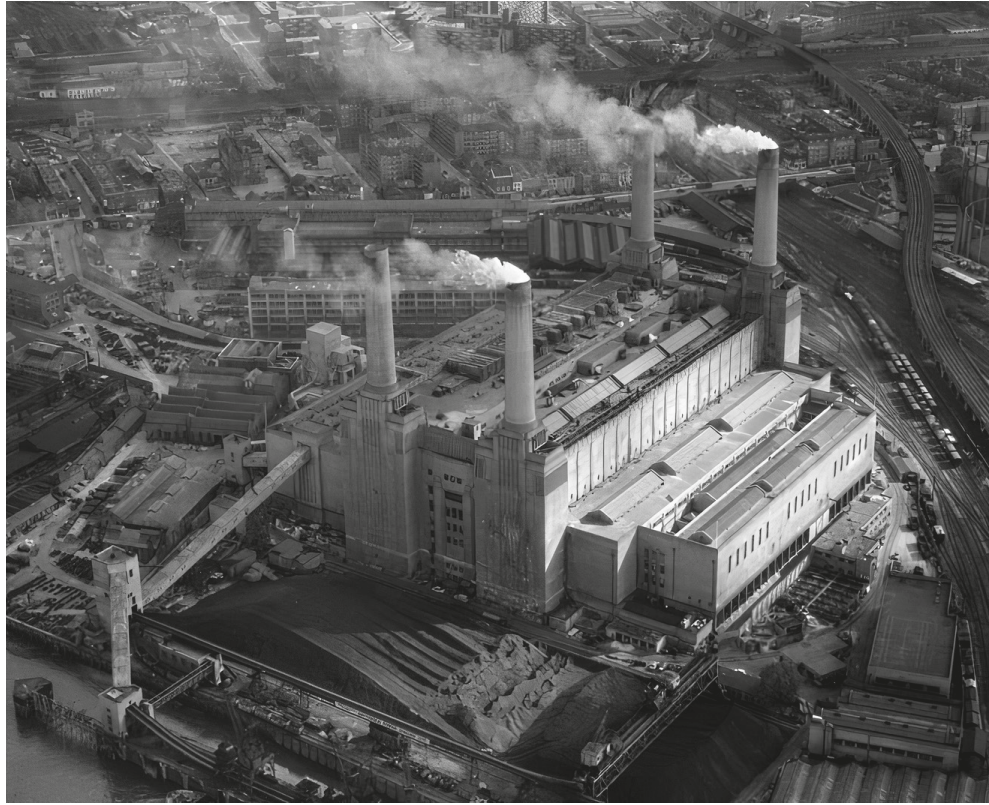


Fig. 17: Chimney's scaffolding, 1951. © Fox Photos / Getty Images.

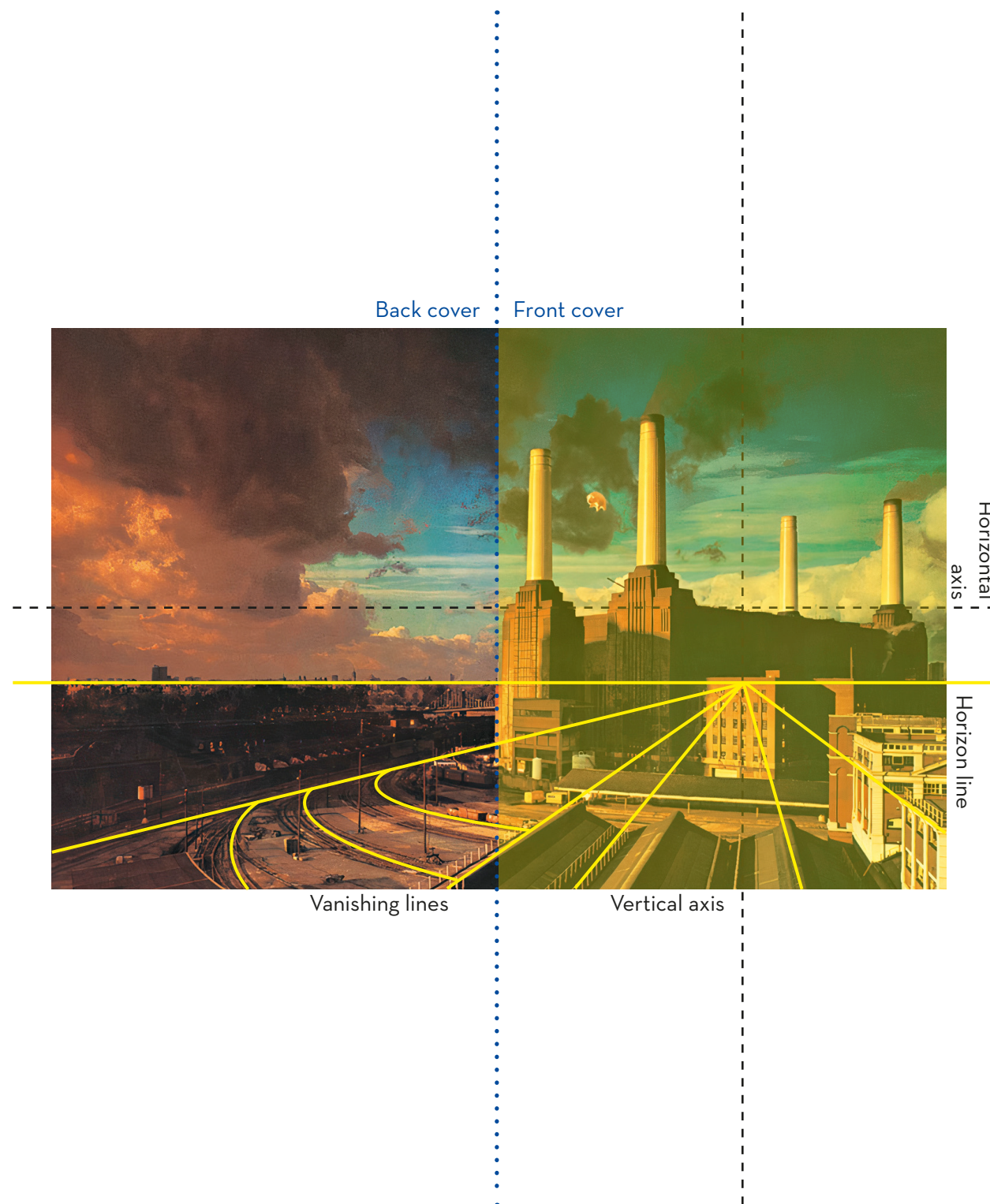
The pig's flying

Formal composition analysis

Let's start by observing the chosen format. The album cover includes a square format, while the entire image is horizontal. The *Battersea Power Station* is captured in perspective view, facing left, viewed from the roof of the train station. The tight framing reinforces the sinister vision of the building and its imposing presence in the urban landscape. Notably, the visual narrative follows from right to left, with the eye first reading the station. Then the train tracks and smoke guide the viewer to the background of the city. The organisation of the different shots contributes to the theatricality of the scene. Significantly, there is no human element to energise the town, which appears deserted. The powerhouse stands alone in a sad, lifeless landscape, while the clouds and the smoke are moving around the skyline.

Regarding the composition analysis, we deconstruct the elements of each part of the cover to gain a comprehensive understanding of the illustration as a whole. Firstly, the cover page is composed according to the building positioned at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical axes. The symmetrical composition is accentuated by the vanishing lines, guiding the viewer's attention towards the centre of the horizon line. Secondly, the illustration is divided into three parts: a quarter for the post-industrial landscape composed by the railway station. The central half is dominated by the imposing station and its chimneys. While the last third is illustrated by a dramatic sky, where the clouds mingle with the black smoke. Consequently, the symmetrical construction contributes to depict an austere and cold portrayal of the power station inscribes into the surroundings.

Concerning the back cover, the image is divided along the horizon line. The foreground depicts the train tracks guiding to the city intersected by a bridge, offering an important understanding of the post-war reconstruction defining the British landscape. Notably, the curved lines of the train tracks contribute to a dynamic composition. The sky occupies two-thirds of the composition, with clouds obscured by the black smoke emanating from the chimneys, heading towards the city. Reading the whole



cover, a clear separation is marked between the juxtaposition of the town, depicted on a smaller scale and the immensity of the station. The contrast highlights the important presence of the station which organises the town around its footprint. Finally, the suspended pig between the two chimneys appears in the black smoke and adds a surrealistic and intriguing element to the narrative.

Importantly, the illustration employs strong contrasts of light. The sunlight from the west dramatically illuminates the façade of the powerhouse. In opposite, the station sides are marked by a large shadow. Significantly, the pig seems to be the shadow reflected on the façade with its round contours, symbolizing the essence of the powerhouse. On the other hand, the chimneys are an important focus part, with the sunlight reflecting and accentuating their prominence in the sky. The towering structures draw attention on the black smoke rising into the sky. In contrast, the city remains in the shadows. The presence of the station is the source of the city's darkness, whose smoke fills the sky. Ultimately, the interplay of light and shadow produces powerful, unreal contrasts, emphasising the visual negative impact of the building on the rest of the scene.

In terms of colours, red dominates the image, particularly in the urban landscape. The artist uses saturated primary colours for each visual element. On the one hand, the front façade appears in yellow, gradually fading to red. The orange tones contrast with the gradually darkening blue sky. However, the other facades are fading from red to black colour, hiding the construction details. Meanwhile, the chimneys are portrayed in a yellowish tint, accentuating the old dimension of the architecture. On the other hand, the left-hand side of the image, as well as the train station adopt a singular violet-brown hue, transitioning to the black background. The dark gradation makes difficult the reading of the city elements, forming a same mass. On this side of the city, the sky represents a rosy hue with yellow tints, indicating the sun is setting. However, the black smoke emanating from the chimneys transform the urban sky into a grey colour, illustrating the dramatization of the scene. The visual metaphor embodied by the smoke illustrates the impact of industrial emissions on the tranquillity of the city.

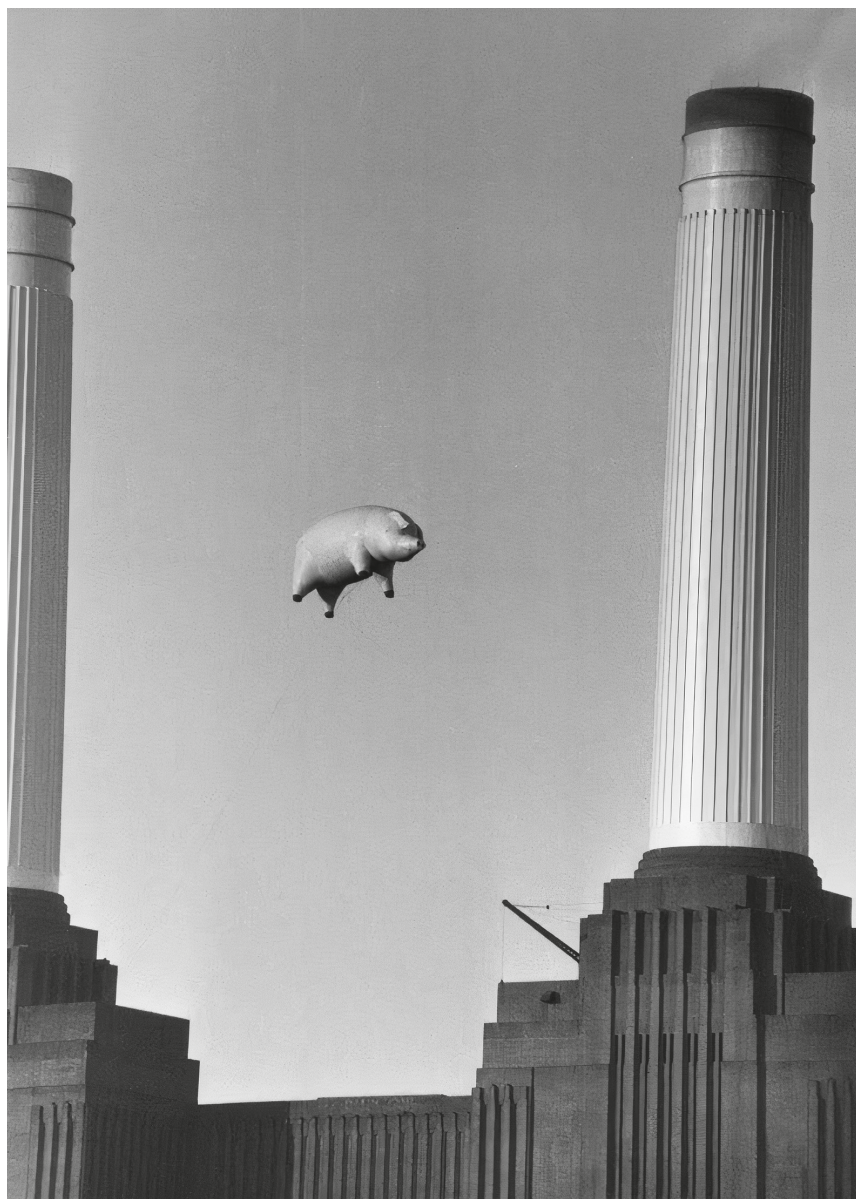
Overall, the cover image is represented by intense contrast of colours, lights and shadows. We can draw a parallel with the famous painter, Giorgio de Chirico³⁹, known for his surrealist depictions of architectural landscape evoking nostalgia and solitude. In his painting *The Arrival* in 1912-13, we can notice intriguing similarities with the album cover of the Pink Floyd. Firstly, the interplay of light highlights the architectural elements, while the exaggerated shadows contribute to the mysterious atmosphere. Secondly, the setting seems empty and desolate, portraying a sense of solitude. The symbolic element of the statue in Chirico's painting or the enigmatic pig of the Pink Floyd cover, invites to the reflection of the painting, adding an enigmatic meaning to the visual composition.

