

# Wet Dreams (Celebrating Here)

Paul Stallan  
Stallan-Brand

Baker Street  
Paisley Performing Arts Theatre  
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The promise of post-war planning policy and the imposition of industrial modern architecture across Scotland was a disaster. Dictate and economics brutalised our architectural culture for half a century leaving legacy environments derelict of meaning and a landscape of vacuous building.

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As a counter to the dislocation I experienced growing up I have been driven to value the art of place.

My lived experience has encouraged me to posit a vernacular architecture that celebrates our *here*, our *genius loci*, our unique situation, through art. I am certain that our unique climates and our *actual place on earth* influences and shapes how we engage with the world.





Stallan-Brand's architectural projects in Scotland do not look to sunny climates for inspiration. We promote architecture for our unique location for lack of a blue sky. The late Isi Metzstein beautifully articulated the necessary function of *local variation* and the importance of art in architecture different from mere building.

*Essentially, all buildings are parcels of single or closely-packed, multi-cell volumes of varied plan and sectional ordering. The wrapping, with the possibility of local variations in stiffness, thickness transparency colour and texture has an intense capability of artistic and functional orchestration, and thus an opportunity for combining artistic self expression and public pleasure.*

Architecture and artistic self-expression are not easy bedfellows. Architecture, different from art, implores public scrutiny and processes that can dilute spirited work and result in conceptual fatigue. To counter such malaise requires a reasoned architecture language that people will be excited by, that they understand and that means something.

At a very personal level I have tried to develop a *means of making* and a language of architecture that is not only functionally *orchestrated* but one that resonates with it's context.

Skin-up DaDa  
Collage by  
Paul Stallan



#### Painting as a Laboratory of Form

I have been painting and collaging similar shapes and forms for the past 20 years. When I look back at my work I can trace common shapes and emerging patterns. It is as though my brain has a 'muscle memory' that prescribes a family of forms and related images. When I paint I have no pre-conceptions rather I throw paint adding more paint layers post-rationalising and composing emerging patterns and figurative shapes that appear. I have developed a language, an internal language that is a dialogue between favoured shapes.

This language of sorts inspires my constant doodling of structural forms, ships, bridges and submarines, interspersed with architectural grids and a layering of skins and masks – a playground of personal and visual ideas. My experiments in paint are like micro-architectural compositions, free from any functional requirement, warm up exercises, like a gymnast free-styling and practising potential moves before a public presentation, they are mental gymnastics and always work-in-progress.

#### Structure & Skin

The architectural skins that my paintings or collages adopt are various submarine-like configurations, they can be seen as hung, or to act like a cladding or wrap, they can seal a form or space, they can also be cut and punctured and peppered with holes. These skins that I detail I imagine are like an abstract representation of say a metal rain screen, an architectural thinness that protects like a waterproof jacket. Or they can be more like the hull of a ship or concrete covering a landscape.

Whatever form the layers of paint take in my compositions skins have one thing in common and that is that I always imagine them being defensive, protecting us from the rain, shielding us from noise, blocking the sun, creating imagined interior and exterior relationships. These shapes are fluid and help me to imagine a contemporary responsive vernacular that I might use in my architecture.

Structural forms that appear in my work help me compose my paintings and allow secondary forms and characters within my compositions to find their place. The structural shapes represent to me actual structural systems that you might encounter in a building, a crane or a bridge.

