

The Museum of Modern Art

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An early 20th century warehouse -- a legacy from the Industrial Revolution in England -- which two architectural students propose be saved from demolition and converted into a Museum of Science and Technology for the City of Manchester, is the subject of a small exhibition of photographs, drawings, elevations and a model, on view at The Museum of Modern Art from April 10 through mid-May.

York House, designed by Harry S. Fairhurst in 1911 for Lloyd's Packing Warehouses Ltd., provided both storage and showroom facilities for cotton goods. Although the street elevation is endowed with the commercial neo-classical facade common to the period, the rear elevation, made prominent when surrounding buildings were demolished, is a remarkable example of the functional use of glass, according to Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, who selected and installed the exhibition.

"...The architect stepped back each floor from the second to the ninth, and glassed-in the entire expanse. His linking of each receding glazed level with continuous clerestory windows, set on the same diagonal as the building's brick gables, provided both top and side light for work tables that ran the length of the entire window. It also produced a striking plastic configuration of particular interest to several present-day architects."

Last year York House was scheduled for demolition. Two students in the School of Advanced Studies at Manchester College of Art and Design -- Joseph D'Urso, an American designer, and John Bishop, an English architect -- urged that the warehouse be converted into a Museum of Science and Technology, as there is no local museum to document Manchester's achievements in the history of scientific and technological inventions.

A scale model and sketches show D'Urso and Bishop's remodeling proposal which calls for pulling back five of the floors from the sloping glass wall, thus creating
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a high interior space that would permit even more light to enter the interior, and allow large pieces of machinery to be exhibited and viewed from many levels. The site itself would later become part of a larger museum complex, with landscaping and paving to relate the various buildings and provide an urban park.

In addition to photographs and drawings of the exterior and interior of York House, the exhibition includes pictures of other industrial buildings in Manchester that are similarly uninhibited in their use of glass: the Food Market, the Picadilly Courtyard, the Barton Arcade and the Corn Exchange.

"They illustrate departures from traditional forms that nineteenth century industrial architecture easily made to satisfy functional necessity --in this instance undoubtedly encouraged by Manchester's dim weather," Mr. Drexler notes.

Since D'Urso and Bishop's project has been published, York House has been officially listed as an historic building worth saving. The Manchester College of Art and Design is now attempting to raise the money to convert it to a museum.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, and Patricia B. Kaplan, Associate, Press Services, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.