Will Alsop obituary

Will Alsop died on 25 April at the age of 68. He will be remembered for his gaudy and bombastic architecture and as a controversial figure in the world of design.

Alsop was born in 1949 in Bradford to working-class parents. He became interested in architecture after watching A Clockwork Orange, Stanley Kubrick’s film whose director he greatly admired. He left school at 16 to work as a draughtsman for a software company. He then attended Hull College of Art in 1967 and Northampton Art College, where he was a student of Jane Drew.

In 1973, Alsop graduated from the Architectural Association in London, which at the time was a hotbed of radical thought. He was a pupil of César Pelli, the American architect known for his skyscrapers, and among his contemporaries were Norman Foster and Richard Rogers. He was also a colleague of Rem Koolhaas, with whom he worked for four years, an experience he described as a “cultural rite of passage”.

In 1977, Alsop moved to New York, where he became friends with the venture capitalist and founder of Sotheby’s, Brian Luscomb, who showed him round his art They were to work together to sell Alsop’s business and buy in to a US venture capitalist firm, and he was dropped from a £350m plan for Birmingham New Street station. Three years later he was forced to confess he had been paid £20,000 through an offshore account in Malta for his work on clients being too timid. “Of all the countries in the world, the UK is the most risk-averse group of people there is,” he said. “In London we are not being hired on clients being too timid.”