³⁹ MoMa, « Giorgio de Chirico. »



Fig. 18: Giorgio de Chirico, « The Arrival, » 1912-13, oil on canvas, © 2023 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.

Fig. 19: Photoshoot of the pig's flying through the chimneys, 1976, © Keystone / Hulton Archive / Getty Images.



Animal Farm

Interpretation

The choice of *Battersea Power Station* is significant to address the concept of the album. The imposing presence of the brick station in the urban landscape, including its towering chimneys contributes to the iconic image associated with the powerhouse. On the one hand, the colossal structure governs the territory, shaping the surrounding city. On the other hand, the chimneys dominate the sky, both in terms of height and the smoke that conquers the urban city. The symmetrical architecture of the station accentuates the idea of power, as the composition using a centred arrangement to amplify this effect.

We can conclude that the building's imposing and sinister status serves as a symbolic representation of the industrial and political power. The station plays a dual role in the urban landscape, as a significant architectural icon and a generator of electrical power polluting the landscape. The black smoke addresses a critique of society's exploitation and overproduction under the capitalist system⁴⁰. Significantly, the album cover is divided into two distinct front and back parts, representing the societal divisions between the governor's power and the population. On the other hand, the power station's shadow indicates the forthcoming destruction, symbolizing the decline of its own energy. At the end, the power station reflects the relationship between the political power and the mechanical production, illustrating the damaging consequences on the urban landscape.

The concept album is inspired by the writer, George Orwell and his book *Animal Farm* published in 1945. The book addresses a criticism of communism⁴¹, while the group orients its criticism towards the capitalist society. The album cover uses the portrait of a pig depicted at the top of the chimneys with an overview of the whole city. Pink Floyd employs this metaphorical depiction to portray the excess of the capitalist society. The pig is a representation of the social hierarchy that controls the whole of society. We can interpret the cover as a criticism about the societal, economic, political and industrial situation of 1970s London.

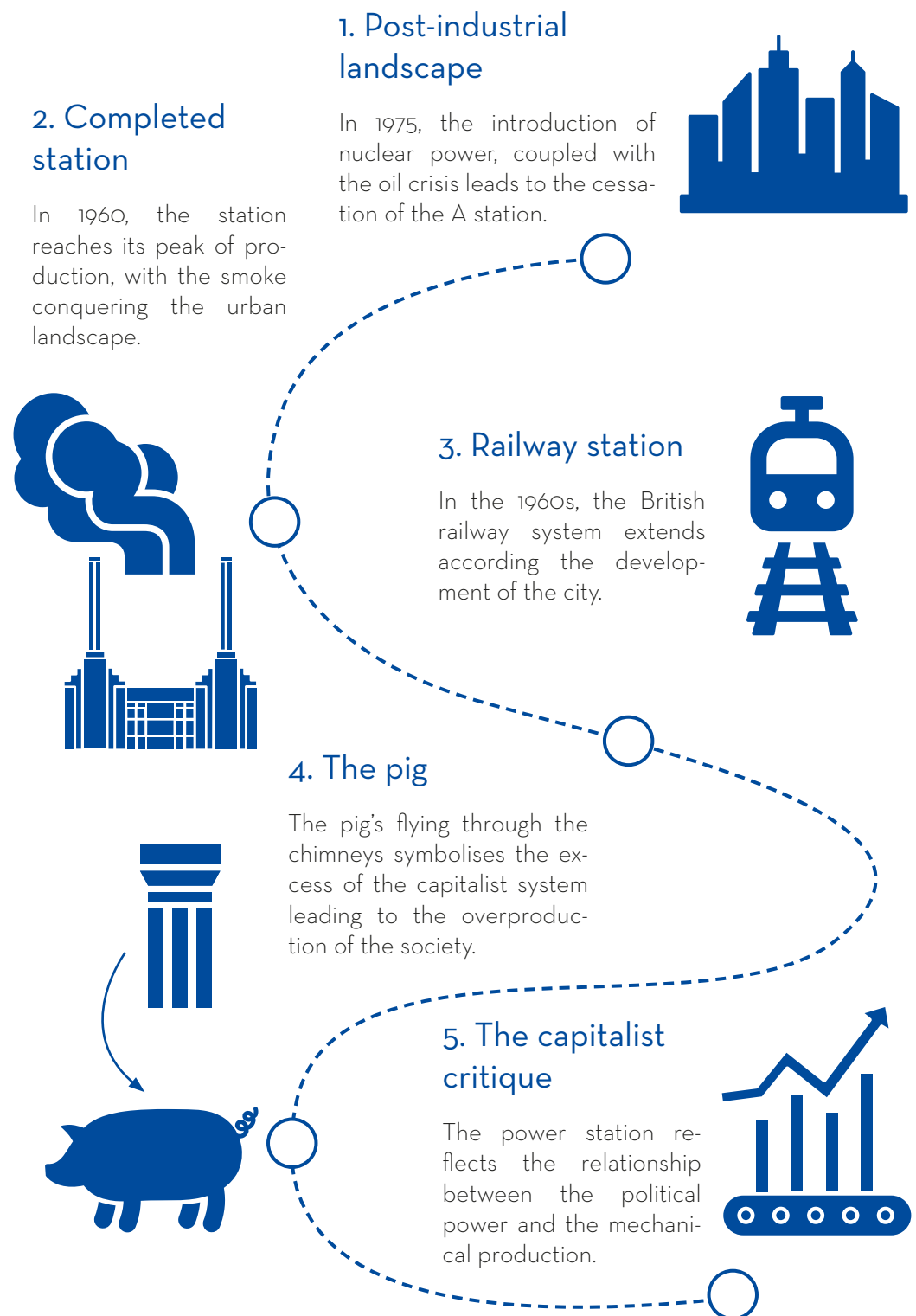
⁴⁰ Harry Warwick, « Cathedral of Power: Battersea Power Station in Dystopian Visual Culture, » 121.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴² Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 97.

The cover illustrates an important moment in the history of the station, which is only half-operational. In fact, only the chimneys of station B are in operation, while the chimneys of station A are at a standstill. The photograph is taken in 1976; a year after the A station is shut down in 1975. The cover depicts a vision of fossil power in decline, which coincides with the industrial context of the time. Importantly, the introduction of oil in the 1970s rapidly replaced the use of coal. The station's system is beginning to age, and speculation about its future closure starts to grow. The overproduction of the industrial era led to the oil crisis in 1973⁴², resulting in a period of economic and social transition in London. The rising prices lead to disruptions in the industrial sectors that affect the division of the society.

Finally, *Battersea Power Station* participates to reflect a dystopic vision of a society in decline, inviting viewers to question prevailing political structures. The building, beyond its industrial function, has played an important role in shaping a collective self-reflection about the state of the nation during the 1970s.





THIRD EPISODE

GOLDEN AGE RENEWAL

The third episode examines the renaissance of the building since its closure, with new proposals including a leisure park inside the station. Importantly, the powering down is an opportunity for the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, to celebrate the British industrial heritage, providing a new optimistic vision of the future. *Battersea Power Station* represents a testament of the glorious industrial past, enduring over time.

Fig. 20: Margaret Thatcher at launch ceremony, 1988, © Steve Back / Daily Mail / Rex Features.



The powering down

Visual narrative description

On 8th June 1988, Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, brandishes a laser gun to reveal the new transformative redevelopment of the *Battersea Power Station*⁴³. The laser triggers a display of fireworks to drop a white curtain, inscribing the station's new name; « The Battersea », in flames. At the same time, plumes of purple smoke emanate from two of the white chimneys. The ceremony serves for the introduction of the visionary plan developed by John Broome, for the new Europe's biggest leisure park inside the decommissioned station. Surrounded by journalists, politicians and photographers, Thatcher poses in front of the *Battersea Power Station*.

The image is photographed by Steve Back for the influential British magazine, *The Daily Mail*⁴⁴. Margaret Thatcher is dressed in a distinguished striped suit, bearing her Legion of Honour. She wears a white helmet personalised with the initials « P » and « M », symbolizing her role as Prime Minister. Her right hand, covered in a black leather glove, rests on the structure of the building, while the *Battersea Power Station* chimneys appear in the background.

By the time of the photograph, the station has ceased operations. After the closure of Power Station A, a major event occurred at the B station in October 1978: a fire damages the turbines and leads the station's decommissioning in 1979. After fifty years of operations, the station is officially taken out of service on 25th January 1983⁴⁵.

⁴³ Margaret Thatcher, « Remarks re-naming Battersea Power Station: Peter Watts. »

⁴⁴ The Telegraph, « Battersea Power Station: a history of the London landmark in pictures. »

⁴⁵ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 109.

Preserving the past

Contextualisation

From the late 1970s, the power station's future is the object of discussions at Wandsworth Town Hall; the station's municipality⁴⁶. The period coincides with the demolition of many inter-war buildings in London. Preservation groups, such as *Thirties Society* and *SAVE Britain's Heritage* led by figures like Gavin Stamp, Marcus Binney, Clive Aslet and Simon Jenkins⁴⁷, actively support the cause of safeguarding the power station. Their efforts aim to recognize the building as a symbol of Britain's industrial heritage. Surprisingly, on 14th October 1980, Michael Heseltine, the Secretary of State for the Environment, announces inscribing the Grade II listed-building status to the *Battersea Power Station*⁴⁸. The designation confers national importance and special interest to the station. In consequence, the listing protects the powerhouse from potential demolition or inappropriate alterations.

Leisure icon

Following Heseltine's announcement, the *Central Electricity Generating Board* decides to initiate a competition. On October 19th, 1983, *The Times* invites teams to submit proposals for the redevelopment of the *Battersea Power Station*, offering a prize of £100,000⁴⁹. The objective aims to draw the necessary investment to repair and maintain the station, required an amount of £700,000. Eleven proposals attract the attention of the jury, ranging from museum proposals and sports complex to a theatre, swimming pool and even an aquarium.

