PLACES IN TIME: THE ART OF KENNETH STEEL

The famous rail travel artist you have never heard of.

I visited this exhibition of his work in the Harold Cantor Gallery, Weston Park Museum, Sheffield which ran from 17 December 2021 until 2 May 2022.

KENNETH STEEL

RBA, SGA, 1906 – 1970

British painter and etcher, noted for his works of art in watercolor. As an accomplished draughtsman his work is noted for its intricate detail, which can be best seen in his landscapes, views and street scenes, many of which were reproduced as designs for railway carriage prints and station posters.

Kenneth Steel was born in Sheffield to George Thomas Steel, an artist and silver engraver on 9 July 1906 . His elder brother, George Hammond Steel (1900–1960) was a successful landscape painter.



ART EDUCATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Studied at Sheffield College of Art under Anthony Betts.
- During the 1920s Kenneth Steel studied briefly under the landscape artist, Stanley Royle, throughout their careers both artists remained close friends.
- He went on to work as an engraver with his father and, in 1932 at the age of 26, was dubbed "the year's biggest artistic find", by the Sheffield Telegraph when he burst onto the London scene.
- Four years later, he became the youngest artist to be elected to the Royal Society of British Artists and went on to have solo exhibitions in London and Dublin in the late 1930s.



Robin Hood's Bay
Line engraving 1932

Devil's Bridge, Kirkby Lonsdale
Line engraving 1935



LINCOLN, BRAYFORD, LOCK

pencil and watercolour
1936

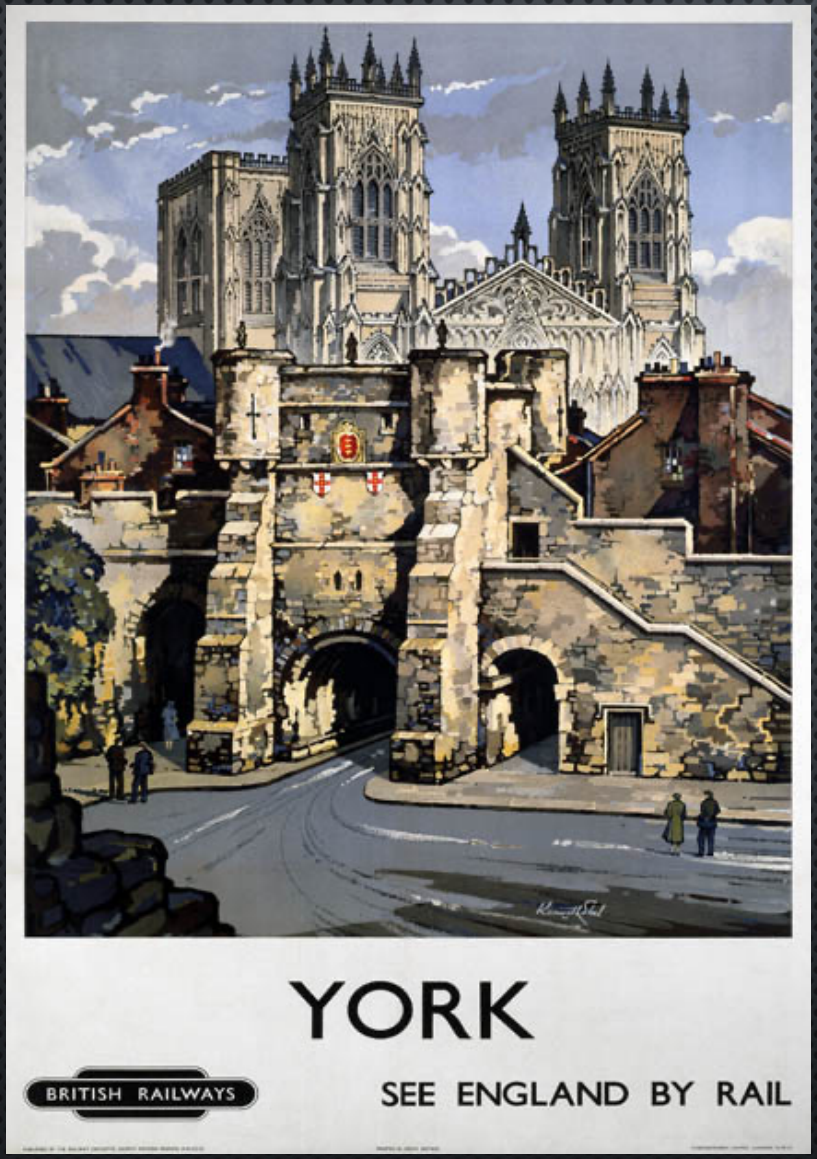


TRAGEDY

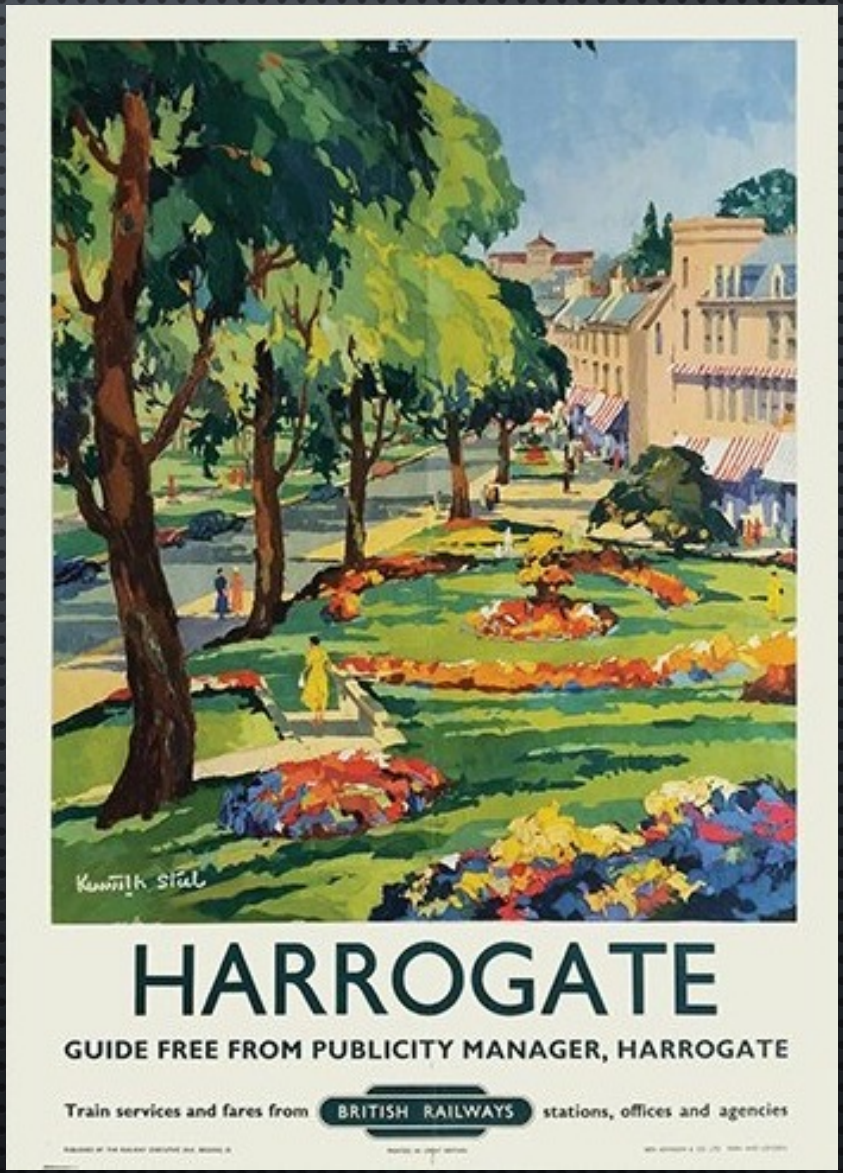
Both his invalid mother, Annie, and pregnant wife, Olive, died in December 1940, victims of 'the Sheffield Blitz' - German bombing raids during World War II when his house took a direct hit, also resulting in the loss of much his work, designs and etching plates

- Throughout the 1940s he wrote several important articles on the art of etching for the London art journal, 'The Artist'.
- From his studio in Crookes, Sheffield, he produced much of his commercial work for several regional railway companies.
- He was commissioned to create architectural drawings for the construction industry and local authority, such as the Brutalist concrete electricity sub-station on Moore Street in Sheffield, designed in 1965.
- Exhibited at the Royal Academy, Royal Hibernian Academy of Art, Royal Cambrian Academy, in the provinces and at the Paris Salon.
- He has written a number of books on artistic techniques.