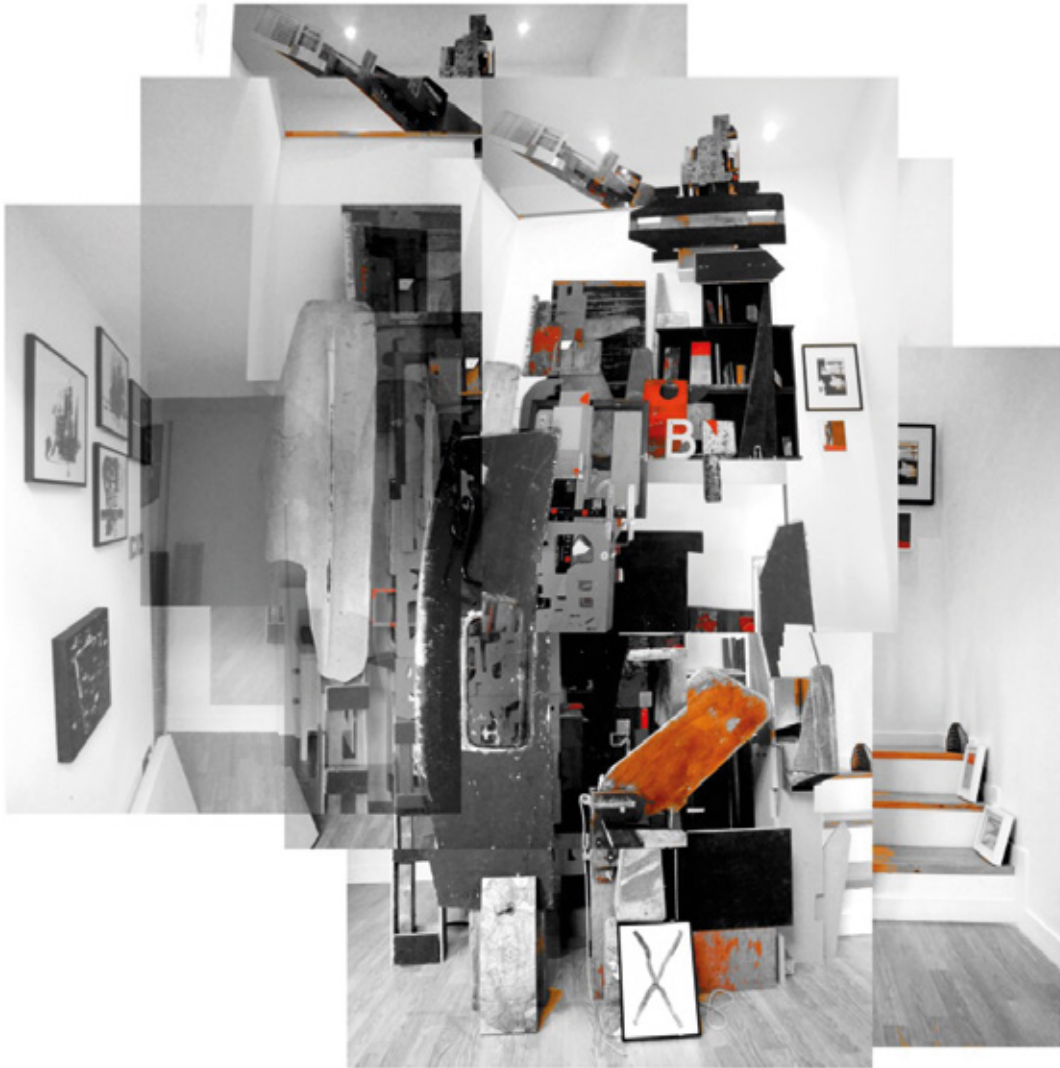
#### Intuition vs. Rationale

The purpose and the influence of my painting and its relationship to my practice as an architect is for me not a direct one. My paintings are not representations or abstractions of any particular landscape or building but rather of an imaginary place. The figures and forms that I draw I might in part use in a future design. Using paint, as medium to explore shape is a forensic process for me, where answers are revealed.

