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Haggerston Girls' School

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Girls' Secondary School. Designed 1962, built 1964-7 by Erno Goldfinger for the London County Council, after 1965 the Inner London Education Authority. Reinforced concrete frame with concrete and brick infill. The plan has three linked blocks, a central teaching spine incorporating first-floor library, with entrance block to west containing an assembly hall, music facilities and staff accommodation, and gymnasium to east.

The floor slabs are expressed as continuous shallow bands, bush-hammered, whilst the exposed columns are broad and smooth faced, incorporating a service duct. High concrete parapet to all the blocks. There is a fine harmony about the facades, despite their initial impression of toughness.

The teaching block of twelve main bays, the classrooms with four units of square windows per bay interrupted by three staircases with full-height metal glazing and doors at their foot. Three storeys, with top two rooftop classrooms and central watertank between them. Concrete parapet rail similar to those formerly used at the listed Trellick and Balfron Towers by Goldfinger but now removed. Projecting bays at the southern end of the western elevation with larger windows and opening louvers house the library and specialist teaching areas, while on the east façade projecting rooms at the northern end, similarly treated, house year rooms. Internal walls plastered and non load-bearing, served by central spinal corridor with brick pavements and some original doors. Fire doors in vertical timber screens. Granolithic floors, now mostly covered. Some of the larger teaching rooms retain cupboards, and there are some original science benches, while several of the classrooms have built-in radio sets. Single storey addition of 2002 to kitchen/cafeteria of no special interest.

Entrance block with full-height metal glazing over double doors on either side, lighting a broad central corridor. These elevations are clad in brick, with concrete cornices. Glazing to the southern elevation, lighting music rooms and offices. Large concrete water spouts project from upper offices.

INTERIOR: Upper level has coffered ceilings on 2'9" grid. Corridor has paved floors and timber ceiling to link. A timber screen of stout vertical members separates the hall, to which access is given via double doors in boldly expressed surrounds. Hall with stage, timber stage surround and timber floor, the rear brick wall of angled cur brick to reduce acoustic reverberation and with timber surround box. Alongside are rehearsal cells. Opposite are the main music rooms, one with stepped floor for orchestra. Above the music rooms is a gallery with timber handrail, reached via a corner staircase and serving staff rooms. The main entrance denoted by projecting walls to either side which lead to the street. Black steel gates.

Gymnasium block on two levels, the lower sports hall formerly open at the sides and retaining spectator area. To side, former common room now learning resource centre with timber lined wall, built-in timber banking and kitchen counter. Staircase with concrete balustrades lead via changing areas (not of special interest) to the upper level, which has two gymnasiums lit by continuous clerestory glazing. Circular fire escape from rear balcony between the two gymnasiums. Low retaining wall to sides define the play areas and are an integral part of the composition.

The school opened in January 1966 when the teaching block was completed, and was completed in phases. Erno Goldfinger (1902-87) was born in Budapest, and lived in Vienna and Paris, where he studied architecture under Augustus Perret, one of the first architects to develop the use of reinforced concrete aesthetically. Perret's buildings of the 1920s and 1930s are rigorously classical in and expressive of their concrete structure, and this influence is well seen in Haggerston School. The elevations follow the Golden Section, a use of mathematical proportion that owes considerably to Perret's inspiration. Goldfinger's work is unique in Britain in combining the influences of Perret with the detailing and plan-forms derived from Le Corbusier; he is also unique in having known both men personally. The acquisition by

the National Trust of Goldfinger's own home has done much to raise the architect's profile and to encourage a steady re-evaluation. He did much to encourage a classical rigour in the modernism of younger English architects, many of whom passed fleetingly through his office, while the evolution of his mature style in the late 1950s and 1960s kept him abreast of the younger generation. He was some twenty years older than his fellow exhibitors at *This is Tomorrow*, the Whitechapel Gallery Exhibition of 1956, yet this is not readily apparent from his work. He is entirely separate from his peers in time and place, and his work continued to develop until inflation and recession in the 1970s brought his career to an impromptu end. When in 1934 he moved to England with his wife Ursula Blackwell, his first jobs included the design of a nursery school (which was never built) and school furniture for small children. In 1950-1 he built two small primary schools (in Hammersmith and Wandsworth, both listed). Haggerston School was Goldfinger's only secondary school, and the progression of buildings for increasingly bigger children corresponds with his own stylistic progression. This is the only school that demonstrates his mature style. The principle spaces are among Goldfinger's boldest and most handsome public interiors, and in completeness and interest compare with his listed housing (Kensington and Tower Hamlets).

Sources:

Mate Major, *Erno Goldfinger*, Budapest, 1973, pp.42-5

LCC Council Minutes, 1962-64

ILEA Minutes, 1965-6

James Dunnett and Gavin Stamp, *Erno Goldfinger*, London, Architectural Association, 1983, pp. 81, 113

Elizabeth Robinson, *Twentieth Century Buildings of Hackney*, London, Hackney Society, 1999, pp. 85-86