Notably, the proposal for a theme park led by the Roche consortium is chosen for the potential of creating jobs. The concept is developed by Mark Leslie, a British architect, envisioning the transformation of both the interior and exterior of the powerhouse. Importantly, the project is supported by John Broome, a chairman owning the *Alton Towers* leisure park in Staffordshire⁵⁰. The scheme implies five floors of attractions in-

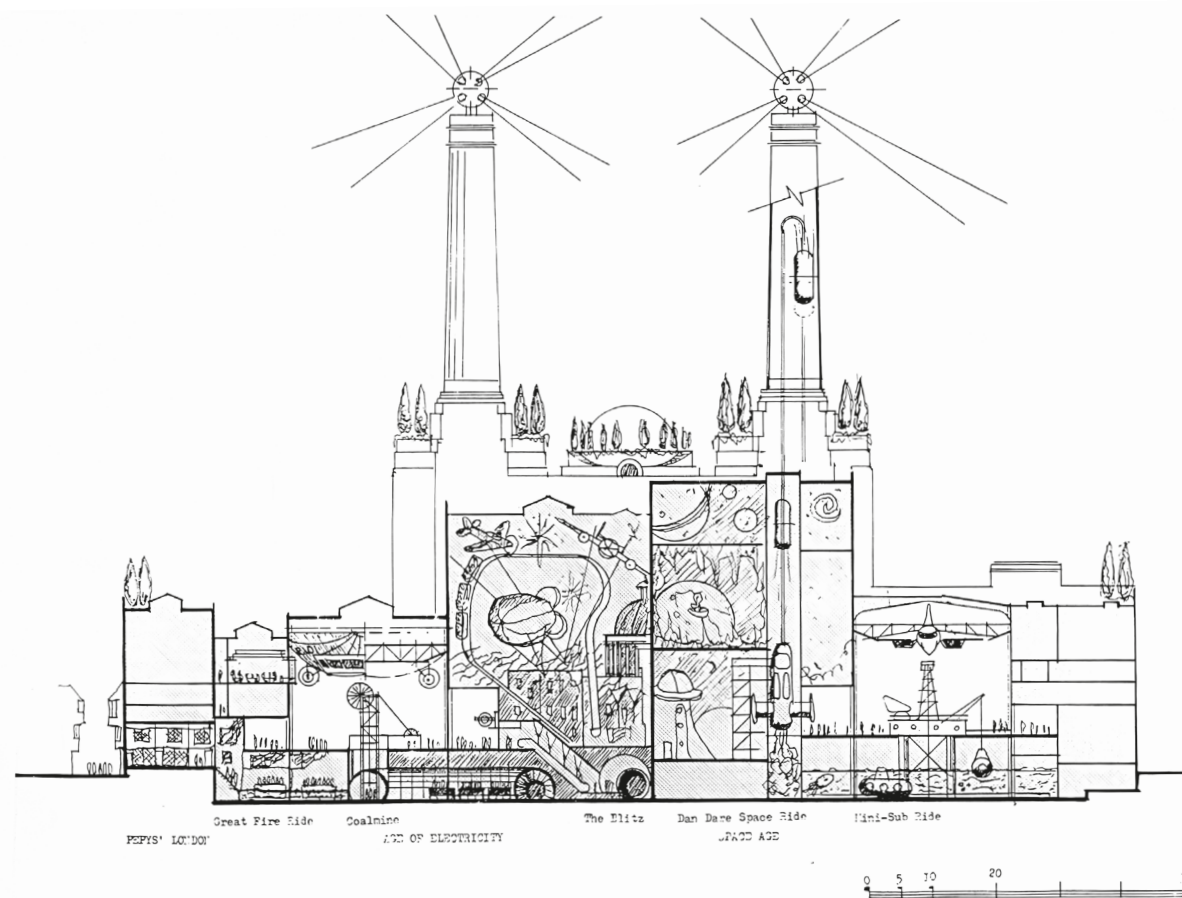


Fig. 21: Section of the theme park, 1983, © Marc Leslie

side the power station for a total of 200 rides⁵¹, including shops and restaurants. Significantly, the park is inspired by the theme of science and technology combined with the British industry history. Subsequently, Broome acquires the site for £1.5 million at the end of 1984⁵², while the planning permission is approved by Wandsworth council on 6th May 1986⁵³. Following the year 1988, Broome develops his company, *Battersea Leisure Ltd* and presents his project to Margaret Thatcher, recognizing the potential signification for the nation. The launch event marks the pivotal symbol of the *Battersea Power Station* from an industrial powerhouse heritage to a national pride in education, entertainment and leisure.

⁴⁶ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 100.

⁴⁷ Helen Bowman, « Battersea Power Station Part Four – Purgatory. »

⁴⁸ Peter Watts, *op. cit.*, 102.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁵⁰ Margaret Thatcher, « Remarks re-naming Battersea Power Stationer Watts. »

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁵² Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 132.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 137.

Fig. 22: John Broome in front of the Battersea Power Station presenting the theme park project, 1983, *The Times*.



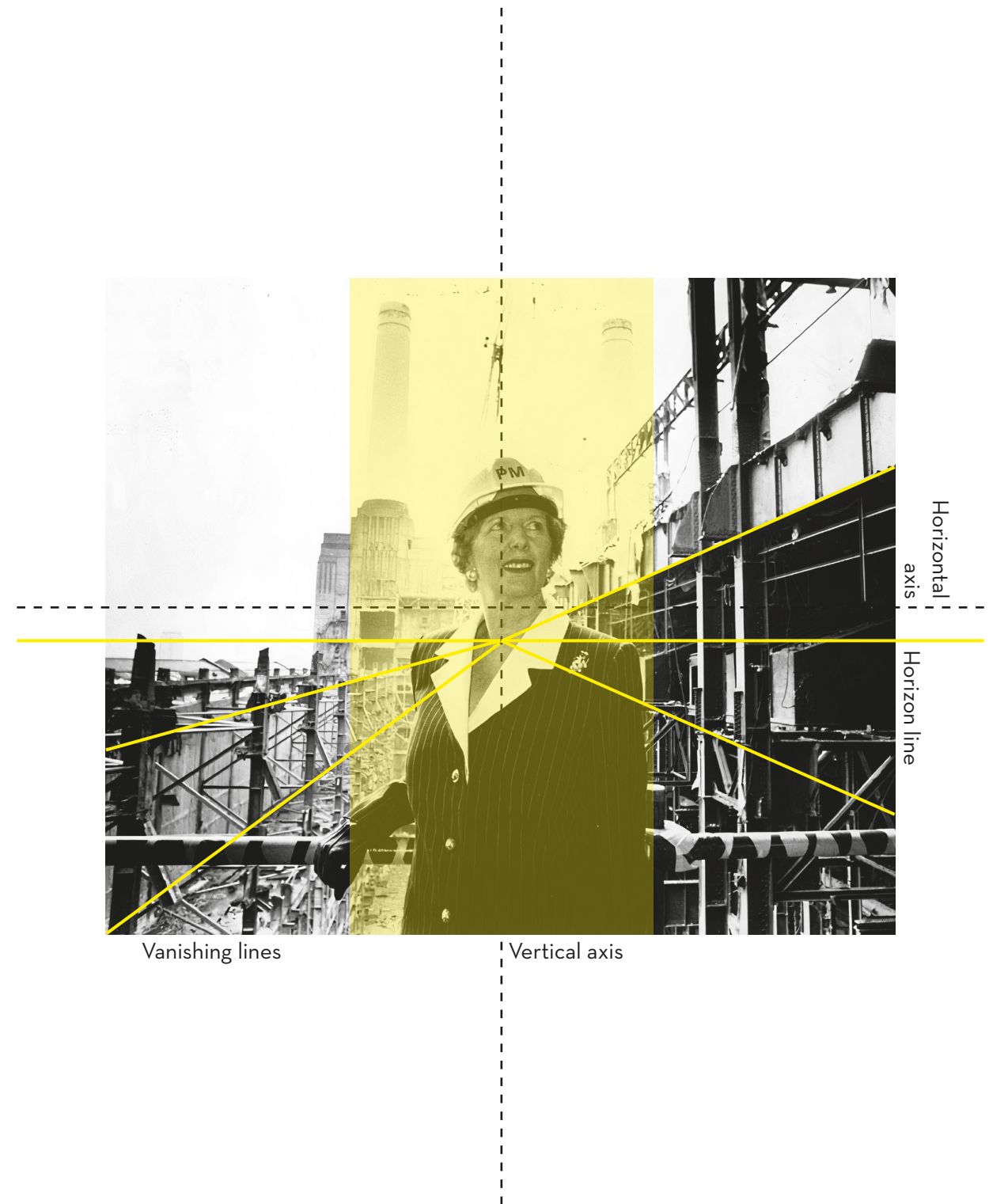
Thatcher's propaganda

Formal composition analysis

We can examine how the First Minister orchestrated her presence at the *Battersea Power Station* to understand the significance behind the image. On the one hand, the photograph captures a horizontal format with a close-up of Margaret Thatcher, who appears at mid-height. On the other hand, the close frontal framing evokes a friendly feeling to the viewer. In particular, the image is framed slightly diagonally, suggesting the photograph had been captured quickly, without Thatcher assuming a deliberate pose. It results a dynamic sense of spontaneity and authenticity, reinforcing the chosen format.

Regarding the composition, the vanishing lines converge at the centre of the horizon line, strategically located in the middle of the vertical axis. The subject is positioned slightly in profile, at the centre of the two chimneys. The division of the composition into three vertical parts is evident, with the central third dedicated to the First Minister with the imposing station in the background. While, left and right thirds focus on the structural elements. Consequently, the centred and symmetrical arrangement contradicts the apparent spontaneity of the photograph. Instead, it reveals an elaborate framing technique used to highlight the main subject; Margaret Thatcher.

Similarly, her head and gaze turned slightly to the right, following the direction of the building's architectural lines, reinforcing an optimistic view of the future. Importantly, the structure of the station is highlighted, and the viewpoint offers an examination to the interior of the building, exposed to external conditions. Ultimately, the impressive steel structure reinforces Thatcher's status as a minister. In fact, she's using the powerful aesthetic of industrial heritage to promote herself. Overall, the formal composition accentuates the harmony between the stature of Thatcher and the imposing presence of the iconic structure behind her.



54 Panorama de l'art, « Découvrir nos ressources et analyses sur Perspective atmosphérique de Panorama de l'art. »

On the other hand, the black and white composition is marked by strong contrasts of light. Firstly, Margaret Thatcher's white collar contrasts with her dark suit, drawing attention to the central figure of the photograph. The light, sourced from the left, accentuates her right profile but notably illuminates her subtle posture. Secondly, the foreground architectural structure is marked by a strong contrast where dark hues are illuminating by light emissions. Significantly, the light reflects off the metal structure, enhancing the aesthetics of the building and reinforcing its role in the photograph. Importantly, the further the gaze moves away from the image, the more the distant elements gradually appear blurred. The artist uses an atmospheric perspective⁵⁴ to give the illusion of depth by playing on the contrasts between the different planes. The station is depicted with light tones, fading the chimneys into background colour, allowing the main element of the image to come to the fore - it's not the building that is depicted as a symbol, but Margaret Thatcher.

Fig. 23: Margaret Thatcher and John Broome launching the new redevelopment, 1983. © Steve Back / Daily Mail / Rex Features.



Fig. 24: Margaret Thatcher at Battersea Power Station, 1983. © Steve Back / Daily Mail / Rex Features.

Industrial heritage

Interpretation

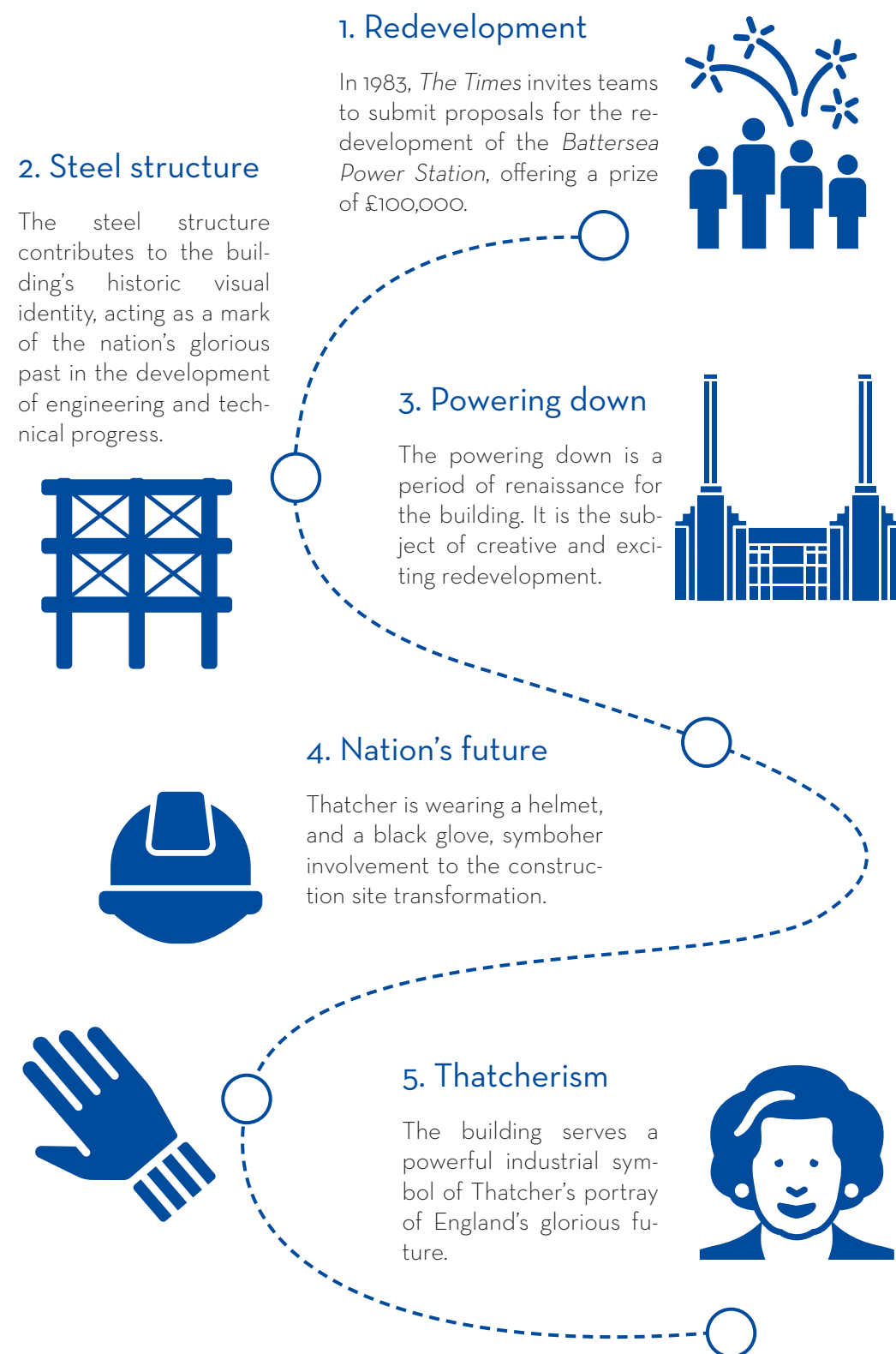
We can conclude that the steel architectural structure participates in shaping the iconography of the power station. Serving as a symbol of industrial design, the abundance of structural elements symbolise a structure that endures over time. Importantly, the chimneys are still intact, as the façade of the building, standing as a mark of power and greatness. Ultimately, beyond its functional role, the steel structure contributes to the building's historic visual identity. The station acts as a mark of the nation's glorious past in the development of engineering and technical progress. The industrial aesthetic, the architectural details and the distinctive shape all contribute to elevate the station to the status of an icon that transcends every era.

