

The RIBA Collections

Free and open
to everyone

RIBA 
Architecture.com

Visit the RIBA Collections

There are two main locations to discover our collections. You'll find world class research materials, knowledgeable staff and quiet, welcoming study spaces.

66 PORTLAND PLACE, LONDON W1B 1AD

Discover books, periodicals and photographs through the RIBA Library Reading Room, plus temporary exhibitions in our Architecture Gallery that regularly feature material from the collections.

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON SW7 2RL

Explore drawings, archives, models, objects and artefacts from our collections in the RIBA Architecture Study Rooms and visit the V&A + RIBA Architecture Partnership galleries.

Due to the size of our collections, some items are stored offsite. Depending on the volume and condition of the material required, it may be possible to arrange access to our offsite store by prior appointment.

Find out more:
architecture.com/collections



Image: Library reading room at 66 Portland Place. Philip Vile

We care for one of the largest and most diverse architectural collections in the world

From 15th century books and drawings to photographs documenting architecture around the world today, our collections offer global scope and rich historical detail. Together they represent the national collection for architecture in the UK, a Designated Outstanding Collection and a museum fully accredited by Arts Council England.

The collection brings together over four million objects in a broad range of media through a shared narrative that describes how buildings, communities and civilisations are designed and constructed.

THE RIBA COLLECTIONS ARE FREE TO ACCESS AND OPEN TO ALL

Use our collections to:

- Learn about specific architects or styles
- Research individual buildings or projects
- Uncover the development of towns and cities
- Discover built and unbuilt schemes from around the world
- Understand the history of the architectural profession

LIBRARY CATALOGUE

Search and locate catalogued material across the collections through our online catalogue.

architecture.com/collections

RIBAPIX

Search and download 100,000+ images from the collections on our online image database.

architecture.com/image-library

Our collections offer a unique snapshot of the architectural profession at any given moment. We are acquiring new material all the time, with most new archive material continuing to come from architects and their families. As well as using the collection for inspiration and instruction in their designs, architects look to us for the history and legacy of their own practices.



Why collect architecture?

When the Institute of British Architects was formed in 1834, the creation of a collection was one of its driving aims. The founders called for a “Library of Works of every kind connected with architecture” and a “Museum of Antiquities, Models, Casts, Specimens of the various Materials used in building”. The collections were to provide:

- An educational tool for students training to be architects
- A source of inspiration for architects already in the profession
- A record of British architectural practice

Since then, the collections have grown into one of the most significant of their kind in the world. Many RIBA Members have donated their own work, practice archives and private collections. Over the years students, historians, writers, artists and practising architects have used the collections to understand the past and plan for the future. They have been written about by world-leading scholars and exhibited around the world.



Image: Hanslip Fletcher, the RIBA Library in its previous home at 9 Conduit Street, 1934. *RIBA Collections*

**1 million
architectural
drawings**

**1.6 million
photographs**

**150,000 books
and 15,000
journal volumes**

**1,000 objects
and artefacts**

**400
architectural
models**

**500 coins
and medals**

**5,000 rare
books**

**1.5 million
manuscripts
and archive
documents**

Books and Periodicals

Our collection of around 150,000 books covers almost every aspect of architecture and architectural history. This library is always growing, with over 100 new books added every month.

We also hold around 2,200 periodical titles, from the earliest architecture-related journals to the latest architectural and design publications worldwide. The Books and Periodicals Collection includes:

- Reference books on all aspects of architecture, from drawing techniques and urban planning to furniture design and conservation
- A constantly expanding collection of all the major architectural journals from around the world
- Rare volumes such as the Modern Movement Collection, around 600 books documenting developments in architecture in the 1920s and 1930s
- Around 2,000 pamphlets dating back to the early 19th century, reflecting the ephemeral aspects of architectural publishing

- Exhibition catalogues documenting the work of specific architects, practices or architectural themes
- Audio and visual material documenting lectures and other events, along with documentaries and other television programmes
- Publications produced by or relating to RIBA
- Print and digital versions of the all-new 21st edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture*

Since the 1930s we have been compiling the world-leading **Architectural Periodicals Index (API)**. With over **550,000 index records (and growing)** the API forms a major part of the RIBA catalogue, allowing access to a wealth of periodical literature, both historical and current.

