

IDEA LYC

**Realms of the Mundane:
Viewpoint of an architectural practice**

建築實踐觀

Cuadernos de Estudio



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Process

Beginning and Ending

As one project ends and another begins, this month Studio Idealyc has reflected on the completion of a new circle and a new stage in the practice's development. Part of any growing process requires a loss to upset the balance which once reinstated can be made stronger. This is the essence of many team based sports in a competitive league. The new challenges that we face every month serve to reinforce the shared effort of our practice.

The process of working always requires a starting point, without context or history the lack of information from which to derive solutions renders the act of embarking on a journey, either physical or intellectual, impossible. The great upheavals of the past brought about by modernism clearly demonstrate this virtue as while the forward thinking philosophies and design intentions of the modern masters were declared independent of historical precedent by observers, the artists and thinkers of the age looked to the past to discuss the present. While the paintings of Picasso shocked onlookers with their violent rejection of earlier Western convention, the forms were derived from Picasso's interest in African sculpture. In the past, a pair of eyes were depicted merely as figurative object, Picasso's genius was to look beyond the physical and present the viewer with the emotion behind the human mask. Architecture consists of elements within and without and in the same way Picasso and his contemporaries drew out emotions from the figure, the Modernists called upon the internal services and structure of a building to replace the ornamental facade. The viewer of a painting and the user of a building become interlinked and their roles blurred while their relationship to the creator is a challenge of knowledge and understanding.

In mythology the ending typically takes on the framework of either of two scenarios, the fading of grandeur into an empty void or an explosive end brought about by raging anthropomorphic elements. This primal juxtaposition is expressed in T.S Eliot's apocalyptic poem, "The Hollow Men" as the final few lines read "This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a whimper". Finishing can be just as difficult as beginning and the final conclusion of a scheme is not easily reached nor decided on hastily, often an end can lead to a new beginning or resurrection of a previously unresolved design. Perhaps the main difference between art and architecture is that when a piece is left on the easel it can be seen as completed without the intervention of the artist, however a building at an incomplete stage will be quite easily recognisable and vulnerable to damage if the designer has departed.

The circle of our practice continues and we welcome a new member to our team who has joined us in London from Seville.

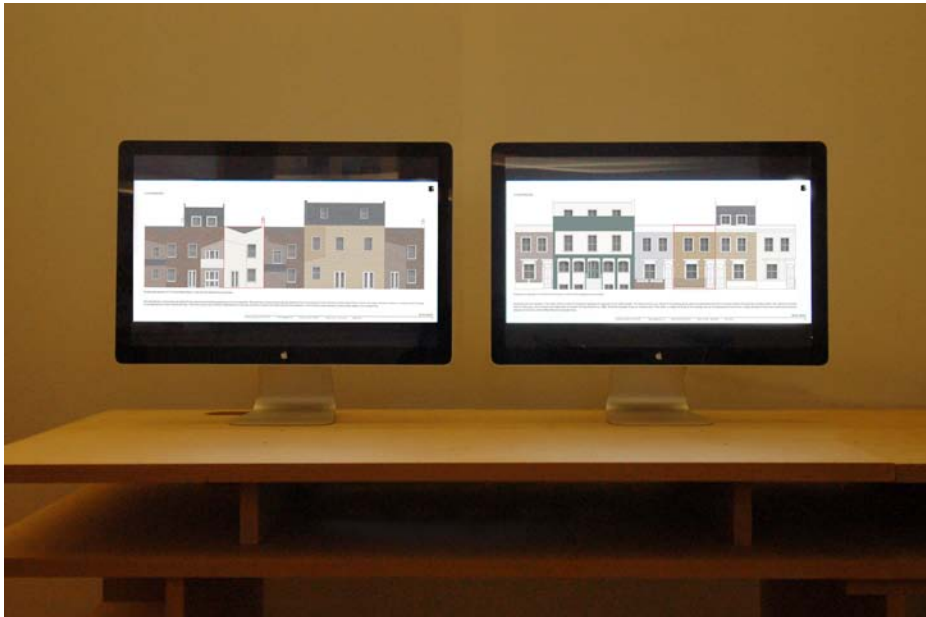
Studio Idealyc are:

