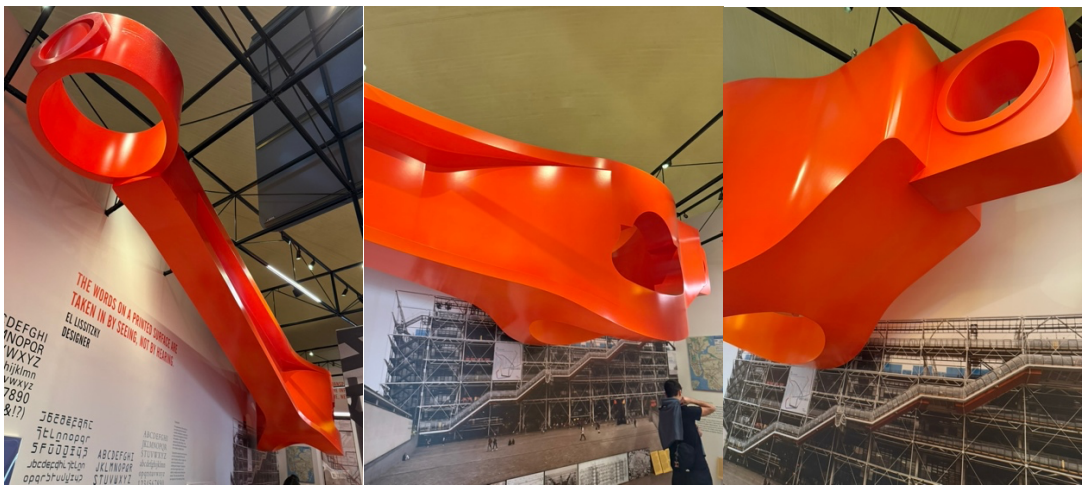
THE GERBERETTE

My Object at the Design Museum

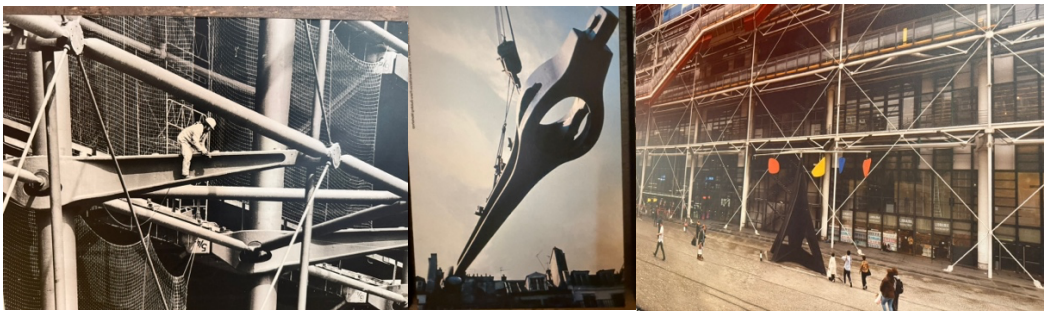
Richard Croes Benavides | University of West London | 12 November 2026

The object I have chosen is a very iconic architectural piece of an iconic building in an iconic architectural city. The Gerberettes, designed by engineer Peter Rice, are very distinctive beams in the Pompidou Centre, Paris, France. Completed in 1977, it was commissioned by architects Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers and Gianfranco Franchini (Renzo Piano Building Workshop, n.d.). This approach expressed a new way to see museums: it made them more modern, honest and welcoming to people. I find that by exposing its inner structure, it beckons, not just as metaphor, but as an active psychological invitation to explore what is exposed within its space.



Gerberette, Design Museum (Photo: Richard Croes Benavides, 2026)

Displayed in bright orange at the entrance of the Designer Maker User exhibition at the Design Museum, an impressive, 8-metre-long piece hanging from the ceiling caught my attention (Fondazione Renzo Piano, n.d.). Although presented in orange here, this structure is white in the real building (Fondazione Renzo Piano, n.d.), and as we can observe in the images, it stands out from the rest of the structure to highlight the building's irreverent personality. Made of cast steel, each Gerberette was cast at a foundry in Germany around 1975, then lifted by crane and bolted into place on site.



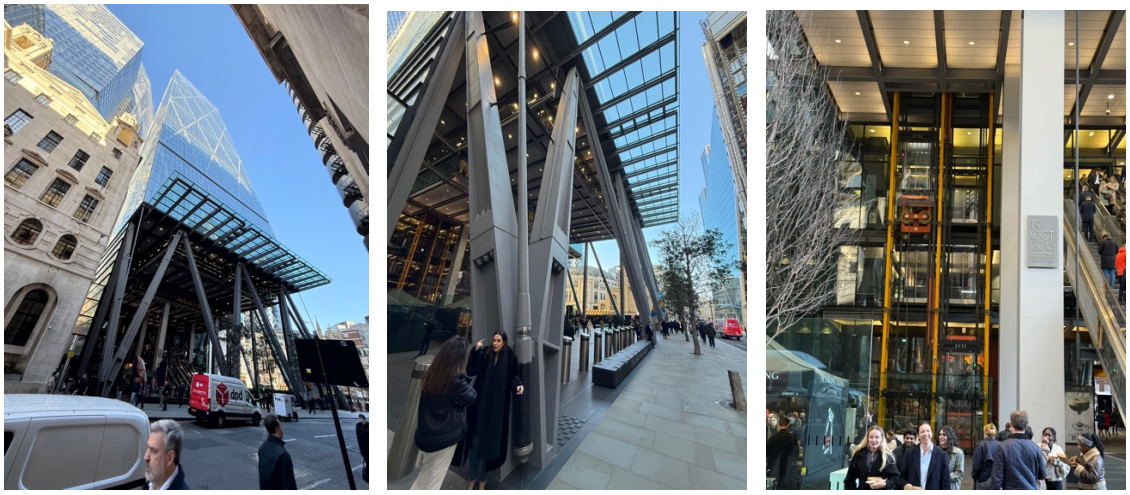
Gerberette assembly, from the information panel at the Design Museum (Photos: Richard Croes Benavides, 2026)

An interesting fact is that with the construction of the Pompidou in Paris, we can start to find a pattern in Richard Rogers' style. This Gerberette evidences his new approach of making noticeable in the design things like pipes, air conditioning ducts and, in this case, structural parts of the building, that were usually hidden, and exposing them for the public to interact with, making them an important part of its own character. This became part of his signature style, and we can see it evolve in buildings like the Lloyd's building. This structure opened a new way of architecture (inside-out buildings, that later led to High-Tech style), leaving an important footprint in architecture history, and it still inspires new constructions all over the world (Hopkins, 2019).



Lloyd's Building (Photo: Richard Croes Benavides, 2026)

This brings an interesting point, considering our class conversation about originality and authenticity — a more personal reflection: is it possible that this iconic London building is less original than its predecessor in Paris, being the consequence of the stylistic development of a more innovative Pompidou? In my view, this is certainly the case, but at the same time it consolidates Rogers' authenticity by transforming it into a personal style of his own. **Probably the loss of originality over time, once achieved in the past, can only mean the establishment of an authentic style that works as a signature of the artist.**



The 2014 Leadenhall Building, known as "The Cheesegrater" for its tapering shape, continues the high-tech lineage started by Richard Rogers at the Pompidou Centre (Design Curial, n.d.) (Photo: Richard Croes Benavides, 2026)

The fact that high-tech movement buildings are still being designed half a century later shows how important this new way of design still is, not just in an architectural way, but also in how people interact with these frank spaces, more welcoming to everyone.

REFERENCES

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