RARE BOOKS

Our collections feature one of the world's finest groupings of early architectural publications. Containing almost 5,000 volumes published between 1478 and 1840, they include many early and rare editions, often richly illustrated, of seminal works on architecture published in Britain, Europe, and the US. Alongside early editions of texts by renowned architectural theorists are manuals and pattern books, large volumes on archaeology, and detailed building studies. Key texts include:

- A 1486 edition of Vitruvius' *De Architectura*. In 1839 the Institute resolved to acquire a copy of every edition of this important text
- Serlio's *First (-Fifth) Book of Architecture*, which pioneered the use of high-quality illustrations to accompany architectural theory
- Alberti's 1485 *De re aedificatoria*, the first printed architecture book
- John Shute's *First and Chief Groundes of Architecture*, published in 1563 and considered the first English architecture book



The collection includes over 20 different early imprints of Palladio's famous *Four Books of Architecture* dating from 1570 to 1742, including the 18th century "architect earl" Lord Burlington's first edition.

Drawings

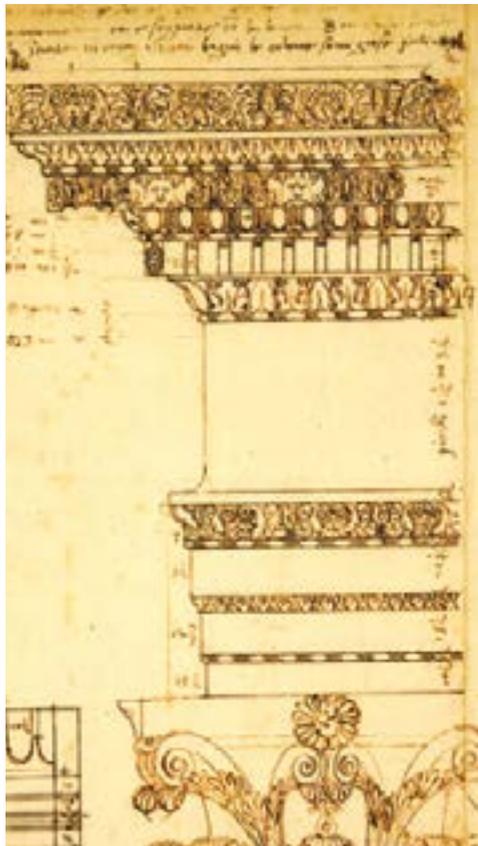
The RIBA Drawings Collection is one of the most important of its kind in the world, with over one million architectural drawings from preliminary sketches to presentation and technical drawings.

The collection is particularly strong on British architects since the Renaissance, with most significant architects represented in some form. It also includes topographical drawings by architects and artists of buildings across the world, from prehistoric structures to Postmodern offices.



Left image: Sir Charles Barry, design for clock face, Palace of Westminster, London. 1840s. *RIBA Collections*

The collection includes almost 400 drawings by Andrea Palladio, by far the world's largest grouping of surviving Renaissance autograph drawings.



Right image: Andrea Palladio, details of Corinthian and composite capitals, Baths of Caracalla, Rome. 1540. *RIBA Collections*

There are over 100 major groupings within the Drawings Collection covering specific architects, practices, and architectural dynasties including:

- Renaissance pioneers like Andrea Palladio and Vincenzo Scamozzi
- The 18th century “architect Earl” Lord Burlington
- Influential 19th century figures such as Sir Charles Barry, Alfred Waterhouse and CFA Voysey
- Important 20th century architects including Sir Edwin Lutyens, Ernő Goldfinger, Sir Leslie Martin, Sir Denys Lasdun and Sir Colin St John Wilson
- Important architectural practices such as Tecton, Seifert & Partners and Ahrends Burton Koralek
- Some of the most prolific families in architecture including the Wyatt and Scott families

The collection also includes drawings relating to specific buildings or competitions including the Palace of Westminster, Liverpool and Coventry Cathedrals and the National Gallery extension, as well as a number of portraits of architects, architectural writers and other key figures.