Francisco Checa Romero, Gayle Chan, Francisco J. Cosmen Diaz, João Godinho,
Matthew Northover, Nerea Bermejo, Lewis Jon Marriott

- The team at Studio Idealyc

02.04.2012

Sameness



When we are working in the studio it is often that we have to develop our tasks not with an individual approach but through a combined method of sharing our views, which is essentially the basis of working as team. During this process we follow the principles of discussing, compiling multiple solutions to a singular problem, in turn offering a wider scope of alternatives. This system of going forward and backwards while constantly progressing starts to move in circular motions, from which we all try to learn from even knowing that ultimately there is only one route that we can take.

Considering repetition, we think of rhythm and the immense possibilities that it can result. Its sameness is a canvas of opportunity, not a blank one, but one filled with movement and of moment, and in architectural process lends itself to being easily contorted to the needs of the architect offering a powerful but whimsical form. Repetition remains strong in its position, how it is viewed and what this view provokes. It

is this normality, its recognisable face of pride, which makes repetition, we believe, comforting to the soul, nourishing ones desire to feel what they see.

The style of harmony is established through the balance of symmetry, this is especially evident in the terrace houses of some historic parts of East London and specifically in our current scheme at Vivian Road, which lies in the heart of Driffield Conservation Area near Victoria Park. Our approach to the design of the rear mansard seeks to repair the symmetry of the rear elevation where its appearance is visible. Our design is based on the paired element of the rear wing in which a line of symmetry would be projected, mirroring the two properties in both material and geometric character. At present this symmetry is broken by the mansard roof while the rear wings were initially paired. By the implementation of a mansard at the rear, this symmetry will be restored, returning the harmony lost due to this previous development.

Street Art or Stain?



Derived from the Italian sgraffio, meaning to scratch, graffiti has been around since the beginnings of mankind, being found at such places the Lascaux caves in France, inhabited by the prehistoric man. Architects themselves have many different views on graffiti; some claim it destroys areas, increasing the fear of crime and defacing buildings, while others see it as an interaction with the urban spaces that they create.

Street art and architecture are shaped, and move, with similar processes, drawing inspiration from socio-economic influence and current and past trends. To think of both as a movement of influence, altering course under political, economical and social changes is to understand not only the pressures that can influence them but also the influence

they can inflict in return.

Being contacted by a known street artist from Japan, we were asked if we would offer up our front door, our immediate calling point when arriving at work, a mediation of space from the urban streets of Shoreditch to our inner sanctum within the SI Concept studio, to said street artist. Being an open and culturally engaging practice we jumped at the chance, and gave the door up immediately for the artist to engage with. Working on Redchurch Street you soon come to realise that street art is part of the urban grain, far from the instigator of irrational fear that it can sometimes be made out to be; and in fact we believe bad architecture, in reality, is a much larger contributor to an increased fear of crime and disorder.

13.04.2012

Idealism

Architecture's moral mission is said to have reached its decline in the mid 1970's, after critiques of modernism hailed it forgotten, refuting its principles labeling it pretentious. The notion that architecture was being designed to solve social problems, as had been earlier, seemed to wither and die, and in its place a self-serving business venture took over.

Here at Studio Idealyc we like to think that this is not the case and often partake in extensive social sessions with artists, fellow architects and members of the community to best conceive a sense of purpose and idealism, and if two heads are better than one then a whole community is a powerful concept, meticulous in its informed decisions. Applying our efforts to any number of projects no matter how large or small they may

be is crucial in establishing ourselves as a strong practice, and reflects much of the process of architecture and its ideals, where good practice concludes that nothing should be overlooked and everything over thought. These thoughts then become the essentials of our practice, our driving force, applying ourselves with equal scrutiny with no prejudice to scale and strong prejudice against complacency.

