

# The Euston Folly

*Adrian Forty*

Next to the Euston Station Signal Box, and behind the Bartlett School of Architecture's temporary accommodation, is a free-standing concrete megalith. 26m long, 3.9m high for most of its length, except at the end where the ground rises and it reduces to 2.2m, and between 0.15m and 0.4m thick, its most striking feature is the chevron pattern in the board-marked surface. It serves no obvious purpose, and will shortly disappear as it stands in the path of the new HS2 track.

The wall, which dates from late 1964 or 1965, is the only relic of the abortive Taylor Woodrow project for the redevelopment of Euston Station. The design of the scheme was led by Theo Crosby, and it was he who brought together to work on it all the members of the Archigram group, as well as various people who later became famous for other things – among them Alex Pike and Robin Middleton. The project is generally acknowledged as an Archigram scheme and is listed as no 33 on their website. The concrete wall, whose survival can only be the result of some oversight, was put up as a test for the concrete work of the new station, and the unusual shuttering pattern was the work of the artist Joe Tilson, also an associate of the informal academy of avant-garde talent that operated out of a Portakabin behind the parcels office in nearby Eversholt Street. (Another regular visitor was Eduardo Paolozzi, and from Peter Cook's description it is clear that the occupants' time was far from exclusively spent on Taylor Woodrow's project: both *Archigram* magazine and Theo Crosby's own magazine *Uppercase* came out of the hut, while, for purposes of his own, Warren Chalk was occupied in reading the entire back run of *Casabella*). Tilson got involved because he had collaborated with Crosby on the British pavilion at the 1964 Milan Triennale, producing the dome and a geometric wooden wall relief for the interior of the pavilion, for which Crosby was the lead designer. It was Crosby's suggestion that he work up a design for the board-marked facing for the in-situ concrete of the new station, and this is what we see today. Tilson's relationship with the design team and with Taylor Woodrow, whose tradesmen must have fabricated the shuttering and poured the concrete, was, like everything else about the Euston Station project, characteristically casual: there was no contract, no agreement and, Tilson says, 'I never got any money'.

*Photo Sue Barr*



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