The collection includes drawings and models for the unbuilt Ahrends Burton & Koralek high-tech proposal for the National Gallery extension that was denounced by the Prince of Wales.

Image: Ahrends Burton & Koralek, unexecuted final revised design for the National Gallery extension, London. 1983. *RIBA Collections*

Photographs

We have been collecting photographs since the 1850s, with a specialist department established for photographs in 1981 by the first formally appointed photographs curator, Robert Elwall. Now numbering over 1.6 million images, our collection is among the largest repositories of architectural photographs in the world and includes examples of almost every photographic medium.

The collection covers everything from interior design to large-scale urban developments. Highlights include:

- Rare examples of 19th century photography documenting architecture
- The photographic archives of influential architects such as Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew, Powell & Moya, Ernő Goldfinger and Denys Lasdun

- The photographic archives of prominent architectural photographers including Eric de Maré, Martin Charles, Henk Snoek, John Donat, John Maltby and Edwin Smith
- An outstanding selection of large exhibition prints of inter-war architecture from across the world
- Portraits of eminent architects like Norman Foster and Frank Lloyd Wright by photographers such as Monica Pidgeon and Anne Katrin-Purkiss

Photographs can offer an important record of the evolution of construction techniques.



Image: Edouard Baldus, photograph of the north wing of the New Louvre under construction, Paris, c.1854. *RIBA Collections*



The largest grouping in the collection is the Architectural Press Archive, around 600,000 images illustrating the changing face of the built environment in Britain between 1930 and 1982.

Image: R. H. de Burgh Galwey, photograph of architects Gordon and Ursula Bowyer at the Festival of Britain, London, 1951. *Architectural Press Archive / RIBA Collections*