Significantly, the photograph depicts a portrayal of Margaret Thatcher's optimistic vision of the nation's future. The image shows the Prime Minister as the main central figure of the photograph. Although the subject of the ceremony is the redevelopment of the power station, the *Battersea Power Station* itself occupies the background role, almost hidden in the sky. The composition symbolises an authentic, spontaneous image of the Prime Minister in motion, although the illustration has been strategically constructed. On the one hand, Thatcher is wearing a helmet, and a black glove carefully placed on the barrier, symbolising not only her involvement but her contribution to the construction site transformation. On the other, her gaze is promising, looking up to the right. Consequently, she embodies the nation's vision of the future, as if she herself were going to rebuild the nation.

The portrayal extends beyond a photographic moment; it is a propaganda image reinforcing Thatcher's policies. She presents herself as close to the people, as if she were taking the nation with her. Her speech during the ceremony supported this vision, quoting: « We have seen the past today. We will be back again in two years time to see the future.⁵⁵ » In fact, Broome has promised to inaugurate the leisure park precisely on May 21, 1990 at 2.30 pm. In the context of 1988, when Thatcher's popularity was diminishing, Battersea presents an opportunity for her to redefine her public image. Despite her resignation two years later, the building serves a powerful industrial symbol of Thatcher's portrayal of England's glorious future. Overall, the powerhouse symbolizes the nation's heroic past during the industrial era.

The powering down is a period of renaissance for the building. It is the subject of creative and exciting redevelopment. The station's position as a relic reinforces its status as an industrial icon, but above all it carries the story of the city's past: from the Second World War, through the oil crisis, to the advent of nuclear power, the station has remained the same, as a testament to the passage of time enduring each historical period. This episode can be described as a golden age, because it is a period of new possibilities for the regeneration of the building architecture, where all imaginings are possible.

⁵⁵ Margaret Thatcher, « Remarks re-naming Battersea Power Stationer Watts. »





FORTH EPISODE

ECONOMIC RISE TOWARDS CHINA

The forth episode follows the new ownership under China-based Parkview International firm, the new investor in *Battersea Power Station* following John Broome. The new investor leads to the contemporary Chinese art exhibition curated by the Serpentine Gallery inside the power station. The episode reflects the rising influence of China on the building, symbolising the economic relation with the United Kingdom.

FUSED MAGAZINE

CHINA POWER STATION ISSUE

ART, ARCHITECTURE, MUSIC,
SOUND ART, DESIGN, LIFESTYLE
WWW.FUSEDMAGAZINE.COM!
WWW.FUSEDMAGAZINE.COM/STORE



Fig. 25: Battersea Power Station for the cover magazine Fused Magazine, 13 October 2006, © Fused Magazine.

The Serpentine Gallery

Visual narrative description

On 13th October 2006, *Fused Magazine* publishes the *Battersea Power Station* for the cover page titled: « China Power Station Part I ». *Fused Magazine* is an international art, travel and culture magazine based in England and distributed through *Boutique Mags* twice a year. Notably, the magazine is founded in 2000 by David and Kerry O'Coy⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ Fused Magazine.

The illustration portrays the *Battersea Power Station*, viewed from the Thames bridge. The power station is enveloped in a large cloud of smoke against an intense red background. Significantly, the edition coincides with an important event inaugurates at the power house. From 8th October to 5th November 2006, the building hosts the contemporary Chinese art exhibition curated by the Serpentine Gallery⁵⁷, a free contemporary art exhibition located in London. Importantly, this is the first time the station opens its doors to the public. Directed by Julia Peyton-Jones, the event, entitled « China Power Station: Part I », showcases the post-industrial Chinese artists and architects work, echoing the original function of the power station. The immersive performance displays sounds and videos installations placed on three floors, both inside and outside the building. Notably, the architect Ma Qingyun presents his project creating different paths on the outdoor ground leading to the powerhouse.

⁵⁷ Serpentine Gallery, « China Power Station: Part I ».

Importantly, the event gives access to the interior of the station before the transformation site. The project is led by Victor Hwang, associate member of China-based Parkview International firm, the new investor in *Battersea Power Station* following John Broome. By 2000, the Chinese Power rises in England. Since the handover of Hong Kong, originally a British colony, to China in 1997⁵⁸, China and the UK have consolidated strong economic relationships. In fact, the UK is now the European country that welcomes the largest number of Chinese investors, and is China's second largest trading partner in Europe. China has invested in many sectors of the British economy, and the arrival of Parkview, a China-based company, is testimony to the trade agreements between the two countries.

⁵⁸ Olga V. Alexeeva, « La Chine peut-elle être la bouée de sauvetage économique d'un Royaume-Uni sorti d'Europe ? »

Fig.26: China Power Station Part / exhibition, 2006. © Stephen White.



Fig. 27: Ma Qingyun outside installation, 2006, © Sylvain Deleu.



Fig. 28: Inside the power station exhibition, 2006. © Sylvain Deleu.

Broome's decline

Contextualisation

By 1989, Broome's project is encountering numerous technical problems. A theme park is extremely demanding in terms of regulations compliances, even more so in a building. Requirements mandate an air conditioning system, insulation, and a fire control system⁵⁹. However, the main concern emerges from the decontamination of the site required by the *Central Electricity Generating Board*. In fact, the overall envelope of the building suffers from deterioration and erosion⁶⁰. The measures include the removal of the Boiler House roof and the west wall due to sulphur damage, increasing the cost to £135 million. Facing financial difficulties in maintaining the project, Broome sold *Alton Towers*, his leisure park, to Madame Tussauds to acquire a new capital for the amount of £60 million⁶¹.

In 1990, he develops a new proposal to Wandsworth Council to manage the project financing. The plan integrates the development around the power station, including a hotel, retail spaces, a conference and events centre. However, financial difficulties lead Broome to sell the *Battersea Power Station* in 1993. Parkview International, a Hong Kong-based development company acquires the station for the amount of £9.5 million. After Broome's departure, the building is left largely empty in the open air. Consequently, a temporary steel support system is designed in the meantime.

The Parkview scheme

Parkview International, based in Hong Kong, is a family business owned by Chou-Shiuan and his sons. Victor Hwang serves as the president of the firm, playing a central role in the transformation of *Battersea Power Station*. In 1997, Parkview obtains approval from Wandsworth Council for the masterplan, developed by the engineering and design firm, Ove Arup & Partners⁶². The schemes envisions a cinema inside the power station, along with two hotels, theatres, an exhibition and shopping centre, retails and offices spaces and housing surrounding the station. In fact, Hwang acquires a substantial thirty-six acres of the land for the redevelopment. However, the *Battersea Power*



Station Community Group stands against the project. Over years, Parkview works with an important number of architects, never satisfies with the proposals. He collaborates with offices such as John Portman & Associates, John Outram Associates, MacCormac Jamieson Prichard, and Nicholas Grimshaw.

The only evidence of Parkview's investment is the acquisition of the Serpentine Gallery's summer pavilion in 2002 next to the *Battersea Power Station*⁶³. Designed by the architect Toyo Ito and Cecil Balmond from Ove Arup & Partners, the pavilion is characterised by interconnected triangle and trapezoids. The acquisition serves as a marketing coverage for the new proposal project of Hwang, presenting an additional 750 homes and office spaces plan, for a value estimated at £900m. By 2006, he invites the Serpentine Gallery to exhibit a cultural Chinese art event inside the building. The exhibition marks a significant moment in promoting China power inside the *Battersea Power Station*.

Fig. 29: Proposed Grimshaw redevelopment, 2005, © PR / PA.

⁵⁹ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 138.

⁶⁰ Keith Garner, « Battersea Power Station », 18.

⁶¹ Peter Watts, *op. cit.*, 149.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 162.

⁶³ Marina Otero Verzier, « Tales from beyond the grave. »

Fig.21: China Power Station Part 1 exhibition, 2006. © Stephen White.

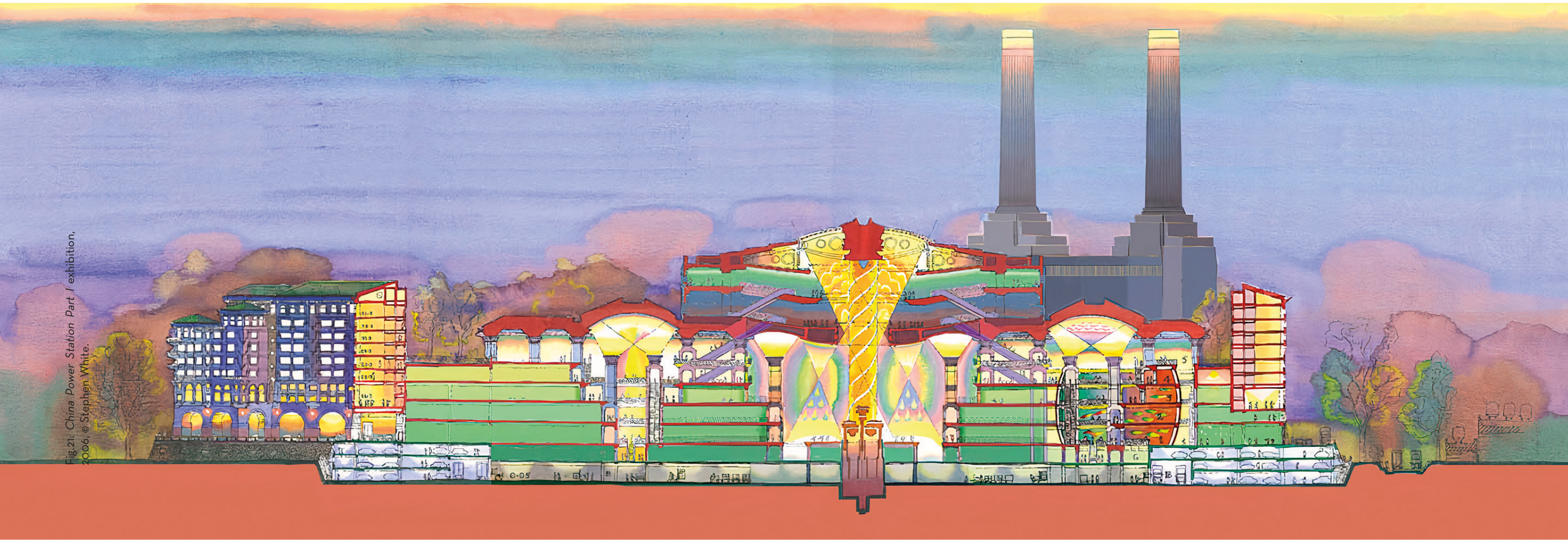


Fig. 30: Section designed by John Outram Associates for a hotel transformation of Battersea Power Station, 1997. © JOA.

Temple of power

Formal composition analysis

The vertical rectangular format includes a large plane that presents the *Battersea Power Station* surrounded by the sky and framed by the bridge. The building appears in profile, offering a view from the other side of the bridge. Significantly, the central part of the building is open, revealing the steel structure of the upper floors. Two floors are illuminated, illustrating the ongoing exhibition taking place in the station. However, the building doesn't dominate the cover. Instead, it seems to be silently placed in the landscape. The main focus element is the important cloud which the size surpasses the building. The cloud embodies the symbolic role of the station's traditional representation of power to dominate the composition.