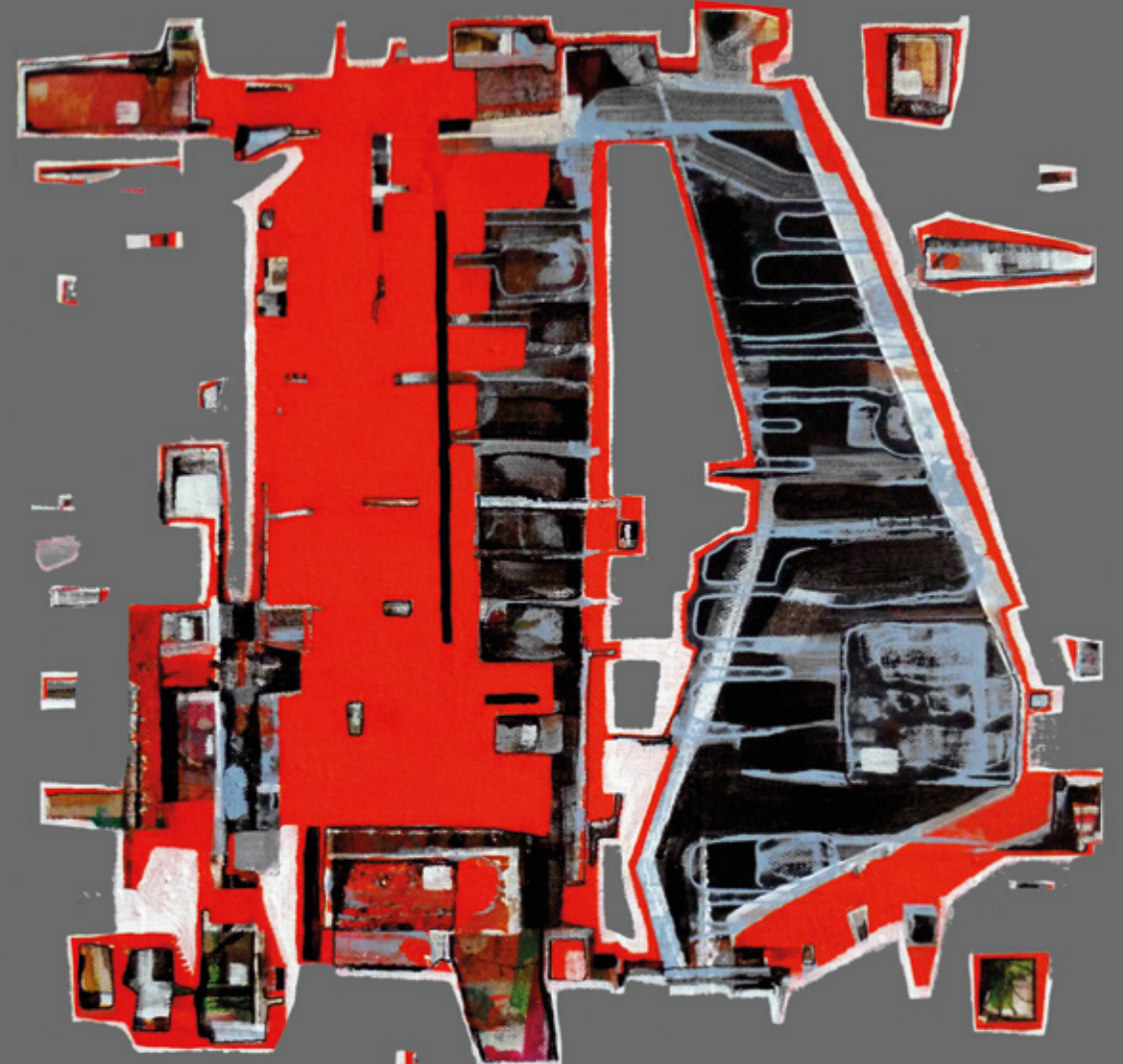
Making marks and post-rationalising did not at first come naturally to me. I blame my architectural education for not encouraging more intuitive study. Architectural education when it focuses on form-making tends to be formulaic and prescriptive. Studying the dynamics of form in a dispassionate fashion is common to architecture courses and easier to teach compared to experimental aesthetics.

I have tried to build on a studio-based learning experience by reflecting on both scientific and artistic perspectives in art and form. I am certain that my exploration in paint is useful to me as a practicing architect at a fundamental level. Having confidence and being clear on not only how the dynamics of a form or colour can benefit your design, but also to having the intuitive ability to experiment and discover these actual forms and shapes for yourself is for me exciting and constantly challenging.

Unstable  
Assemblage  
Paul Stallan



Skinhouse  
Paul Stallan





## Baker Street Paisley Performing Arts Theatre

Gerry Rafferty, son of Paisley, inspired the naming of this new cultural project for Paisley. Baker Street proposes to fill the cultural vacuum at the centre of town and radically reposition Paisley's offer as place of distinction. Baker Street plans to form a new nexus of intergenerational social interaction, basically a new living room for the town.

In recent times Paisley has been quite literally gutted by out of town planning initiatives leaving a town centre bereft of form and content. Stellan-Brand have grasped the opportunity to address the ragged urban context in Paisley's town centre and introduce a catalytic architecture that in both its bold form and active content will capture the community's energy and creative angst.