- His work is widely reproduced in such publications such as Arts Review, Sphere, Studio and The Artist.
- Steel eventually remarried in 1953 at the age of 47, and in his last 20 years produced some of his most experimental work, such as Reflections (St Mary's Church, Sheffield) in 1963.
- He was an artist who laid such importance on fine draughtsmanship and strong colour.
- The sheer variety of his artistic output has long been admired by a few loyal private collectors but is largely unknown to the general public.
- Steel died of lung cancer in 1970, aged 63.


YORK
BRITISH RAILWAYS
SEE ENGLAND BY RAIL

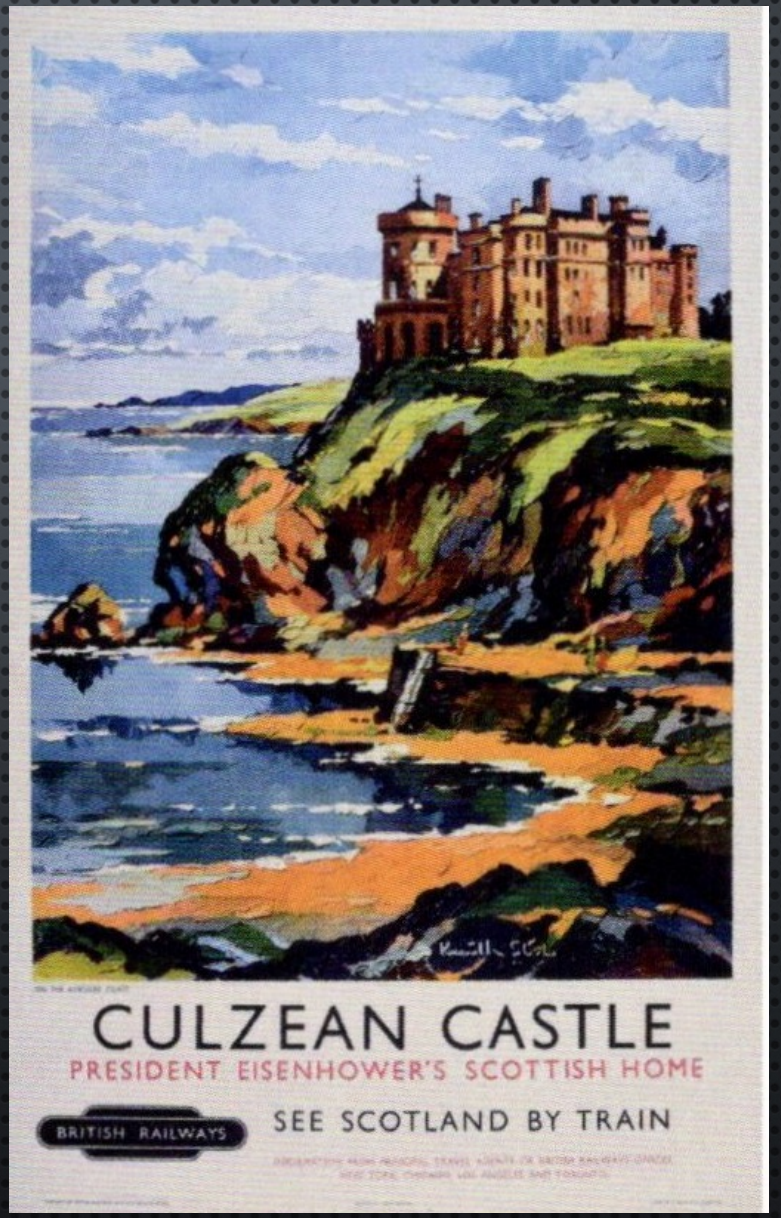
1949


HARROGATE
GUIDE FREE FROM PUBLICITY MANAGER, HARROGATE
Train services and fares from BRITISH RAILWAYS stations, offices and agencies