The image is composed by diagonal lines extending beyond the frame, creating a dynamic composition. Centred along the vertical axis, the building occupies the lower horizontal part. The lower part is divided into three segments, one third for the chimneys, another third to the power station, and the final third to the bridge extending out of the scene. On the other hand, the upper horizontal half of the composition is dominated by the sky, in which the title is inscribed along the vertical axis of the chimney. The cloud of smoke rises towards the cover title to illuminate the China power ascending from the chimney. In addition, the curves represented by the cloud of smoke and the bridge contribute to the movement effect of the image. Importantly, the bridge occupies an important part of the cover by the imposing size, symboling the economic relationship between United Kingdom and China.

In opposition, the building portrays a profound sense of tranquillity. It stretches along the length of the composition, exuding a serenity presence. The powerhouse serves the symbol of a temple of power, celebrated for its grandeur and distinctive architectural features. Significantly, we understand that it's not the power of the station that's being illustrated, but the power of China imposing itself on the station.



Fig. 31: Opened structure of Battersea Power Station, 2016, MessyNessyChic.



Notably, the image power is represented by the strategic use of light and colour contrasts. On the one hand, the light source comes from the right, artificially illuminating the longitudinal section of the *Battersea Power Station*. The artificial light emanates from the bottom of the image like a spotlight illuminating the scene. In contrast, the station's entrance façade is completely dark, illustrating the powering down and creating a strong contrast with the rest of the architecture. Notably, the main upper part of the station is the most brightly lit, emphasising the floors of the station's exhibition.

The juxtaposition of contrasts allows highlighting the historical context of the station. It underlines the role of the closing building as an open ruin in the urban landscape. The exhibition transforms the identity of the station, breathing life into the powerhouse. Furthermore, the bridge emerges very brightly, providing a strong contrast with the semi-darkness surrounding the station. Ultimately, the cloud of smoke captures most of the light, drawing attention eye upwards. The smoke participates to the dynamic dimension of the composition, by creating a visual contrast with the building and the bridge and emphasizing the role of China power.

In terms of colour, the composition is dominated by the bright red of the sky. Secondly, the yellow of the chimneys, despite their actual white colour, and the luminous bridge add to the contrast in the image. In this way, the two colours of the Chinese flag are brought to the fore, creating a symbolic visual narrative. In opposition, the building is depicted in dark brown with red tones, contrasting with the smoke that envelops it. Significantly, the smoke is represented in blue, forming a gradation towards white colour. Both the white title and the cloud are eye-catching elements of the cover. The composition is therefore dominated by primary colours, contributing to a dynamic illustration. Consequently, the interplay of colours represents the domination of Chinese influence over the station, incorporating the symbolic colours of the national flag.

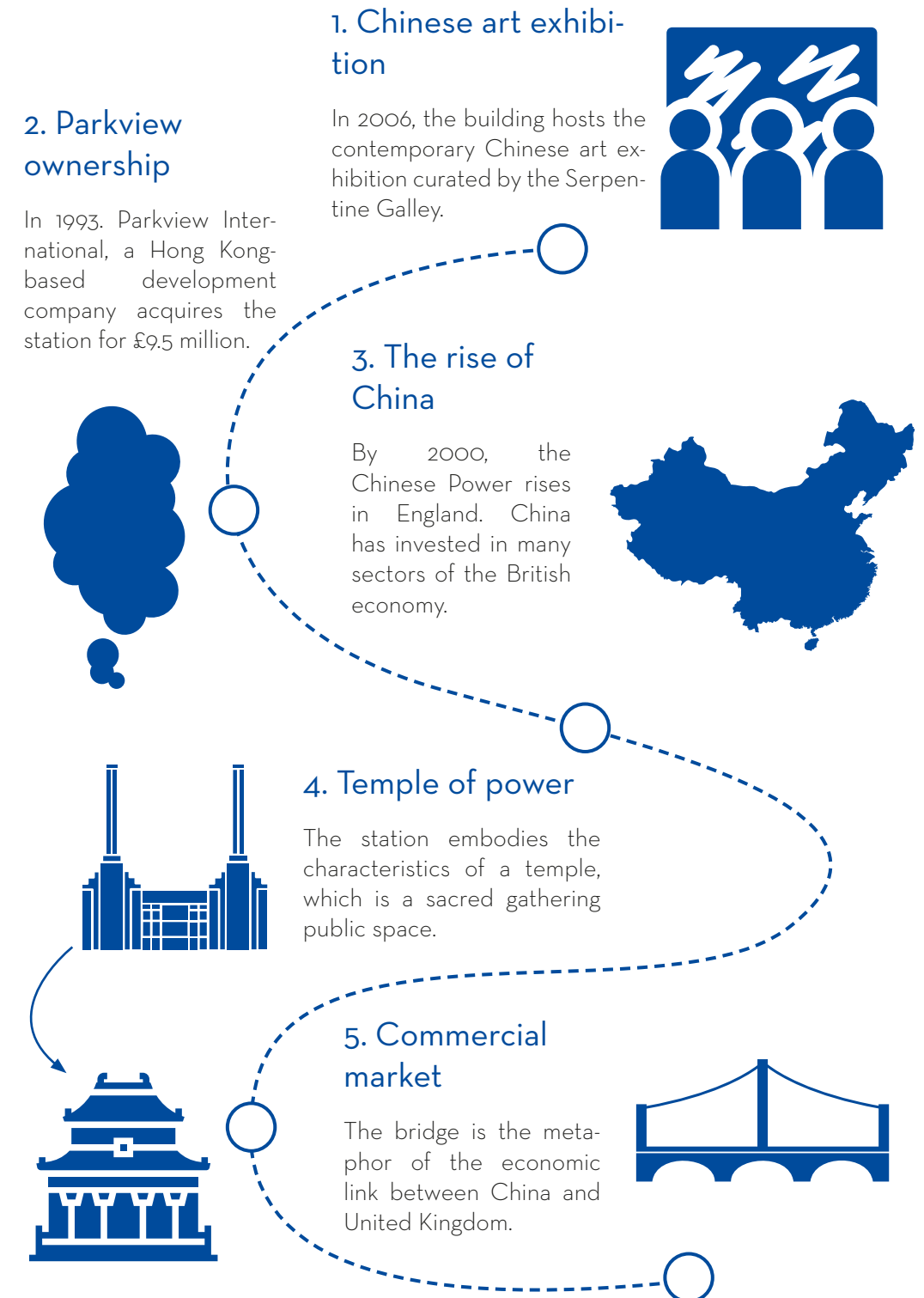
A cultural symbol

Interpretation

We can conclude that the *Battersea Power Station* incarnates the cultural symbol of a temple of power. The building is majestically placed alongside the bridge, extending its presence along the land. The station embodies the characteristics of a temple, which is a sacred gathering public space. Similarly, the power serves as a unifying space for society during the exhibition. In the end, it is no longer power that the station embodies, but the serenity of an architecture that endures over time through its sacred imagery.

The cover's title, rising from the chimney and embodied by the cloud, indicates the overall understanding of the illustration, symbolizing China's rising influence on the station. The light of the exhibition illuminating the darkness of the station serves as a metaphor of the Chinese power participating in the rebirth of the building. Ultimately, the exhibition is a narrative pretext for highlighting the station's new investor, Parkview, a Chinese company based in Hong Kong. The title heralds the building's new transformation; the name of Battersea's location is replaced by China, marking an important chapter in the new embodied vision.

First, the bridge is the metaphor of the economic link between China and United Kingdom. It highlights the important role of China in the British commercial market. Secondly, the illustration emphasises the potential as an international architecture, reinforcing the iconicity of the station as a cross-cultural symbol. In fact, the building is on the cover of *Fused Magazine*, reaching an international public. This exposure serves to portray the building not just as a national representation of England but as an international recognized icon. Finally, by embodying the Serpentine Gallery's exhibition, the building participates to the contemporary artistic China's expression. It places ultimately the building as a catalyst in sharing a dialogue with the international economic market. After Broome and Parkview, the building is now in the hands of investors, it is no longer acquired for its architectural value, but for its economic value.





FIFTH EPISODE

CONTEMPORARY REGENERATION

The fifth episode examines the new transformation of the power house into a leisure center, developed by a consortium of three Malaysian companies. The episode marks an important phase in the evolution of the power house from a structure of public utility to an economic use reserved for a particular class of the society.

Fig. 32: Battersea Power Station for the advertising campaign Brave, 20 October 2015, © Mads Berg / Brave.



New site's campaign

Visual narrative description

On 20th October 2015, the new developers of *Battersea Power Station* publish an advertising campaign for the new site's transformation⁶⁴, titled « There's still time to come aboard ». The London-based agency *Brave* has collaborated with the Danish illustrator Mads Berg. The campaign is unveiled in the *Financial Times*⁶⁵, an international British business newspaper, and in *The Daily Telegraph*⁶⁶, a London daily newspaper.

The campaign illustration represents a part of the *Battersea Power Station's* facade, emerging from the Thames. The power station is enveloped by a large sky with birds flying around the two towering chimneys. The poster illustrates an advertisement to acquire the new apartments developed in collaboration with the renowned architects Frank Gehry and Norman Foster, planned for completion in 2023.

The project is led by the new investors, a consortium of three Malaysian development and investment companies; SP Setia, Sime Darby and Employees Provident Fund. The project is based according to the masterplan designed by the architect Raphael Viñoly. The historic power station is redeveloped into residential apartments arranged in a circle around the iconic building. The new project marks an important phase of regeneration, succeeding the ownership eras of Broome, Parkview, and Treasury Holdings, culminating in the Malaysian acquisition.

⁶⁴ August Montgomery, « Battersea Power Station posters, by Brave. »

⁶⁵ Financial Times.

⁶⁶ The Daily Telegraph.

Viñoly's masterplan

Contextualisation

Surprisingly, in 2007, Parkview sells the site to the Irish company Real Estate Opportunities for a price of £400 million. Similarly to Broome, Hwang has contracted financial issues to maintain the project's transformation. Significantly in the same year, the power station acquires the Grade II* listed status⁶⁷, elevating the *Battersea Power Station* to particular historical significance. The new Irish investors held by Treasury Holdings are a Dublin company owned by Richard Barret and Johnny Ronan. The Uruguayan-American architect Rafael Viñoly is chosen to develop the masterplan.

The transformation envisions 3200 glass residential blocks arranged in a circle around the station. The plan includes retail spaces, offices, a hotel and an urban square for the amount of £4 billion investment⁶⁸. The key architectural element centres on a gigantic eco-tower with a natural ventilation system, standing as the tallest structure envisioned in London. The project is characterized by the utilisation of renewable energy sources, including biofuels and repurposing two of the chimneys for the techniques circulation.

By 2010, the revised plan includes the extension of the Underground to address Battersea's connexion to neighbourhoods. However, the global property market crash in 2008⁶⁹ leads Treasury Holdings into important depts. Consequently, the station is placed into administration in the meantime to identify a new holding company. It marks the first potential acquisition on the open market for the *Battersea Power Station*.

⁶⁷ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 188.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶⁹ Peter Watts, *op. cit.*, 199.



Fig. 33: Battersea Power Station redevelopment, © Rafael Viñoly Architects.