Each project regardless to size, whether it be commercial or domestic excites us all the same, and with a willingness to accomplish the task in hand comes speed of service, something that we pride ourselves in. The project undertaken on Morpeth Street was a small one, requiring predominantly internal alterations but receiving no less attention than had it been of a greater scale.



New Appointment at “The Seaman’s Mission”



We have recently been appointed for changes to a Grade 2 Listed Building in Commercial Road. The building stands tall, on a cathedral scale, and is an eclectic mix of architectural styles. There are elements of the English perpendicular gothic style whose buildings paid homage to the vertical; In this case the fenestration is thin and drawn out and sits comfortably next to long upright mullions and vertical stone turrets. There are hints of Georgian architecture surrounding the plain windows either side of the turrets, mirroring much of the architecture surrounding it, and in contrast, decorated archways reminiscent of the Art Nouveau movement.

747 Commercial Road, known as The Mission, became a semi-permanent home to sailors who found themselves ashore with nowhere to stay. As noble as the idea started out, it decayed in equal measure, as the masses sought cheap accommodation. Economic and social changes brought about from the

Edwardian period created the essence of the building, aimed at increased social mobility, and such changes were also the demise of its existence, as rising interest to the plight of the poor meant it had to cease functioning as a hostel. Our design will remain respectful of all this information, responding to its dramatic past.

The movement that the facade possesses, brought about through contrast and its unsettling shift on the eye, is reflected also in the functions that have taken place within them. It is these changes of functions that have the ability to render what was once a driven structure to encompass the hollowness of a shell. In the case of the mission though, despite having changed hands numerous times, and despite its embraced mix of influence, there remains continuity throughout. This continuity is one of unexpected amazement and awe and represents everything great and bold architecture has to offer.

Victorian Etiquette



Being approached by a client and ask to help with a project lying within the veil of a conservation area is always an exciting prospect, even more so when it is also a listed building. Conservation areas are parts of our local environment with special architectural or historic qualities. They are created by governing bodies, in consultation with the local community, to preserve and enhance the specific character of these areas. Victoria Park conservation area includes the listed park, the formal axial road pattern to the south west and the Victorian terraces, including those along Old Ford Road, where the most recent project is to be nurtured.

In 1840, Queen Victoria was presented with a petition, signed by 30,000 residents, requesting that a green space be made available for the 'healthful recreation' of the East End. The job was given to Sir James Pennethorne, a protégé of John Nash and architect of Batter-

sea Park, to prepare plans for Victoria Park, which was then laid out in the early 1840's. The character of the area is primarily defined by Victoria Park, which to this day remains a fine example of the English landscape park tradition, set out with informal tree plantings, irregular lakes and sweeping lawns. The formal axial road pattern adopted on the park's western periphery was influenced directly from the more formal terraces fringing the royal parks of West London. Roads in the area are broad and tree-lined, or fringed with landscaped front gardens, all reflecting and contributing to the park setting.

Having given consideration to the above, commencing work on such a special property within such a prestigious area of London will require strenuous deliberation to not only conform to such strict building regulations, but also deliver a design that is worthy of such a place.

Open Plan Living



The notion of open plan living is one coined by the modernist movement of the 20th century which had huge influence from such architects as Mies van der Rohe who stated that “less is more”, and before that Adolf Loos who’s messianic belief was that ornament was crime.

In an escape from the somewhat gloomy, heavy architecture of the previous centuries architects of recent times have adopted open plan living as a standard way of designing their living spaces. Through the progress in building knowledge this has become possible, for example innovative building concepts using composite floors and light steel framing have developed the ability when designing a home, to create far more space without the need

for as many internal beams, joists and walls. Such spaces have their positives and negatives, and where once it was a trend to have large open living spaces, recently it has become expensive to live in such environments, using a lot of power to heat the room. This is where the addition of partition walls, along with the argument of privacy becomes apparently convenient.

For a recent project on Cable Street we have been tasked with changing an open plan living room/dining room of a flat. The open plan living space within the flat is complemented with a double height space complete with mezzanine level which acts as a corridor for the bedrooms on the level above and which also utilises double height windows, bathing both floors in natural light.

