Richard MacCormac describes how his practice has built up what he calls a 'repertoire of tricks' which seem to draw heavily not only on his time at the Martin Centre but also on his study of the work of the great English architect Sir John Soane. In the catalogue which accompanied the exhibition of the work of James Stirling and Michael Wilford, at the RIBA in 1996, Michael Wilford wrote of the 'series of interlocking strategies' which they had developed over three decades of work:

- The expression of the primary functional activities of the building through a rich, hierarchical composition of formal geometries.
- Incorporation of coherent circulation patterns to provide clear routes and connections in and around the building.
- Development of spatial sequences to reinforce the circulation patterns and functional activities.
- Articulation of spaces in and around the building to enhance the public realm.
- Subordination of structure and systems to formal and spatial objectives.
- Use of solid and void, light and shade, colour, texture, a limited pallet of materials and landscaping in support of formal and spatial objectives.

This can be seen as a remarkably clear description of a set of guiding principles mainly centred around developing formal constraints to organise and express the radical functions and circulation of people. There is also a clear wish to relegate the practical constraints to a lower level. Elsewhere in the same catalogue Michael Wilford claims that 'architecture, as a pragmatic art, cannot be about style'. Critics have noted over the years how the work of Stirling, first with Gowan and then with Wilford, went through a series of phases. Perhaps the critics would do better to concentrate less on the superficial apparently stylistic changes and pay more attention to these guiding principles which can be seen to have an increasingly consistent influence on Wilford's work with Stirling, and since.

Symbolic

In general the modern movement in design was a period of emphasis on the formal rather than the symbolic and, in this sense can be interpreted as another cycle in the historical tendency for

periods of formalism and expressionism or classicism and romanticism to alternate. Even the explicitly expressive and communicative design fields such as graphic and stage design went through periods which might be thought to be austere or, even, brutal. The product designer, Richard Seymour makes this point in describing the approach of Seymour/Powell who try to give their designs a 'personality':

> Unfortunately it doesn't lend itself to methodology, though many designers try . . . back in the 1960s and 1970s the idea was that if you got the ergonomics right, the moulding right, the material right and usability and function correct, then in a mysterious way it would make itself into a good design . . . but we don't do that, we start with the total product.
>
> (Gardner 1989)

Typefaces without serifs were popular and theatrical sets became indicative rather than an attempt faithfully to recreate the scene. Richard Buckle, describing the work of the famous ballet designer Sophie Fedorovitch, 'believed in cutting down the decor and dresses of a ballet to the minimum'. However, such minimalism still had its symbolic job to do and Buckle explains how Fedorovitch achieved this trick in her acclaimed set for *Nocturne*:

> She only used a few pillars stuck with posters, framing a ground-row and a well-lit sky cloth yet we knew we were on the Butte Montmarte, with Paris sleeping below. Her dresses were often mere wisps of colour without any pattern: her sets were sometimes hardly there at all.
>
> (Buckle 1955)

Similarly in her final design for *Veneziana*, only to be produced posthumously, Fedorovitch maintained this almost stubborn refusal to use the obvious symbols:

> How many designers could have resisted introducing a suggestion of the Salute, the Rialto, the Campanile or St Mark's, one of the famous Venetian landmarks? She contented herself with an empty looming, thunder coloured sky over the lagoon, framed by pink walls and gilded lattices. The revellers wore clashing yellows, pinks and reds; there was a white Punchinello, a tremendous tragic courtesan in black and diamonds. At the end four lanterns on poles were carried in. Nothing could have been more romantically Venetian.

Such a consistent body of work clearly suggests that Sophie Fedorovitch had some guiding principles about the minimal use of symbolic material in theatre design. Of course, a member of the audience for Fedorovitch's ballets knew only too well where they were set, and one suspects this game of seeing how little purely