1953


MORECAMBE
AND HEYSHAM
OFFICIAL GUIDE BOOK (6d)
FROM DEPARTMENT "P"
TOWN HALL, MORECAMBE
BRITISH RAILWAYS
TRAIN SERVICES AND
FARES FROM STATIONS
OFFICES AND AGENCIES

1951


CULZEAN CASTLE
PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S SCOTTISH HOME
BRITISH RAILWAYS
SEE SCOTLAND BY TRAIN

1953

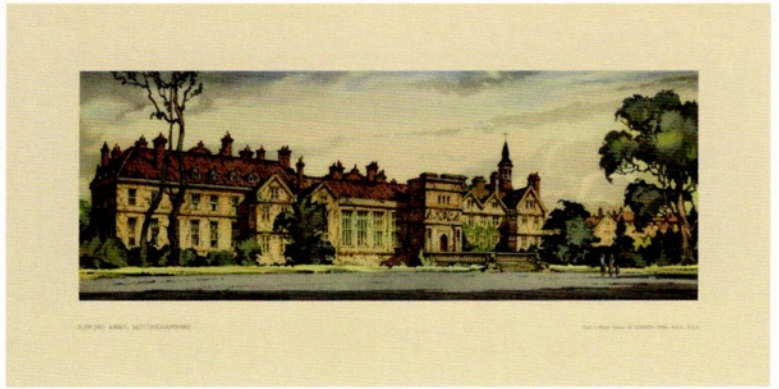
RAILWAY CARRIAGE POSTERS 1945–55



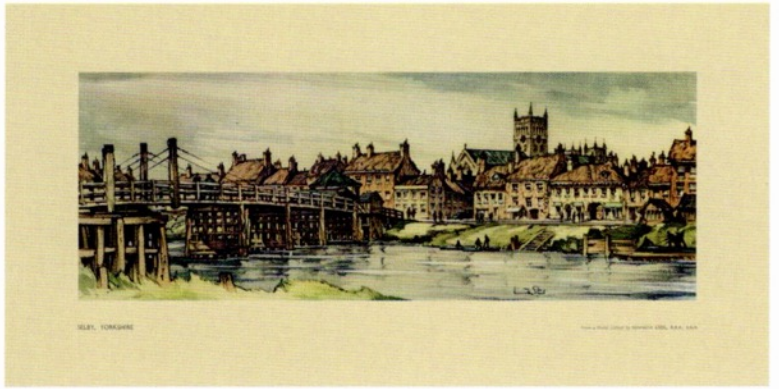
25. Monsal Dale Viaduct, Derbyshire



26 Ribblehead Viaduct, Yorkshire



19 Rufford Abbey, Nottinghamshire

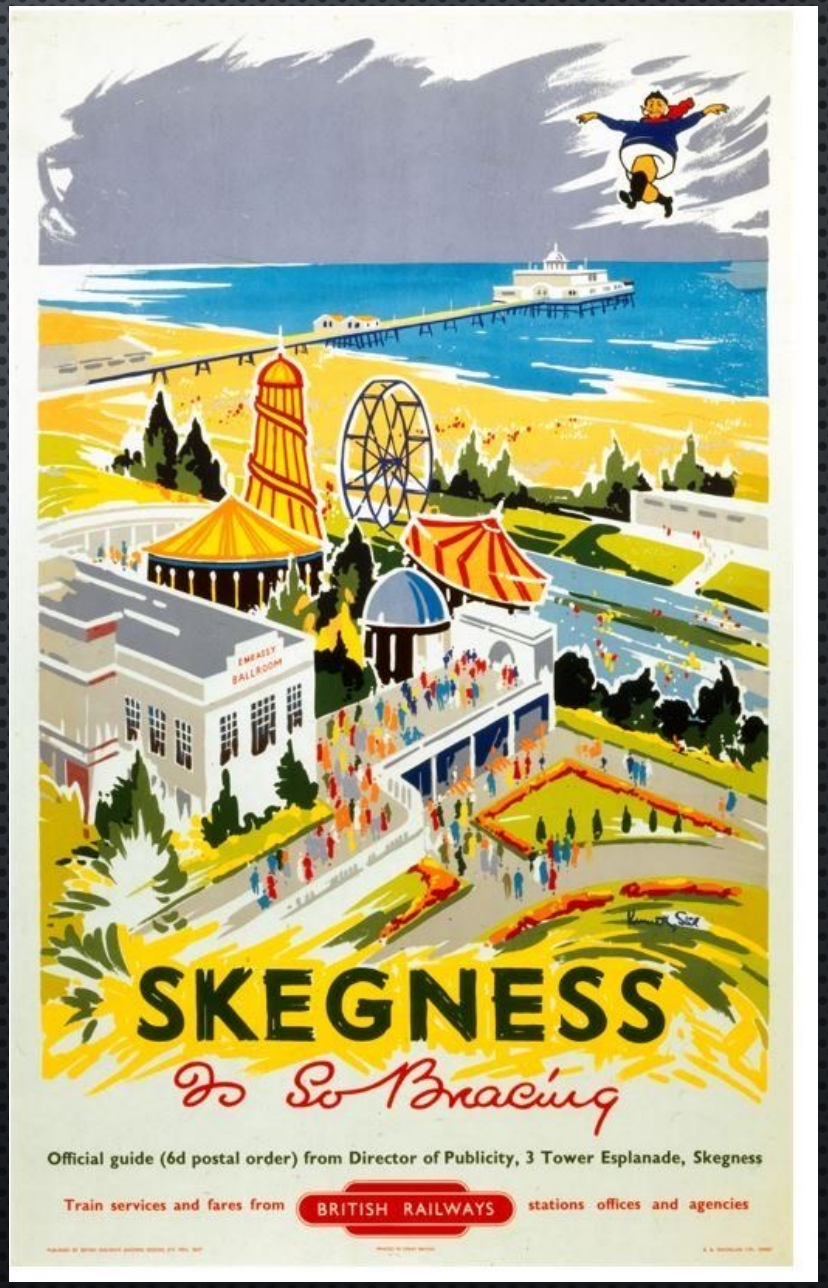


20 Selby, Yorkshire

POSTER OF SKEGNESS FOR BRITISH RAILWAYS IN 1956

This poster features The Jolly Fisherman from a poster created by artist John Hassall in 1908 for the Great Northern Railway (GNR) which is regarded as one of the most famous holiday advertisements of all time.