Physically and philosophically access for everyone is a Baker Street project ambition. Paisley does not do cultural snobbery. The team recognise the role that quality public space will provide. Against the Paisley skyline the architecture is dramatic with vertiginous light canons articulating the buildings social spaces. The structures composition, though unapologetically modern, is rooted in its context, finding a scale, proportion and material character that responds to the locations townscape to create a building that is odd but not at odds with its place.

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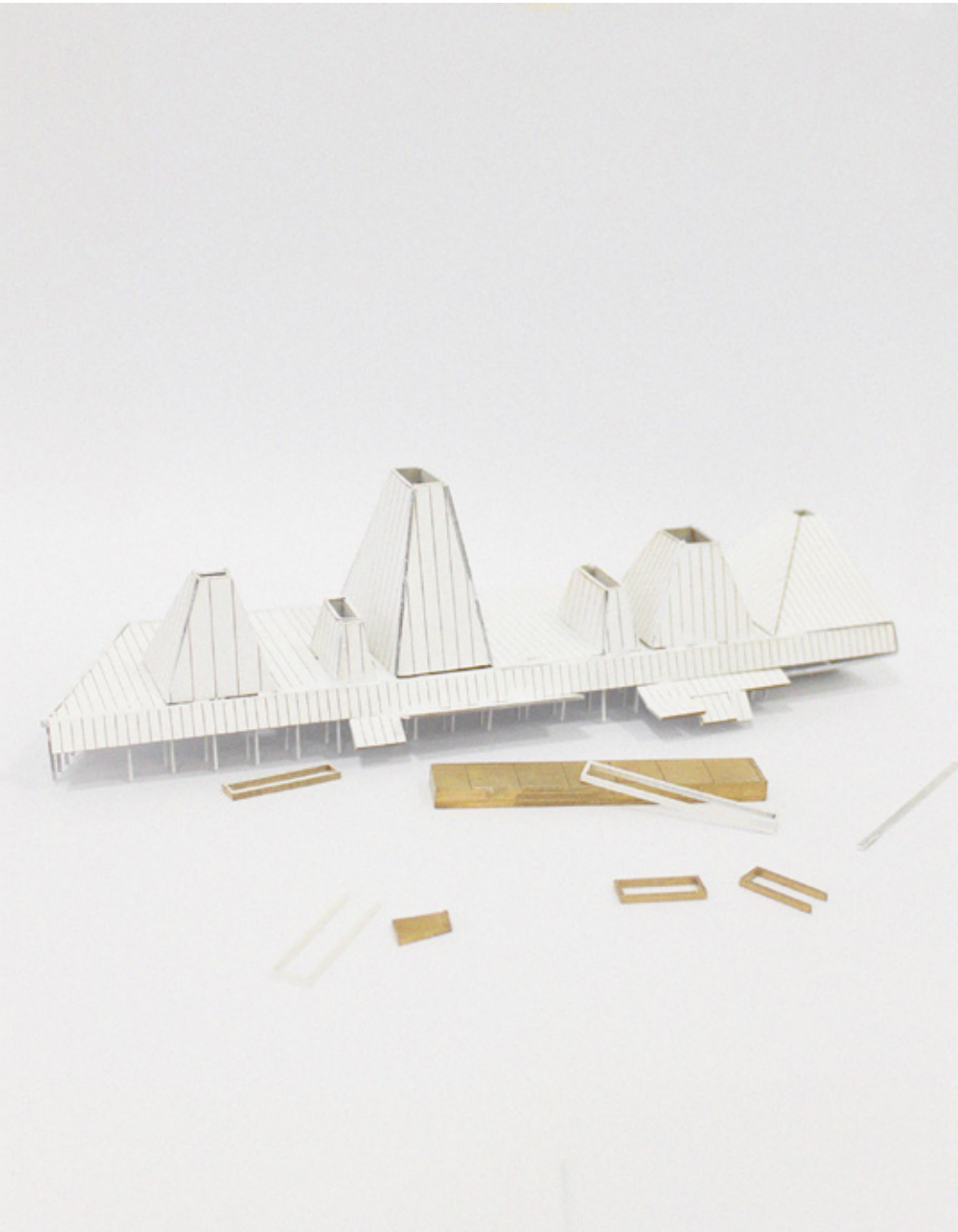
'Hairy' Green  
Public Space.  
(Lots of weeds)



