For all the impracticalities of some of his wilder plans, Will Alsop’s chief legacy is that buildings can act as umbrellas. At ground level, buildings get in the way of the sun and the street, but at the top, they provide shelter and views. “You can see out, and you’re protected from the rain,” he said.

One of his loofah-shaped towers, called Trier, rose from the ground on the riverbank at the foot of the Siegfried Gate. It was a monument to his idea of a “SuperCity of the 21st century”, a进行式 of buildings that were joined together by walkways and green spaces. Trier was a place where people could live, work and play, all in the same building.

For all his apparent whimsy, Alsop was an enthusiastic advocate for preservation, saying that “we always have to remember the past, because it gives us the present.” He believed that new buildings should be designed to fit in with the existing architecture, and that they should be inspired by the history of the place.

“He was always saying that architecture should be a reflection of its time,” said his friend and colleague, the architect Peter Zumthor. “He was a great believer in the idea that you can’t just create something out of nowhere; you have to start from something and build on it.”

Alsop’s influence was felt all over the world, from the vibrant indigo tiled columns of North Greenwich tube station, with its oblong Dalmatian with colourful crayons for legs, to the speckled box office of the Ontario College of Art and Design, which also hovers over the college’s existing brick building like an orange beret magic wand.

“Will Alsop is a rare genius,” said the architect David Adjaye. “He was a true original, with a unique voice and a wonderful sense of humour. He will be missed.”

The facade of the Will Alsop Foundation in London’s Battersea was designed by the architect as a “bridge between the past and the future”. It was a place where people could come to learn about architecture and to create new projects, because they never turn out as you would hope. I just want to be sure that we’re doing things for the right reasons.

“I’ve realised that we need to be more careful about what we’re doing, and that we need to be more concerned about the impact of our projects on the environment,” said Alsop. “We need to think about what we’re doing, and how it affects the people who live there.”

For his last projects, Alsop chose to work on a “super-city” in Toronto, which was intended to be a place where people could live, work and play. It was a place where new buildings could be added to existing ones, and where old buildings could be adapted to suit the needs of modern life. “This is what we’re all about,” said Alsop. “We’re about creating places where people can be happy.”

But for all his apparent fun, Alsop was a serious architect, and he believed that architecture should be a reflection of the times. “I always think that if people are having a good time, then the project will be successful,” he said. “We need to make sure that our buildings are designed for the future, and that they are sustainable.”

Alsop was a man of contradictions, and he was proud of it. He said that he was a “fun” architect, and that he was “not a trivial thing.” He was a man who loved to challenge the status quo, and who was always looking for new ideas. “We want them to be able to have blue sky all the time, despite the smog,” he said. “We need to find ways to make sure that people can have a good time, and that they can do what they want.”