19.04.2012

Process of Finishing

Architecture is a process, one of culture, social, economical and numerous other influential factors. It is also a physical process, one, which develops with as much scope as it started out, and one that will never cease to finish.

As we start to deliver the final touches on certain aspects of the design process we begin to realise the final product. As with every step of this process we constantly have to review what it is we want to achieve and the physical realisation of this can be somewhat different to the seed that was planted those many months ago, and may have moved, while remaining nurtured, in a different direction than first intended.

Westbourne Terrace is currently very much a work site, but one that sparkles with that realisation mentioned above. As the summer months are breaking before us and the daylight becomes that much stronger decisions regarding surface finishes are starting to be reassessed and constantly considered.



20.04.2012

The Printworks



Historic architecture, holding in its foundations important memories that maintain links to the past and offer direction on the road ahead is crucial within a growing society for the aid of social and shared memory.

139 Clapham Road is an important feature within The London Borough of Lambeth, lying within the Clapham Road Conservation Area and being part of the larger Offley Works. This collection of warehouse buildings were originally built around 1899 for James Allen Sharwood, an importer and exporter of food products. Later it became a print factory and more recently has been acquired for the use of residential apartments. The building screams Victorian prestige, embellished with a front façade intent on providing a clear position and hierar-

chy, with the fenestration decreasing in scale and dominance towards the top of the building where the small, arched windows are positioned. There is an unusual detachment in the placement of these top windows, sitting out of line with ones found below, but coincidentally eases the modern apartments placed on top into view.

The property is prominently situated on the east side of Clapham Road between the junctions with Durand Garden and Caldwell Street. The premises comprise a series of "loft" style offices within this former Victorian warehouse building. Clearly walking around the building, mediating inside and out, there is a strong sense of identity, steeped in history and influential in its presence, that must be respected.

Bricks and Bonds



Working with older buildings, whose presence has been felt among numerous centuries' demands respect and attention. A full understanding of how they were built, the tools available at the time and how these buildings might have reacted to the surpassing of time remain among numerous factors that must be taken into account.

During the 1700's there were a number of improvements to the brick making industry, brought about from technological advances that featured in their making. Better moulding machines and firing techniques brought about stronger bricks with a higher grade of finish. The property uses clearly the Flemish bond on the front of the property with header then stretcher in repetition. The

change of brick that we mentioned before plays a pivotal role in defining this Victorian front façade, constituting to its strength, which when reviewing its position stretched over three floors, would have required the extra support. The ashlar cut blocks help appearing at ground floor level, along with the rising decrease of the windows scale, help to portray clear proportions evident as the building trend of the period.

This movement, industry and production influencing structure and design, is constantly progressing and flourishing. Our project at College Cross will take all this into account, responding with a submissive design that will respect existing brick patterns, bonds and colours.

Greenwich Revisted



Having recently submitted our proposals for the design of a nursery situated within the 43-81 Greenwich High Street redevelopment, we started to reminisce over our time spent developing it and what it will in turn develop into offering an important resource for a new community.

The final design proposal that we reached answered to strict guidelines and regulations in regards to safety and education and yet while respectfully answering to these, pronounced no evidence of external influence outside our regular, creative nurtured style of designing. We eased this process along through the production of sketch models, serving many purposes, from the initial design stages through to explaining our scheme to council officials. Creating the model as a team was an initiative that brought us together, as a

unit, propagating our initial design ideas surrounding the proposed development. The children's play areas, while all complying with regulations surrounding education and health and safety issues, were our arenas for innovative design solutions, a canvas for creativity. The proposal makes sure the children receive the maximum amount of sun light while in the playrooms, subsequently offering views of the creekside. The circulation space, aimed towards the needs of the children becomes flexible and can adapt with the addition of sliding partition walls, opening up to utilise the large expanse of space available, that young children in the midst of finding their feet require. This space, while taking on a necessary dominance, is contrasting to the smaller, more intimate spaces made available as a result, which are to become quiet areas for relaxation.