- 1 Circus West Village
- 2 Power Station
- 3 Battersea Roof Gardens
- 4 Prospect Place
- 5 Malaysia Square

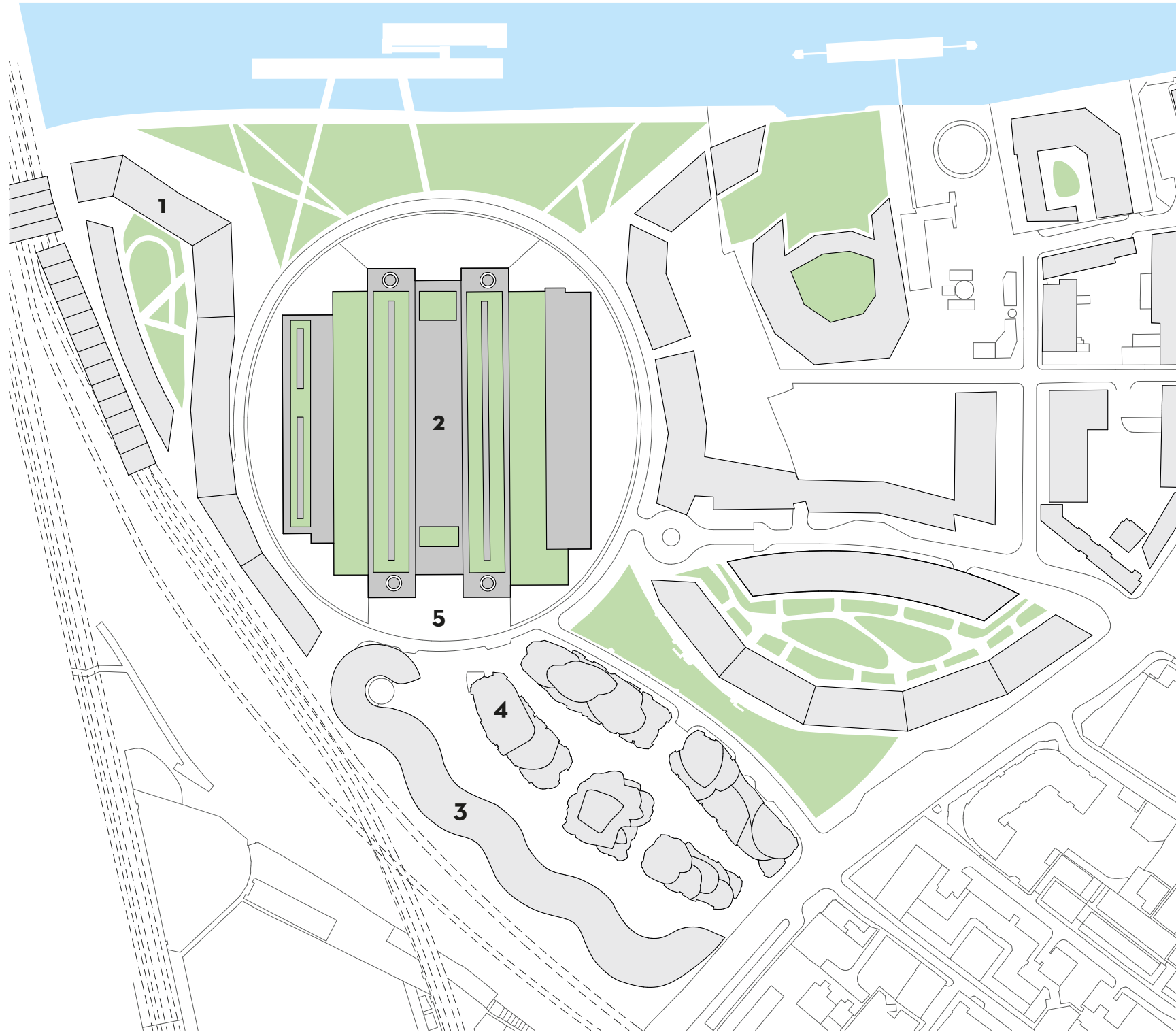


Fig. 34: Battersea Power Station redevelopment masterplan, © Baya Imadalou

Malaysian consortium

In June 2012, a consortium formed by three Malaysian development and investment companies, SP Setia, Sime Darby and Employees Provident Fund, acquires the *Battersea Power Station* for £400 million. On 4th July 2013, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, reveals the new transformation's development vision in front of the power station⁷⁰, echoing Margaret Thatcher's historical launch ceremony. The redevelopment unfolds the existing Viñoly's masterplan, including the *Battersea Power Station* as the main central element, surrounded by a regenerated site integrating shops, leisure facilities, offices, and residential apartments. Several renowned architects have collaborated on different phases of the project.

On the one hand, Ian Simpson Architects have designed the first phase: the *Circus West Village*, next to the railway, including the construction of 753 residential apartments, offices, cafes, restaurants and shops⁷¹. On the other hand, Foster + Partners and Gehry Partners take charge of the *Electric Boulevard*, the southern part. Foster has conceived a residential block apartment, the *Battersea Roof Gardens*. While Gehry has designed five individual towers called the *Prospect Place*. Simultaneously, the south entrance of the *Battersea Power Station* integrates the *Malaysia Square*, a piazza square designed by Bjarke Ingels Group. Significantly, the new tube station is completed by 2020, connecting the south entrance to the Underground by a new urban avenue.

Wilkinson's regeneration

The redevelopment of the *Battersea Power Station* is designed by Wilkinson Eyre, a London-based architecture studio. The historic power station is transformed into a shopping centre, including three floors of retail spaces⁷². The concept unfolds the preservation of the structural framework, reinforcing with new steel elements. On the one hand, the Boiler House and the the Switch Houses are renovated into houses and retail establishments. On the one hand, the Turbines Halls are transformed into an open space for shops, cafes and restaurants organized over three floors surrounding a central atrium. The top

⁷⁰ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 207.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁷² Peter Watts, *op. cit.*, 217.

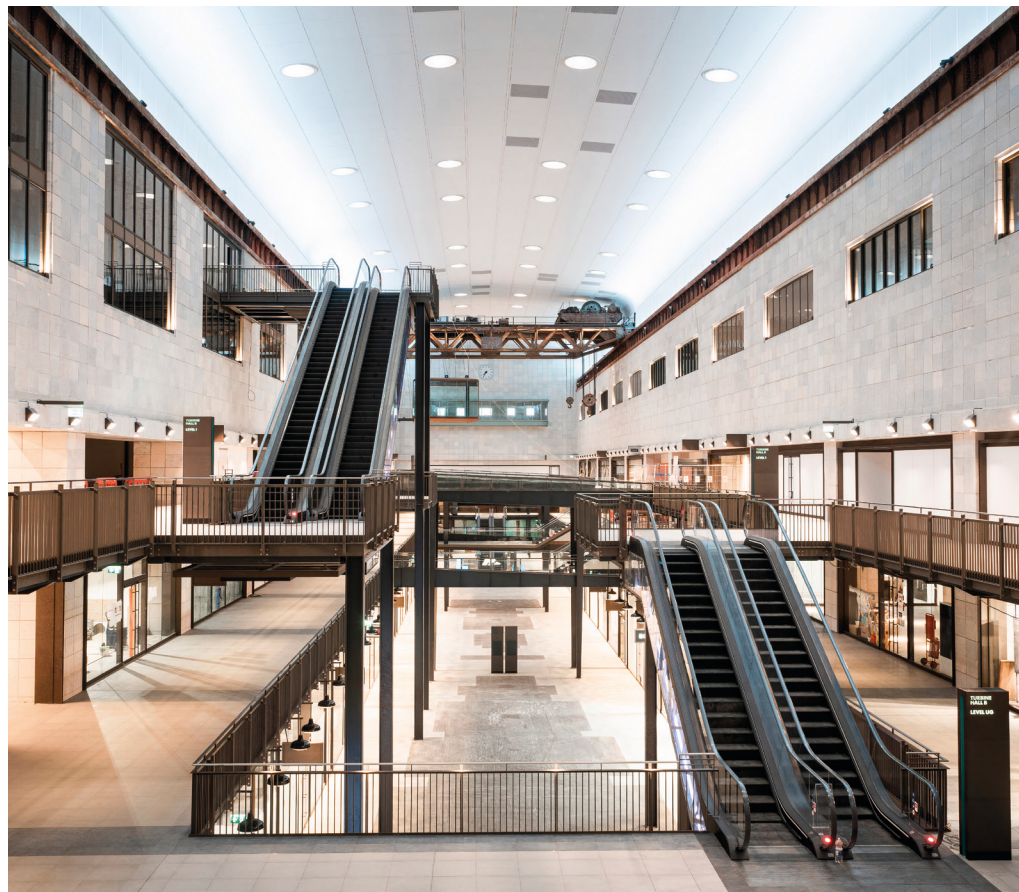


Fig. 35: Turbine Hall A, Battersea Power Station, 2022, © Backdrop Productions.



Fig. 36: Construction details, Battersea Power Station, 2022, © Backdrop Productions.

Fig. 37: Turbine Hall B, Battersea Power Station, 2022. © Backdrop Productions.



floor is dedicated to a large food hall and two cinemas screens. The industrial aesthetic is reinterpreted through the integration of black steel structural elements, such as the balustrades, the columns and the walkways. Notably, the challenging element represents the refurbishment of the faience tiles, ensuring the aesthetic appearance and the safety mechanical standards. The Control Room A is refurbished into an event space, while the B one becomes a daily bar. On the one hand, six floors designed for offices workspace take place on the top half of the Boiler House. On the other hand, a two-floor extension is added above the existing Switch Houses. It contains 254 residential apartments. Moreover, the top of the building is characterised by villas, offering an open garden landscape, for an estimated value of £7 million glass⁷³. The roof structures in the Turbine Hall B, as well as the one of the Boiler Houses need to be reconstructed in precast concrete to support the roof garden.

Regarding the exterior elements, the chimneys necessitate the linings' replacement due to exterior exposed condition. Notably, the concrete, subject to cracking due to high chloride content carbonation, results in the corrosion of the steel structure. Consequently, a decision is made to demolish and rebuild the four chimneys between 2014 and 2017. The reconstruction is executed using the same original construction technique. Importantly, the process involves 680 tons of concrete⁷⁴ hand poured with wooden shuttering into the structure from the top of the chimneys, replicating the distinctive fluted original appearance. Additionally, an elevator is installed into the North West chimney of 103 meters high to offer a panoramic view to visitors from the top, named *Lift 109*⁷⁵.

Significantly, the restoration of the original façade faces challenges due to deterioration. The original façade is composed by six millions bricks. However, the masonry deteriorates due to acidic combustion gases and the rusting steel. Consequently, the architects replace some bricks for a total of 1,8 million sourced from the same company. Additionally, an intervention of 120 openings for steel-framed windows⁷⁶ is added to the brick façade, following the original pattern of Scott's construction. It allows introducing natural light inside the offices and the new residential apartments, while preserving the historical integrity of the structure.

⁷³ Chris Foges, « Battersea Power Station starts a new era with Wilkinson Eyre's painstaking refit. »

⁷⁴ Sébastien Ricard, « Battersea Power Station, Heritage Approach. »

⁷⁵ Buldington, « Battersea Power Station. »

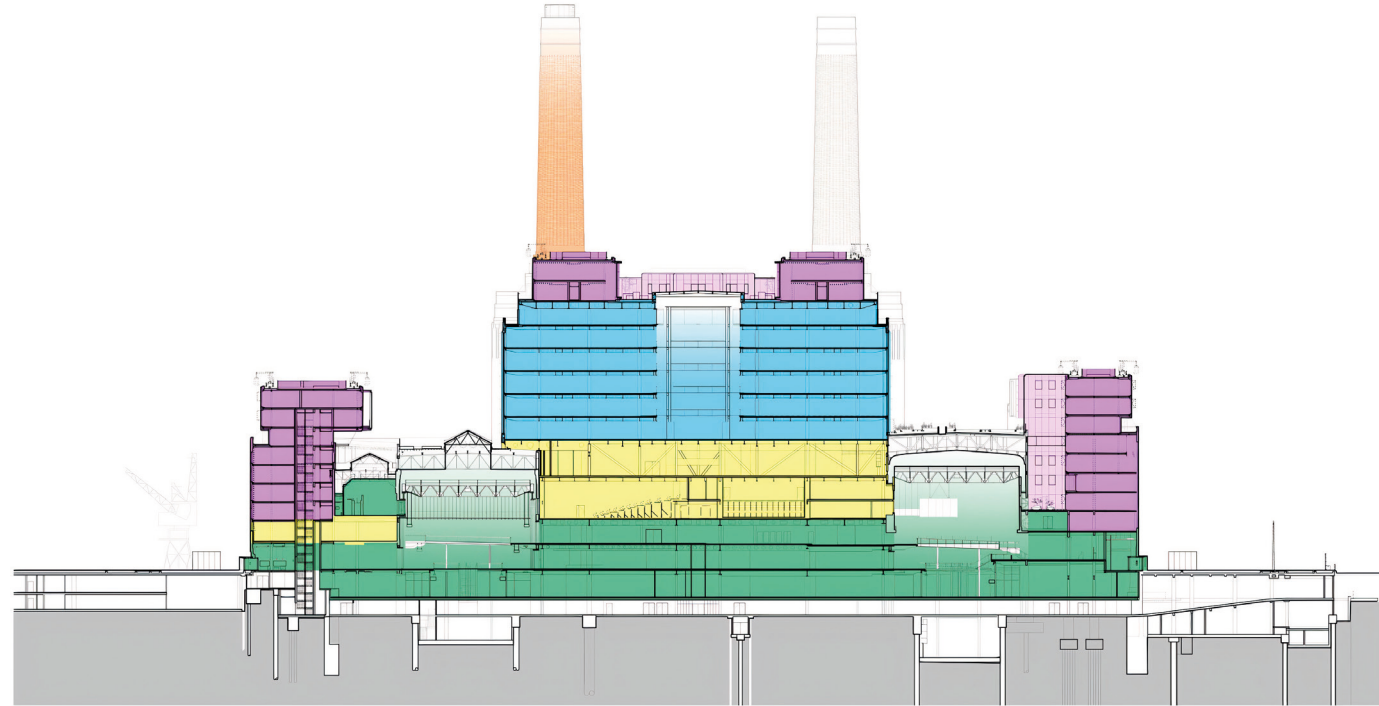
⁷⁶ Chris Foges, *op. cit.*

Fig. 38: Battersea Power Station chimney, 2023, © Baya Imadalou, cf. appendices.