Objects and Artefacts

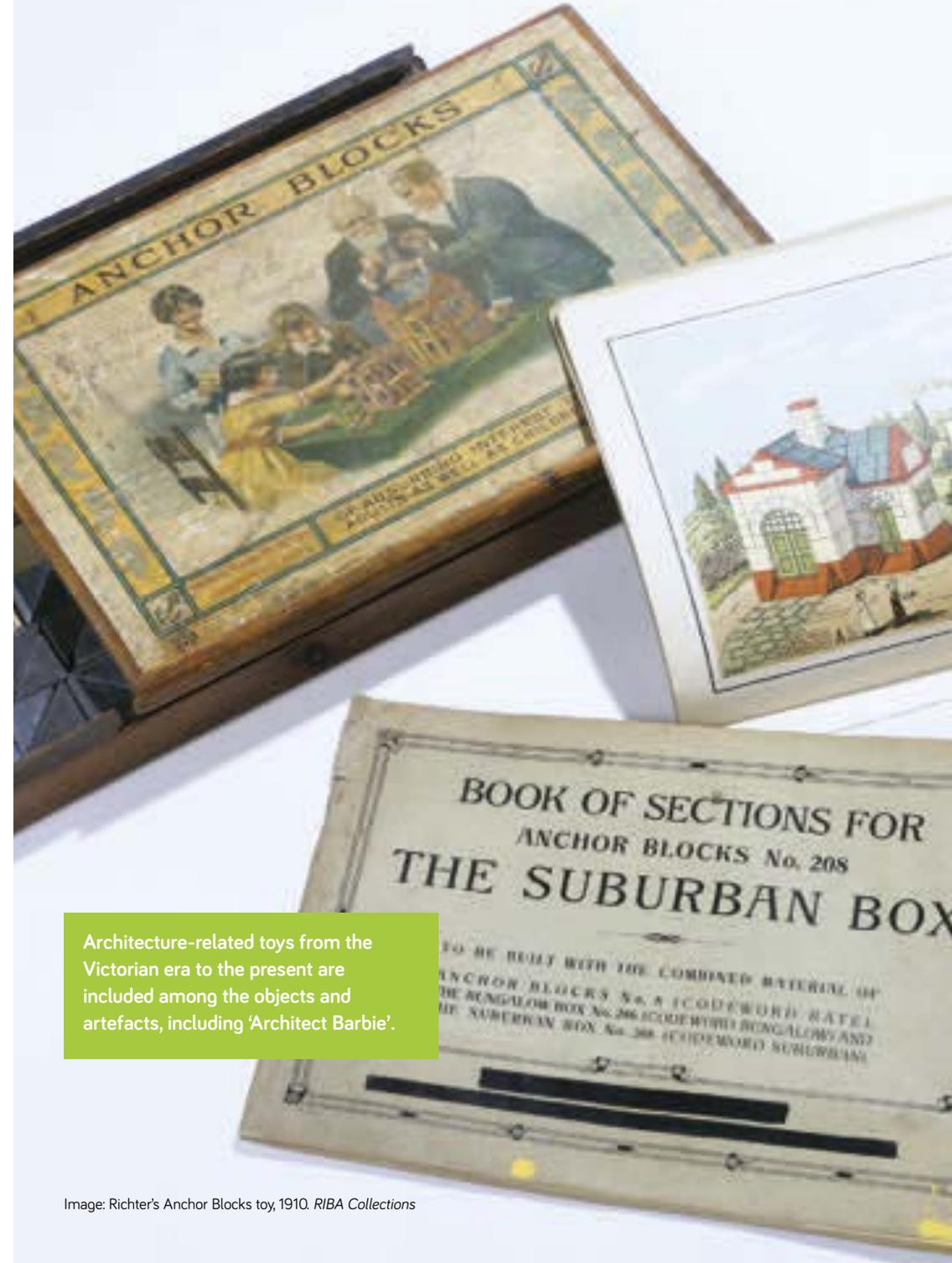
The objects and artefacts in our collection present a unique perspective on the evolution of the architectural profession. Drawing tables, stools, plan chests and measuring instruments offer insight into the changing environment of the architect's office. Smaller items include coins, architectural toys, and the RIBA silver collection. We have also collected architectural medals since our foundation in 1834. Key items include:

- A fragment of Sir Christopher Wren's coffin
- Approximately 900 drawing instruments from the 17th century onwards
- Personal items belonging to CFA Voysey, including his signet ring, despatch case, letter-opener and umbrella
- A miniature timber desk designed by Ernő Goldfinger, part of a mock-up for the children's section of the British Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition
- Denys Lasdun's 1980s mechanical drawing pencil



Top image: Travelling set of drawing instruments owned by the architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard (1723-1777).
RIBA Collections

Bottom image: Ernő Goldfinger, miniature games chest made as a mock-up for furniture featured in the children's section of the British Pavilion at the Paris Exposition, 1937.
RIBA Collections



Architecture-related toys from the Victorian era to the present are included among the objects and artefacts, including 'Architect Barbie'.

Image: Richter's Anchor Blocks toy, 1910. *RIBA Collections*

Architectural Models



Our collections feature almost 400 models covering five centuries of architectural history. Most were used in the development of specific buildings or projects, from James Gibbs' design model for St Mary-le-Strand to a wooden model showing the geometry of the Sydney Opera House 'shells'. Many of the models form part of wider practice archives. These include significant collections from important 20th century architects Ernő Goldfinger, Denys Lasdun and Sir Leslie Martin.

We also hold models from the architecture practices of Herbert Baker, Ahrends Burton & Koralek, Alsop & Lyall, Charles Correa, Patrick Hodgkinson, Tecton, I.M. Pei, and Alison and Peter Smithson.

We also hold a number of models from official architecture departments, including:

- Models of post-war school buildings from the Architects and Buildings branch of the former Department of Education and Science
- Development models from the Lambeth Architecture and Town Planning Department
- Design models for the London 2012 Olympics site, made by the Olympic Delivery Authority

The oldest model in the collection is Nicholas Hawksmoor's model for Easton Neston from 1694. The roof lifts off and each floor can then be removed in turn.



