in the Economist's first-floor banking hall, given further prominence by its escalator access. By way of a linking device, the exposed gable of Boodle's received a faceted bay window detailed as the fenestration of the new building.

The success, therefore, of the Economist building lies in its careful response to the scale of its immediate physical context rather than in any self-conscious attempt to repeat the Palladianism of its neighbour. But in many situations the context for design is a historic building whose primacy must be maintained when extended or built alongside. Such was the case when Howell, Killick, Partridge and Amis designed the delicately-scaled senior combination room at Downing College, Cambridge, 1970, alongside the original William Wilkins building completed in 1822 (**Figures 5.46, 5.47**). The new and existing classical pavilions are linked visually by a bland screen wall which acts as a backdrop to the jewel-like senior combination room and as a neutral void between two buildings.

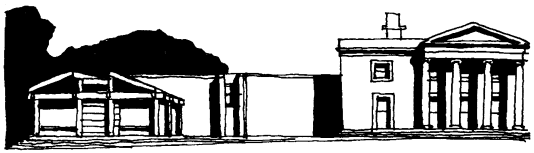

Figure 5.46 *Howell, Killick, Partridge and Amis, Downing College, Cambridge, Senior Combination Room, 1975.*

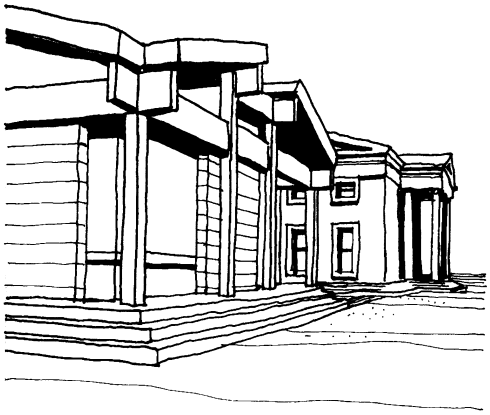

Figure 5.47 *Howell, Killick, Partridge and Amis, Downing College, Cambridge, Senior Combination Room, 1979.*

The wall also obscures the considerable bulk of kitchens and offices which otherwise would have upset the delicate balance of the composition. But it is the sensitive handling of scale which contributes most of this scheme's success; the primacy of Wilkins' building and its heroic scale are not undermined by the intrusion of its delicately-scaled neighbour. Moreover the new building, despite its overtly modernist tectonic display, makes subtle overtures to its classical neighbour; it sits on a 'stylobate' extended from that of the Wilkins building; the faceted pitched roof forms evoke the classical pediment next door; free-standing columns and beams give more than a hint of Wilkins' giant Ionic order and entablature.

The clear message in these two examples is that the tenets of modernism may be applied successfully to the most sensitive of contexts without recourse to historicism, often a disastrous but always a problematic course. Such was the case when Robert Venturi extended the National Gallery, London, in 1990, following a now familiar 'post-modern' response to context; the new façade echoes the neoclassicism of Wilkins' original façade (completed in 1838) but dilutes in its classical detail gradually as it recedes from the original (**Figure 5.48**). Given Venturi's skills, the contextual aims are realised, but in lesser hands, the pursuit of historicism on contextual grounds has resulted in an indescribably banal pastiche which has failed to offer a model for restoring our city streets.

Figure 5.48 *Robert Venturi, Sainsbury Wing, National Gallery, London, 1991. From* A Celebration of Art and Architecture*, Amery, C., National Gallery (cover).*