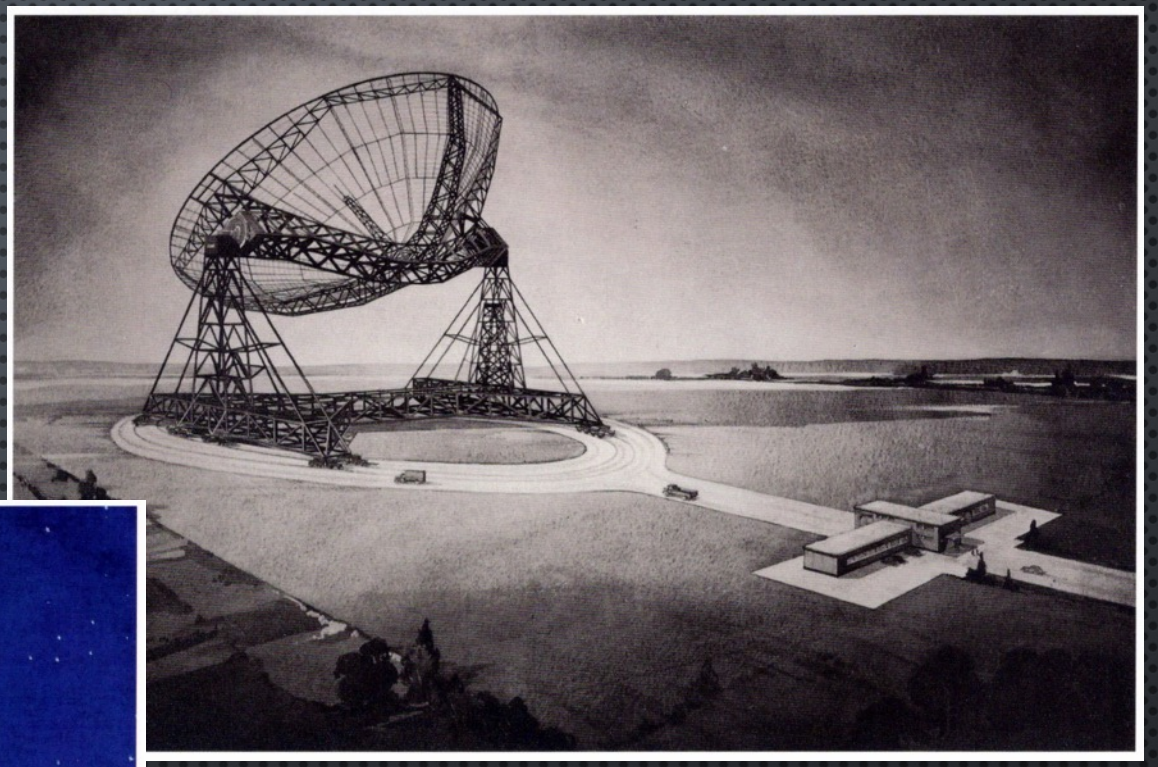
SNAKE PASS
Oil on canvas

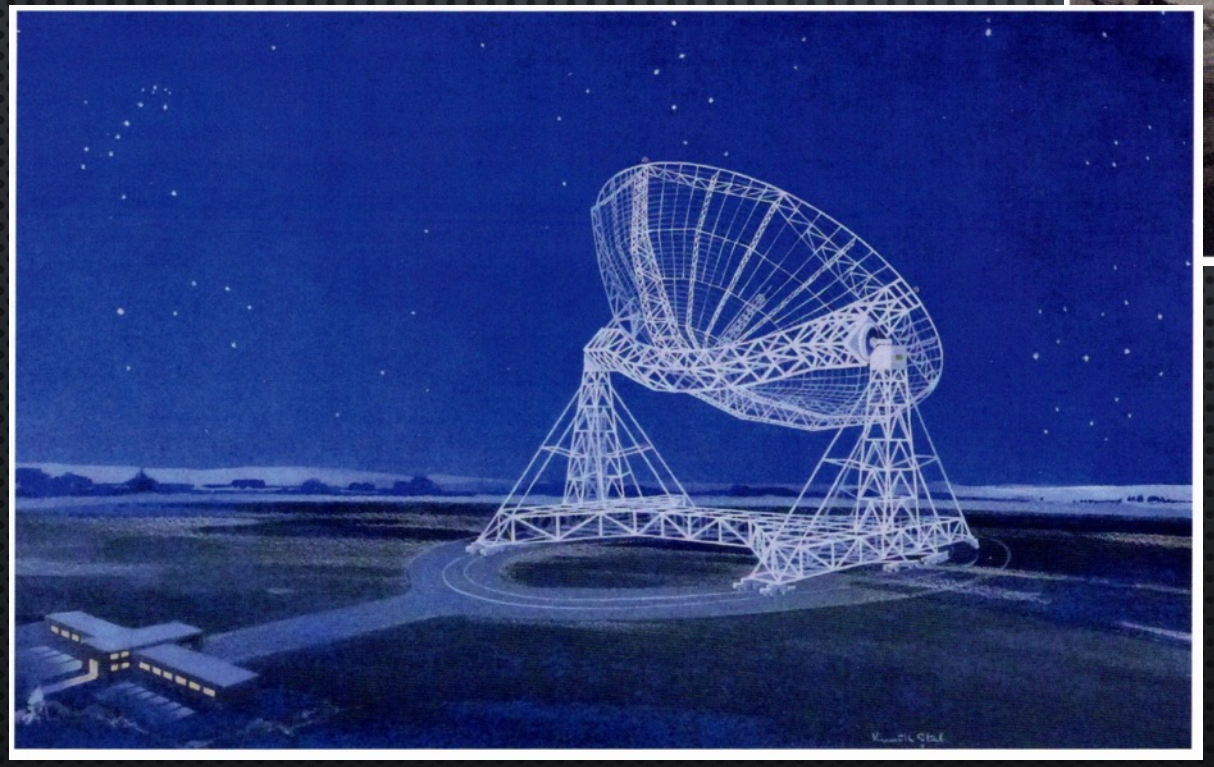
1958



JODRELL BANK

1961-62





ATLANTIS NO. 2
Oil on canvas 1962



REFLECTIONS
(St Mary's
Church, Sheffield)

1963



SHEFFIELD CASTLE oil on canvas 1964

Brightside and Carbrook Co-operative Society commissioned an imaginary view of Sheffield Castle because their headquarters were on the same site.