Archives and Manuscripts

Our collections include a wealth of manuscripts and archival material, particularly on the work of British architects from the 16th century to the present day. The collection features personal and practice archives, journals, notebooks, administrative and job files, pamphlets, press cuttings and unpublished texts from individuals, practices and societies. Among these are:

- The RIBA Institutional Archive, documenting the history of the RIBA and charting the evolution of the architecture profession more broadly
- Sir Christopher Wren's 'Parentalia', family memoirs compiled by him and published by his son
- Archives of important architects like Decimus Burton, CFA Voysey and Sir George Gilbert Scott
- Collections from important 20th century architects including Sir Edwin Lutyens, Ernő Goldfinger, Jane Drew and Sir Denys Lasdun

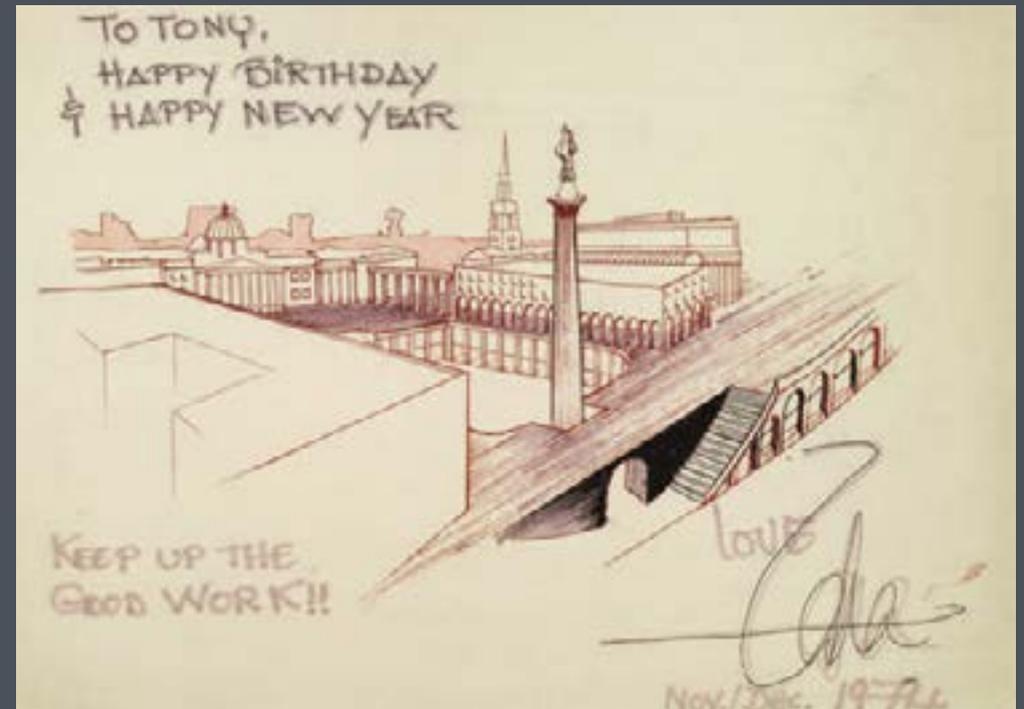
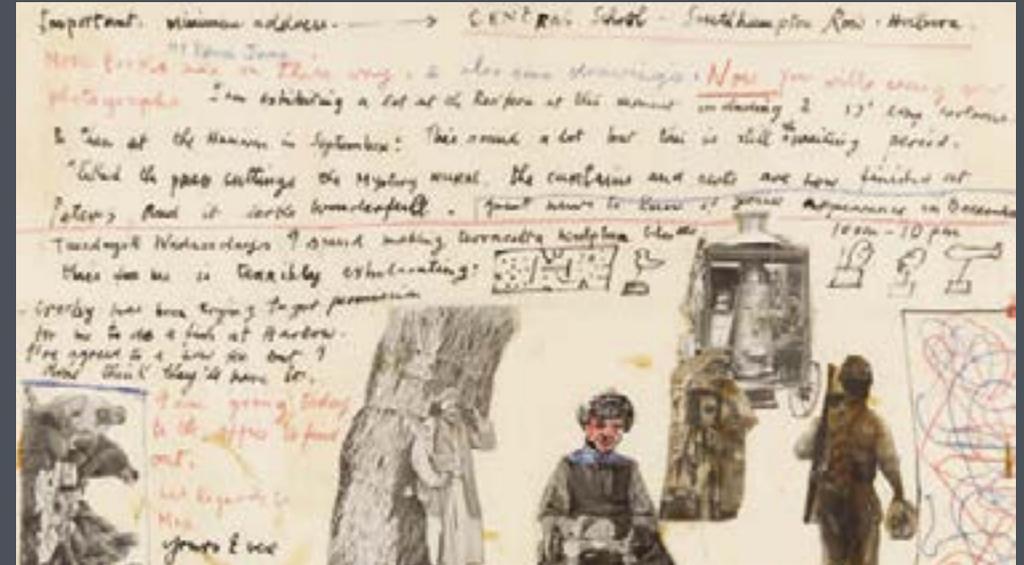
- Institutional papers of the Architectural Society, the Architecture Club, Circle Group and MARS Group
- Papers from architectural writers such as Sir John Summerson and Sir Nikolaus Pevsner
- Biographical files on architects and practices (available via the RIBA Library Reading Room at 66 Portland Place)