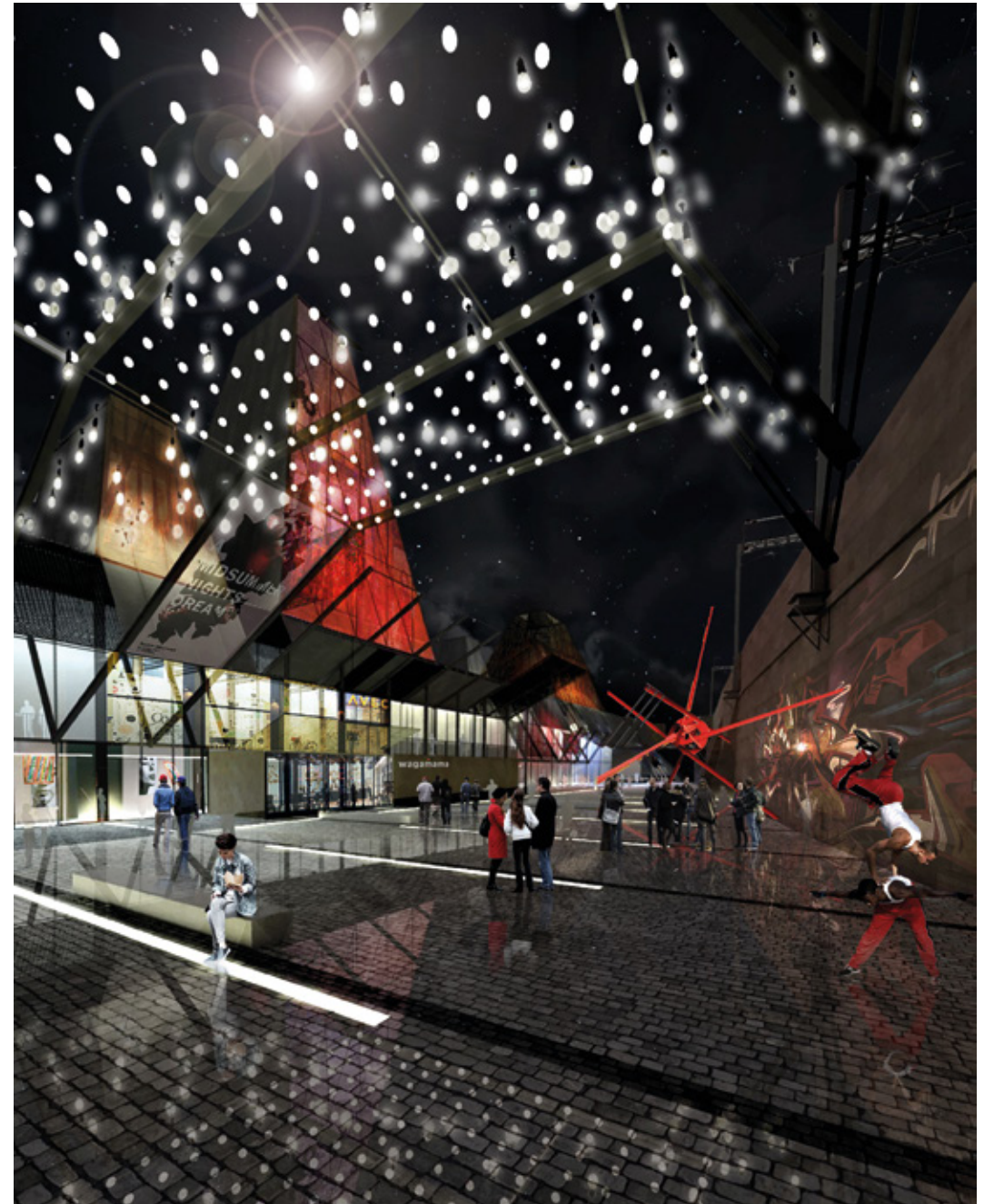
Long sectional  
drawing against  
Paisley skyline.







Sketch Model of Paisley Performing Arts Theatre.



Sketch Visual of *Ripped Backside Lane* the New Public Space between the Theatre & Gilmour Street Train Station.