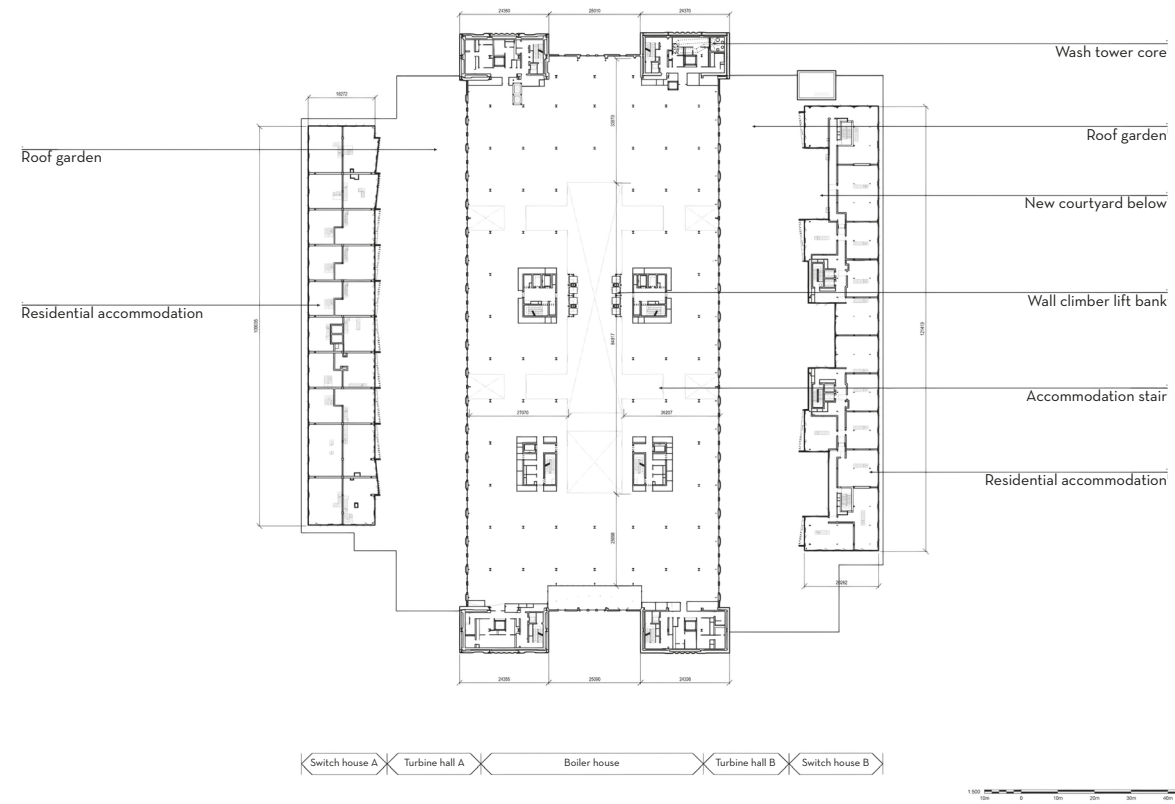
Fig. 39: Battersea Power Station Gehry's residential, 2023, © Baya Imadalou, cf. appendices.

Fig. 40: Section, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Wilkinson Eyre.



Chimney Lift
Residentials
Offices
Retail
Leisure

Fig. 41: Plan, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Wilkinson Eyre.



The Titanic reference

Formal composition analysis

The campaign poster includes a vertical rectangular format, adopting a close-up view of the station's façade against an important sky. Notably, the illustration deliberately depicts any contextual elements, focusing on the half of the station. The building is framed by the river and the subtitle below, while the main title dominates the upper part. The station appears in perspective, in the form of a Titanic boat navigating on the water. The two chimneys symbolising those on the boat. Additionally, we can notice the reinterpretation of the ongoing facade. In fact, there is not actual building next to the towering chimney. However, it portrays a more substantial and imposing boat.

Regarding the composition, the image is dominated by diagonal lines extending to the vanishing point beyond the frame, prolonging the facade. On the one hand, the diagonal lines converge on the vertical axis of the building's corner, reinforcing the imposing structure. On the other hand, the towering chimney is positioned according the vertical axis of the composition, depicting a symmetrical image. The straight lines of the building contrast with the curves of the dynamic background.

Significantly, the right side of the facade is emphasised by a large curve, symbolising the station in the form of a boat. Moreover, the chimney's smoke is transformed into a cloud of waves. The station appears to emerge from the water, with its two chimneys, in the image of an ocean liner. Ultimately, the birds flying around the chimneys add to the imaginary world of the ocean. The lower part of the composition is marked by blurred lines that give the impression of wave movement, with the reflection of the boat showing the depth of the ocean. The artist chooses to represent the station in the form of the Titanic, a British ship with a distinctive appearance. The ship stands out for its colossal size, but also for its curved profile. Like the station, the Titanic has 4 chimneys with punctuated windows.



It is interesting to examine the light use of the composition, emanating from two opposing sources. The first source illuminates majestically the tower from the left. The tower on the right is contrasted by a shadow, extending on the facade. In opposite, the boat's profile is illuminated by a light source from the right, creating a play of diagonals lines. This play of light and shadow participate to illustrate a dynamic composition of lines. On the other hand, the light seems to illuminate the bottom of the facade as it meets the ocean horizon, marking a gradation rising to the top.

Regarding the use of colours, the composition is dominated by two main complementary colours. First, the building is depicted in orange, the colour of the brick. On the other hand, the background of sky and water is symbolised by the light blue that plays with the white of the clouds. In opposite, the building is mixed with black and darker tones, with the reflection of the station in the water. Each colour is mixed with white to obtain a soft, pastel shade. The colours chosen are bright and contribute to a warm, dynamic composition. The yellow colour at the bottom of the facade helps to form the primary colours and creates a contrasting image. The orange color symbolizes brightness, warmth, as well as the glory and superiority of the building. While blue contributes to lightness, wonder, and immortality. Together, the colors depict an imposing structure facing a future marked by peace and wisdom.

Selling an icon

Interpretation

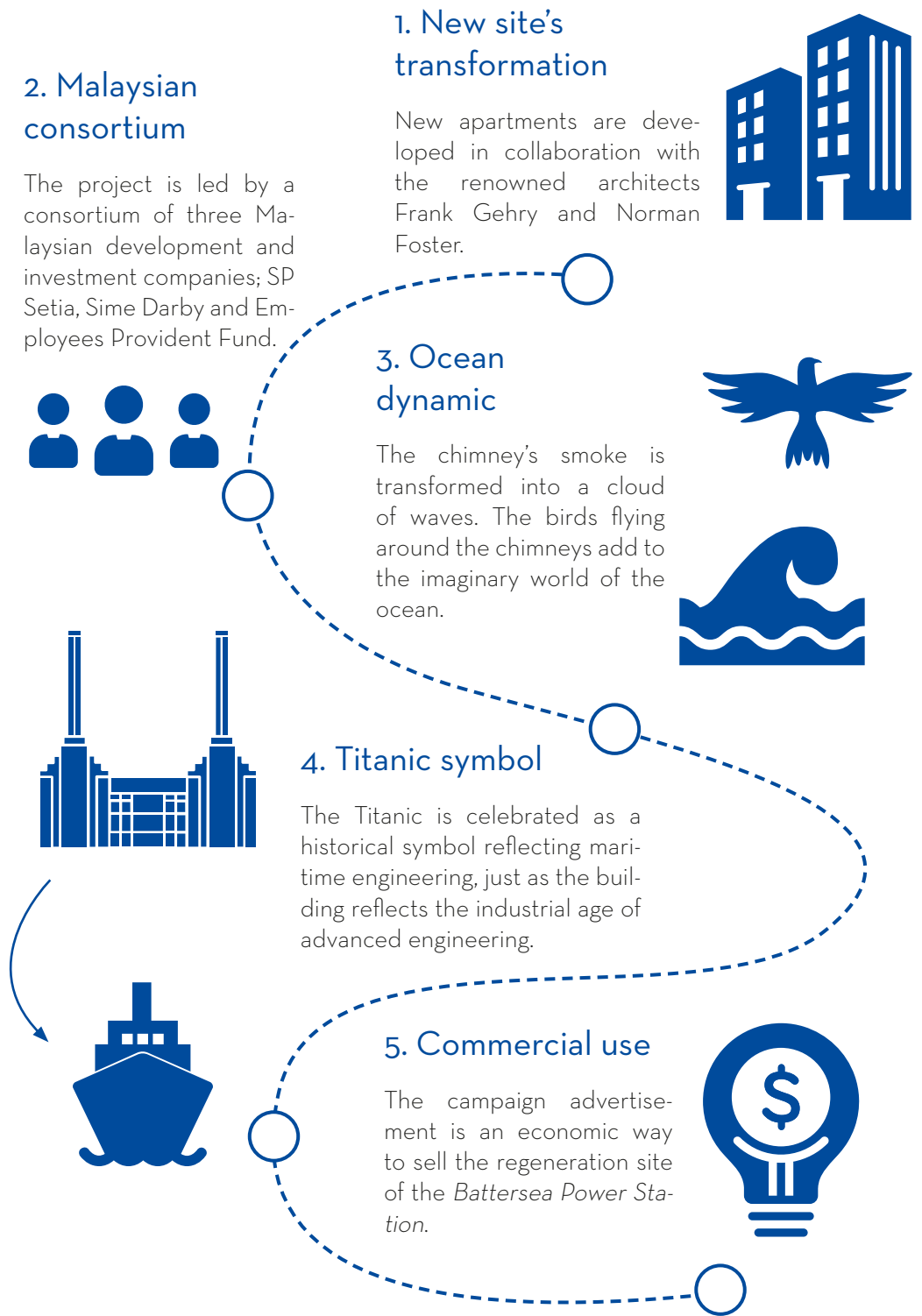
Battersea Power Station incarnates the symbol of the Titanic. The building emerges from the water like a ship sailing on the ocean, with the circulating chimneys reminiscent of a ship. The Titanic is a symbol of exploration, travel and grandeur. This is a British boat from the White Star line, owned by a U.S. company⁷⁷. As the power station, the boat symbolizes a historical and cultural maritime heritage. It represents the largest and greatest boat of its time. The Titanic is celebrated as a historical symbol reflecting maritime engineering, just as the building reflects the industrial age of advanced engineering. Moreover, the Titanic, just as the power house represents the power of the British nation.

On the other hand, the ship is a symbol of a new beginning towards a new destination, just as the building represents the transformation of a new site under development. Ultimately, the metaphor is used to depict the important symbolism of the transformation of an iconic historic building as it embarks on a new future. Notably, the title of the cover adds to the comprehensive understanding: « There's still time to come aboard », refers to an invitation to join a boat before the departure. It suggests the opportunity to be part of the redevelopment of the *Battersea Power Station*.

The campaign advertisement is an economic way to sell the regeneration site of the *Battersea Power Station*. The illustrator uses the imposing icon to draw the viewer's attention. Below it is written: « Stunning apartments designed by Foster + Partners and Gehry Partners are available to buy now in the heart of a new neighbourhood for London. » The illustration is an invitation to be part of the transformative project. It's interesting because the image doesn't show Foster and Gehry's new buildings to sell the flats, but uses the iconography of the power station. The composition chooses to depict only part of the facade and to abstract the contextual elements, emphasising the iconic symbolism of the building. In the end, the station stands as an architectural icon, completely removed from its context to emanate by its symbolic presence.

⁷⁷ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, « R.M.S Titanic - History and Significance. »

Fig. 42: Titanic poster, © Kevin McSherry.





FINAL EPISODE

BRITISH INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

The final episode invites the reader to question the role of architecture in preserving the heritage of industrial and historical ruins. The new transformation site is questioned concerning the preservation of the value of the historical power station. Notably, the observation of a successful site transformation provides a comparison to *Battersea Power Station* new development.

A transformative icon

Conclusion

The theoretical research focuses on the hypothesis regarding the role of the architectural elements of *Battersea Power Station* in shaping the architectural iconography of the power house. Through an analysis of the pivotal moments illustrated in different forms of media, we delve into the formal visual composition of each significant depicted vision. Notably, the research contributes to provide an understanding of the representation of the British industrial historical heritage. Consequently, the conclusion provides an opportunity to retrace each pivotal moment in the building's history, unveiling the significance of its architectural elements and their impacts on the representation of the station's iconography.