19.03.2012

View From Above



Our journey through the city continues unrestricted by heights we have travelled upwards through the urban fabric to survey the surreal landscape of London's rooftops. One of the reasons that the city's skyline is so diverse is that the development of technology through the ages has coming into conflict with the modern attitude conservation and hence while some districts thrive others lay dormant, protected by the Council's policies.

After a series of recent successful applications for adding terraces to urban dwellings we have recently been approached by a client who wishes us to propose a roof terrace where both personality and practicality form the brief for our designs. Access to amenity is impor-

tant in the densely populated capital and the serene atmosphere can be enticing despite the unpredictability of the British weather.

The views from the rooftops can be quite surprising as they can unearth architectural and geographical secrets in the local area that you did not know existed. For example we spotted an outstanding feat of Victorian design and engineering, a leviathan that dominates the landscape of Fulham with its regimented sequence of parapets, gables and chimneys. These ornaments are masterfully orchestrated with a balance reminiscent of the Gothic period, in which architecture was used to express the connection between heaven and earth thanks to the lofty spires and robust vaults.

27.04.2012

Postcard Competition

Competition can be a healthy thing and here at Studio Idealyc we took the opportunity to enter a contest at Architecture for Humanity who proposed that small designs be placed on a postcard to illustrate the creative input for developing a new scheme in London.

Our take on the brief was the articulation of boundaries in the capital with an emphasis on the 33th London's Boroughs with whom the practice works diary due to our involvement in a multitude of small / medium scale residential and commercial schemes. Looking to the future we envision a city without barriers, united by the Olympics yet segregated by the lifeline of the Thames.

While perhaps the entry is abstracted from the guiding intentions of the judges we have completed our submission using a series of formal representational tools. Patterns and colour weave together across the semi organic flowing lines of the river and the district of London. We hope to proponed a sense of locality at a city-wide scale and a return to draftsmanship using the simple medium of the ink pen and colour pencil.



27.04.2012

Royal Academy



Rising to the challenge to compete at the Royal Academy Summer Festival was a step in a different but refreshing direction for us at the studio. Undergoing a rigorous day of artistic interpretation and theoretical practice helped us to bond and shape our growing team.

Our designs were split into two parts, building theory and building practice, with all featured work from Studio Idealyc. Choosing Studio Idealyc's flag ship project, the Hut at Spa Fields in Clerkenwell, we went about portraying the process undertaken throughout its journey to completion. Both images used to show this feature in the form of the Hut's silhouette, the first image, using pencils initially used on drawings produced for the Hut project and the second the

product of the pencils, the sketchbook that helped explicate initial ideas and thoughts through to actualised form. We thought that these 3d commonplace objects best represented our modus operandi, proposing the link between the inanimate normality of newborn idea and the final products perceivably unified glory. It's the installation pieces ability to break down and simplify this glory that renders it with its power.

The second piece within our installation submission featured some intimate thoughts we wished to share regarding our views on housing to date, and how people choose to inhabit them. Together pieces communicate important influences that on a daily basis we at Studio Idealyc remain submissive to.

30.04.2012

Process of Rehabilitation



We have recently been appointed a project in Wansey Street, the London Borough of Southwark. This is a large project, of several stages, the first of which we underwent today, conducting a meeting with the client to discuss how best to push the project along.

To start the project off we agreed that it was important to reinstate important lost features of the properties, which since their original construction, have changed. Reinstating a buildings feature, which has since been forgotten, can often be a more powerful statement than that of the original design, where once there was a statement of intent, now

there is a statement of purpose. Bearing this in mind we started drawing up plans to re-establish several doors that have since been removed and boarded up, with a detrimental affect on the circulation of the properties. Doorways, being of important physical and metaphorical appearance in architecture must be used and designed with thought.

To rehabilitate these once in use, mediations of space, will be to change the way the building is used and in the case of this project, will enable our client alternative access to rooms so to divide spaces up to best utilise the existing space.