Above image: Sir Edwin Lutyens, sketches of the Viceroy's House, New Delhi, in a letter to Lady Emily Lutyens, 1913. *RIBA Collections*

Opposite page top image: Eduardo Paolozzi, letter with collage to Jane Drew, 1950s. *RIBA Collections*

Opposite page bottom image: Zaha Hadid, student design for an imagined re-planning of Trafalgar Square, given as a birthday card to a fellow Architectural Association student, 1974. *RIBA Collections*



Our cultural outreach programme

As well as an important research resource, the RIBA Collections are central to our programming and learning activities. We regularly feature collections material in free exhibitions at Portland Place, the V&A + RIBA Architecture Gallery and RIBA regional sites.

Our collections are loaned to museums and galleries around the world, and we work closely with schools, universities and practices to promote understanding and enjoyment of architecture through a nationwide learning programme. A new Clore Learning Centre at Portland Place has enabled us to reach even more people with the collections.

Keep up to date with our latest events, exhibitions and learning activities. Subscribe at architecture.com/newsletter



Image: Clore Learning Studio at 66 Portland Place. Rachel Manns

Caring for the collections

As a registered charity, we rely on financial support to grow our unrivalled collections and make them available as a source of knowledge and inspiration. Our expert teams conserve, catalogue, digitise, study and curate our collections to bring them to life and protect them for future generations to enjoy.

Find out how to support our work at architecture.com/support



Image: Architects Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew and Le Corbusier, 1950s. RIBA Collections

The RIBA Collections, comprising over four million items, are free and open to everyone



RIBA LIBRARY READING ROOM

66 Portland Place,
London W1B 1AD

Monday	11am to 5pm
Tuesday	12pm to 7pm
Wednesday	11am to 5pm
Thursday	11am to 5pm
Friday	11am to 5pm

RIBA ARCHITECTURE STUDY ROOMS

Victoria & Albert Museum,
Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL

Wednesday and Thursday, by
appointment.

Please contact us to book:
drawingsandarchives@riba.org

CONTACT

support@riba.org

Please check online for summer stocktaking, Bank Holiday weekend and seasonal closures.

architecture.com/collections

Left hand image: RIBA Library Reading Room. *RIBA*

Right hand image: RIBA Architecture Study Rooms.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Cover image: Joseph Bonomi, section of St Paul's Cathedral, London,
shown within a section of St Peter's Basilica, Rome, 1798. *RIBA Collections*

RIBA is a registered charity (210 566)

RIBA 
Architecture.com