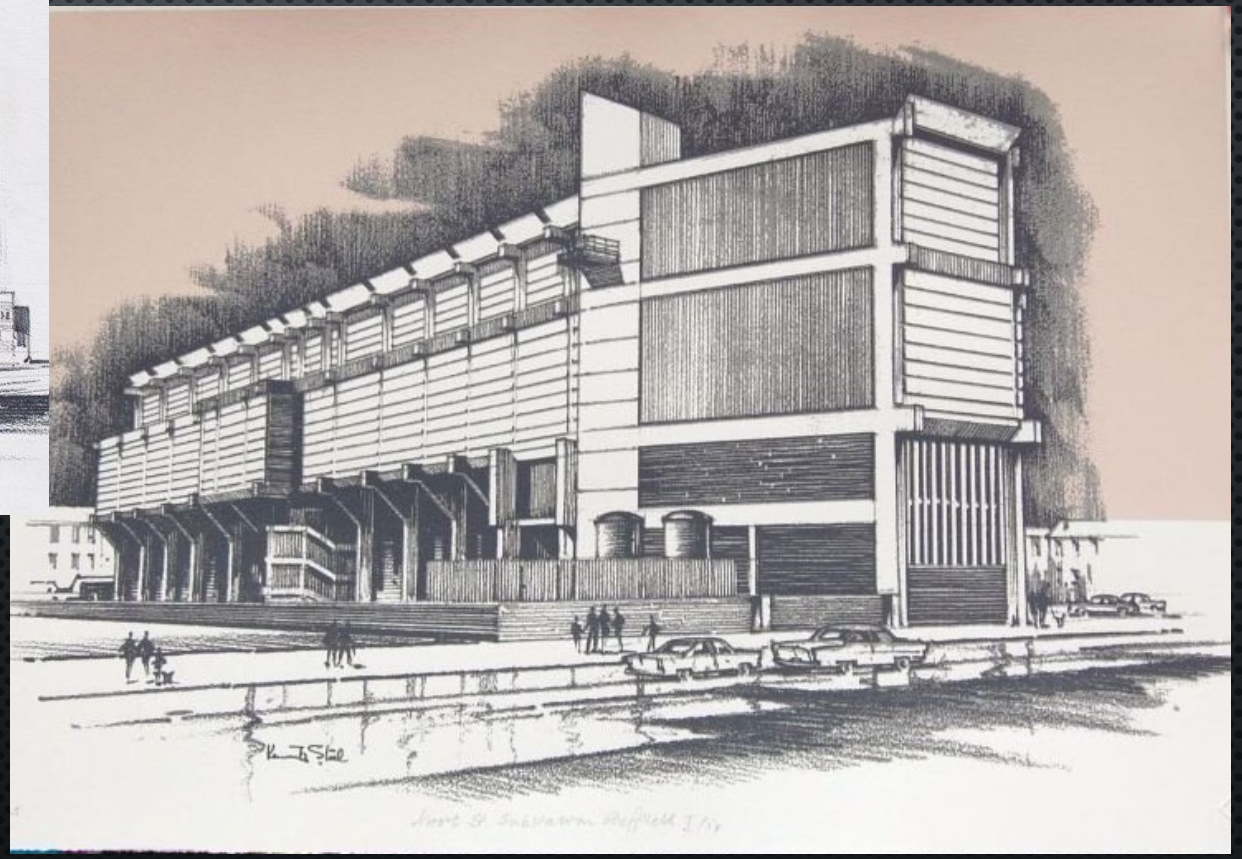


ARCHITECTURE - MOORE STREET ELECTRICITY SUBSTATION

1965-66







ST PAUL'S FROM LUDGATE HILL

pencil and watercolour

1938



ROBIN HOOD'S BAY

pencil and watercolour

1934

