

Topic Page: [Foster, Norman \(1935 - \)](#)

Summary Article: **Foster, Norman Robert Baron Foster of Thames Bank**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1935–, British architect, b. Manchester, grad. Manchester Univ. school of architecture (1961), Yale school of architecture (M.A., 1962). Foster and three other architects formed the influential Team 4, working from 1963 to 1967, when he established his own firm. Noted for the elegant and graceful modernism of his many commissions, he also pays sharp attention to detailing. Foster finds expressive power in a wide variety of cutting-edge technologies, fitting each building to its site, street, or landscape and often taking into account various ecological factors. He first won acclaim for his 1964 “Cockpit,” a minimalist glass bubble partially dug into the earth in Cornwall. Highlights of his early architectural output include the world's first inflatable office building (1970), the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, England (1977), and the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, Hong Kong (1985), an innovative skyscraper filled with natural light and lifted on columns above a public plaza.

Among the prolific Foster's later works are the Stansted Airport, London, with its lightweight “floating roof” (1991); Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France (1993); the Joslyn Art Museum annex, Omaha, Nebr. (1994); the 60-story triangular Commerzbank, Frankfurt, Germany (1997), the world's first ecological high-rise with a building-height atrium core and nine tall sky gardens; the vast skylight-roofed Lap Kok Airport, Hong Kong (1998); and the renovation of Berlin's Reichstag (1999), with its glass dome and suspended interior spiral ramp. Foster has reshaped London's 21st-century skyline with such projects as the new city hall (2001), an inventive leaning sphere of glass and tubular steel also fitted with a curling interior ramp, and the Swiss Re tower (2004), a 40-story elongated oval nicknamed the Gherkin, sheathed in spirals of glass and featuring interior gardens on each level. Among his other 21st-century works are the Millau Viaduct (2004) over the River Tarn in France's Massif Central and the Hearst Tower, New York City (2006), a shimmering skyscraper sheathed in glass and diamond-gridded stainless steel built atop the company's original 1928 stone structure. Foster was knighted in 1990, and honored with a life peerage and awarded the Pritzker Prize in 1999.

See Blaser, W. , ed., *Norman Foster Sketch Book* (1993);

Jenkins, D. , *On Foster—Foster On* (2000);

studies by D. Sudjic (1986), D. Treiber (1995), P. Jodidio (1997), M. Quantrill (1998), and M. Pawley (1999).

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