We are interested in the first episode to the vertical dominance of *Battersea Power Station* along the Thames. The towering chimneys, serve as a metaphor to highlight the station's prominent landmark in London's industrial landscape. Depicting the chimneys as a lighthouse emphasizes the building's role as a city guiding force towards a glorious future. *Battersea Power Stations* stands as a symbol of technological progress and engineering prowess during the industrial era, underlining London's pioneering role in the development of electrical power in the 1900s.

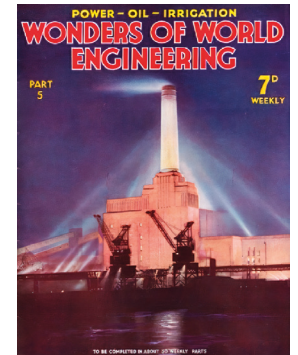
The second episode delves into the post-industrial critique addresses by Pink Floyd's *Animals* cover album. The cover illustrates the station as an integral part of the urban fabric, organising the cityscape around its imposing architecture. The domination of the building in the urban landscape, emphasizing by the pollution of the smoke, criticises the mechanical overproduction consequences of the capitalist society. *Battersea Power Station* becomes a visual representation reflecting societal, economic, political and industrial conditions in 1970s London.

Following the powering down, the third episode represents the distinctive steel structure symbolizing the industrial design power and grandeur of the power station. The abundance of structural elements not only contributes to the station's stren-

02 Post-industrial critique



01 Industrial period of A station



03 Gloden age renewal



04 Economic rise towards China



05 Contemporary regeneration



gth but pays homage to the nation's historical industrial heritage. The building serves a propaganda function, aligning with Margaret Thatcher's political vision for the post-industrial nation's future.

We have examined, in the fourth episode, the symmetrical composition of the station. Represented as a temple, the station features a central square building organising the four chimneys on each side. The arrangement of architectural elements contributes to the visual identity of a recognizable architecture of power. The episode highlights the adaptive reuses of the building, including cultural events as the Serpentine Gallery. *Battersea Power Station* marks a pivotal moment in the representation of the economic dialogue between England and the emerging power of China.

At the end, the fifth episode delves into the enduring distinctive form of the building into the public memory. The visual identity of the architecture becomes an instrumental in marketing the transformative project of the historical station into a new residential and shopping centre. Finally, the pivotal episodes participate to portray *Battersea Power Station* as an integral part of London's social, economic and political history of the British nation.

In conclusion, the architect, Gilbert Scott, describes the essence of the building with the following words:

« *There is a tendency to classify power stations with factories and to locate them in industrial areas, but they differ from factories in one important respect: they are public utility undertakings, marketing their product in a localised and centralised marker and the nearer they are to that market the more economically and efficiently they function.* »⁷⁸

From the power station's creation, the architectural design aims to be both eloquent and distinctive. In contrast to typical industrial factories, the structure is characterised by traditional British brick architecture and architectural references to ancient Greek and Roman civilization. We can notice the Doric columns chimneys, and the pilasters integrated to the façade. Furthermore, the building exudes a symmetrical plan and occupies a central position in the city. The architectural characterised elements

communicate with the public, becoming a collective language that everyone can understand and appreciate. *Battersea Power Station* transcends its primary role of a power station to become a collective masterpiece.

Importantly, the building has represented the changing preoccupations of the British nation. In the 1900s, it reflects a period of technological progress during the industrial era. During the Second World War, it serves a defensive role, supplying the town with smoke against enemy attacks. In the 1970s, it immortalizes the collective memory through a pig flying between the two chimneys. After the powering down, it remains a historical and industrial relic standing to exterior conditions. Finally, it has been transformed into a new purpose. Notably, Battersea Power Station becomes a cultural icon, appearing in prominently popular events and movies from *Superman III* in 1983, to *The meaning of life* in 1983, *Nineteen eighty-four* in 1984, *Richard III* in 1995, *Children of Men* in 2006, *The Batman* in 2008, *RocknRolla* in 2008 and *The Imaginarium Of Doctor Parnassus* in 2009⁷⁹.

However, the station is rarely depicted for the magnificence of its architecture. Instead, it is portrayed in a dramatic and dark sense, offering a critical vision of a societal condition questioning its own values. The power station emerges not only as a silhouette against the London skyline, but as a symbolic voice in the socio-political discourse. We can conclude that the power station is an icon because it is a symbol that society employs to articulate ideological reflections, depicting utopia and dystopia conditions of each time. As the building transitions from public to private ownership, the new project becomes a reflection regarding not only architectural heritage but also the gentrification shaping the contemporary society. The architecture is a response to London's evolving self-perception. In this way, *Battersea Power Station* stands as a transformative icon, offering a visual societal self-reflection across the times.

⁷⁹ The Guardian, « From Monty Python to Children of Men: Battersea Power Station in Films. »

⁷⁸ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 52.

The concept of ruin

Perspectives

The repurposing of *Battersea Power Station* into a shopping centre invites to question the role of architecture in preserving the heritage of industrial and historical ruins. What's the most effective strategy to conserve the ruins of another era? In this context, the power station's iconography contributes to the preservation of its architecture. Paradoxically, its value increases as the building's function diminished from an operational power station to a symbolic ruin. It leads to a question: Why does our perception of ruins elevate the value of an architecture? Peter Watts, author of the historical narrative *Up In Smoke* regarding the fate of the station has described the symbolic concept embedded in a ruin:

« Abandoned buildings are charged with intrigue and potential in a way that ordinary, occupied buildings rarely are. Why are they empty? What happened? Where did everybody go? The absence leaves space for the imagination, hence the profusion of books and articles about Chernobyl and Detroit or, closer to home, London Underground's disuses "ghost" stations. »⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 239.

Architectural ruins carry the history of a bygone era, commanding our respect because there are no longer in use. Relics symbolize the enduring spirit of a specific social condition at a particular time. According to the author, ruins become grounds for imagination, hope and offering new perspectives for the future. This phenomenon is evident in projects like those developed by Broome, Hwang, Thatcher, and Cameron, where ruins play a pivotal role in reshaping societal architecture, enabling the visualization of novel imaginations. Consequently, the challenge consists of transforming a ruin while preserving its value, which is deeply linked to its historical significance. How can a building be reimagined while preserving the essence it carries in a new form of architecture?

The *Battersea Power Station* redevelopment illustrates the difficult condition, between conserving the structures while assigning a new economic function in a gentrified London landscape. Despite the integration of restaurants and brand-name

shops, the building becomes an emblem of an upper-class contextualisation. In this transformation, the station is no longer at the service of the city, either in terms of its primary function, or even its cultural, political and ecological condition. The building has become the property of private investors who are more interested in the success of the resort than in the historic architecture of the monument. Indeed, the station has transitioned from national investors such as Broome to international companies, and is now owned by a Malaysian consortium. The new project reflects a gentrified society to the detriment of the building's primary function, which is to serve the entire population.

It is interesting to observe a successful transformation project: the *Tate Modern*, designed by the same architect, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.



Fig. 43: Tate Modern, 2000, © Herzog & De Meuron.

⁸¹ Tate, « History of Tate Modern. »

⁸² Peter Watts, *Up in Smoke*, 234.

The *Tate Modern*, located on Bankside in London along the Thames, is originally an old power station built in two phases between 1947 and 1963⁸¹. Designed by Sir Gilbert Scott, he uses the same brick covering as *Battersea Power Station*, as well as the plan organised around a central Turbine Hall, alongside the Boiler House, and adorned with a single chimney. The power station is decommissioned in 1981, under the private ownership of *Nuclear Electric* in 1989⁸².

Initially planned for demolition, the *Tate Gallery* secures the site in 1994 for a new modern and contemporary exhibition space. The transformation begins in 1995 when the Swiss office Herzog & De Meuron is commissioned to convert the old power station into an art museum. The project aims to preserve the distinctive exterior character and structural elements, while transforming the interior into a dynamic art display. The Turbine Hall is converted into a huge entrance space, hosting important art installations.

The favorable conservation of the monument, built after *Battersea Power Station*, coupled with the absence of grade statues, facilitate the transformation. Public investment plays a crucial role in turning the building into a public, social and cultural venue, now recognized as one of the most important international art collection.

Finally, isn't the fate of an icon ultimately a celebration of the representation of its architectural heritage ? The main focus on my Master project for the next semester will be to investigate how architectural planning can intervene in the regeneration of abandoned industrial ruins, while maintaining the preservation of its architectural value.



Fig. 44: Tate Modern interior, 2000, © Herzog & De Meuron.

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Fig. 44: « Tate Modern interior. » 2000. © Herzog & De Meuron. <https://www.herzogdemeuron.com/projects/126-tate-modern/>.

Iconic architecture

Appendixes

The appendixes present a photographic documentation regarding the regeneration site of *Battersea Power Station*. I have the opportunity to take part on a trip in London to photograph the new transformed building and to admire the old and new architecture participating in the formation of the characteristic architecture of London. A glass and a brick architecture of different areas living in the same place.



Fig. 45: Battersea Power Station facade, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.

Fig. 46: The glass extension meeting the towering chimneys, 2023. © Baya Imadalou.



Fig. 47: Residential apartments designed by Gehry, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



Fig. 48: Battersea Power Station brick facade, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



Fig. 49: Battersea Power Station entrance facade, 2023, © Baya Imadlou.

Fig. 50: Battersea Power Station surrounded by Foster and Gehry architecture, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



Fig. 51: Battersea Power Station brick facade, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



Fig. 52: Turbine Hall, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadlou.



Fig. 51: Turbine Hall, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadalou

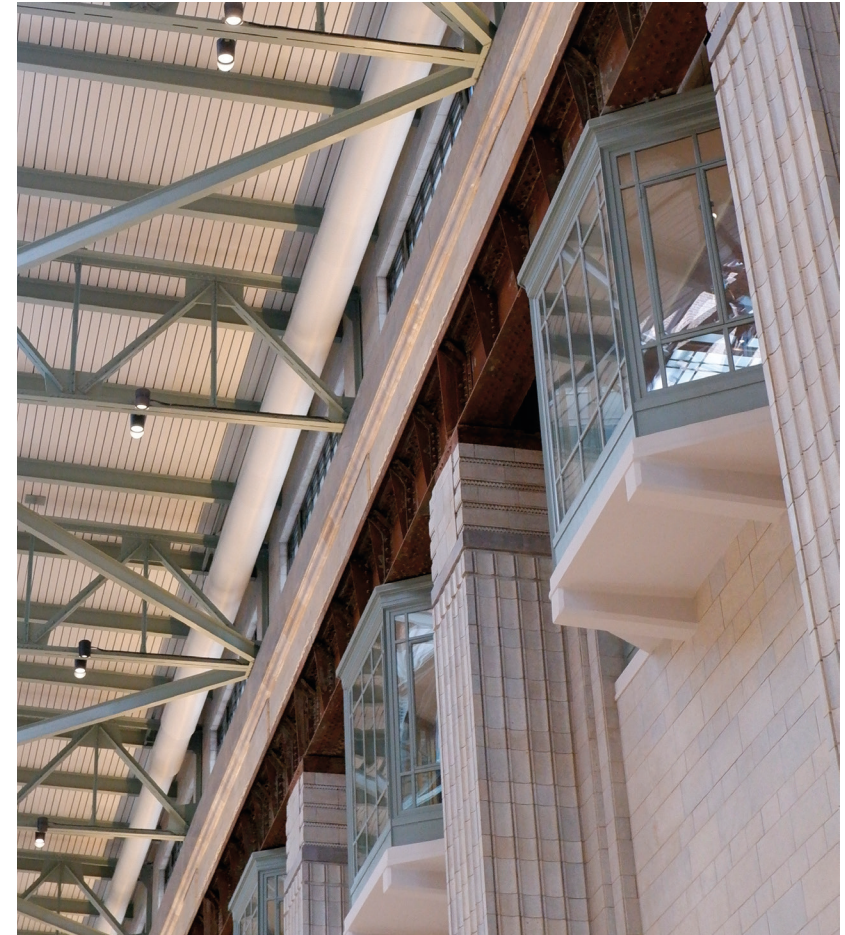


Fig. 54: Details Turbine Hall, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.

Fig. 55: Details Turbine Hall, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



Fig. 56: Turbine Hall, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



Fig. 57: Turbine Hall, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



CONTROL ROOM B

Fig. 58: Control Room, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.



Iconic architecture

Fig. 59: Offices, Battersea Power Station, 2023, © Baya Imadalou.

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