

IDEA LYC

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

建築實踐觀

Cuadernos de Estudio



Monthly 08/12

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Process

It is not easy towing the line when additional challenges constantly present themselves through the acquisition of new stages in life. This perhaps is one of the main reasons why we always lose direction during transitional periods and reestablish the need to find a balance that can satisfy our desires towards a more fulfilled future. This outlook transpires in a variety of ways that influence our day-to-day lives in the studio, including the invitation of a popular new member of the team for a short period of work experience, as well as the temporary transformation of our office space into a pop up restaurant.

We continue develop our organisations identity through performing tasks outside our traditional remit, exploring the potential opportunities in construction and spearheading a project that has presented a range of complex challenges and issues informing and educating us in the process.

The summer also gave us cause to celebrate after being awarded a prize for an innovative photography competition which was one of the unexpected surprises received this month. This wave of recognition culminated in the registration of our colleague Fran with the ARB, ratifying his position as a fully qualified Architect, a title which signals a new dimension in the life of any designer.

We hope you enjoy our month's monologues.

Studio Idealyc are:

Francisco Checa Romero, Gayle Chan, Francisco J. Cosmen Diaz,
Matthew Northover, Nerea Bermejo, Marta Avilés, John Lenehan

- The team at Studio Idealyc

03.08.2012

Experimentation with Paint Finishes



Now that the stunning glass pane is in place at Underwood Road, we can finally begin to envisage the final composition of all of the new elements we have added to the dwelling. The arrangement of the new cedar clad dormer combined with the tiled roof and brickwork leads us to start exploring possible finishes for the substantial amount of exterior paintwork visible at Underwood Road.

The cladding on the gable end of the property and the existing windows on the ground and first floors are currently stained cherry red – a finish that jars uncomfortably with the beautifully natural cedar wood of the dormer. Now the scaffold has finally been removed from the rear of the house, we have been able

to begin to experiment with a variety of finishes that will unite all of the individual components we have introduced to the once modest house.

We have explored a variety of options, considering steel cladding, raw wood, or even a continuation of the cedar introduced to the roof space. Finally, we have decided on grey. The cool sombre tone will complement the existing tiled roof, whilst creating the perfect juxtaposition to the strikingly modern and bold new additions to Underwood Road. We are currently experimenting with a number of different shades of grey at the property, but deciding on just one may too turn out to be a lengthy process!

07.08.2012

New Team Member



Today we have had a new member join the team at Studio Idealyc. Diesel, 9 years of age has no prior architectural experience, but is proving to be a real hit in the office. His tasks will include basic drafting, corresponding with clientele, and of course tea and coffee runs.

Of course we're only joking, Architectural Assistant John Lenehan, our newest member of the team, is in fact looking after Diesel for the week. The inclusion of Diesel in the office for the day highlights the unique way we work at Idealyc, treating the studio as an extension of our living space, thanks in part to the long hours we spend here! Research such as the PAW (Pooch at Work) Study have shown though that a dog in the office can help to substantially lower stress levels, thanks to the endorphins released when they're around. One American study has even suggested that stroking a dog can even aid in lowering blood pressure.

The presence of an animal in the office is also said to boost productivity, and have a positive impact on staff morale. With Diesel only around for a few days before he goes home, perhaps we now need to start searching for another four legged addition to the office.

Second Prize in PLOY Photo Competition



We have recently been awarded second prize in the PLOY Photo Competition. PLOY (Public Life in the Olympic Year) aims to explore the profound impact the hosting of the Olympic Games have on our capital, investigating the way in which we inhabit and use our public spaces. Studio Idealyc received overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding our own entry, 'Holding A Meeting In Chance Street, Shoreditch' which depicted members of the team spilling out of the studio into the urban landscape, taking ownership of the environment around them on a beautiful sunny London afternoon. The PLOY judges noted that:

"The concentration and calmness on those in a meeting belies the fact that they are out on the pavement on a side street rather than in the privacy of their studio, whilst they make the most of the rare sunshine and yet still get their work done. It is the best of both worlds. The

image is very graphic with the tones of the London stock brick, pine table and the pavement blending into one – providing a neutral backdrop to the action at the table. It reminded the judges of a Renaissance painting – a modern interpretation of scholar in their study."

As an architectural practice whose inspirations and ideas are resolutely grounded in our surroundings, the observation that our image echoed a 'reinterpretation of a scholar in their study' is in many ways fair, as the city of London as a whole is in fact our study. The entrants to the PLOY Photo Competition were all to be submitted via the photographic social networking tool Instagram, which distorts an image, almost giving it an aged effect, which in this case has highlighted the unique quality of the London stock brick of our studios, rooting our image firmly in the city and the environment in which we work.

10.08.2012

Topping Out At Underwood



Today was an extremely significant day in the development of the alterations at Underwood Road. The enormous pane of glass measuring 2.3 metres in both length and width has meticulously been lowered into place via a crane to rest in its carefully crafted location in the new dormer extension. The sense of pride as the glass slotted into place, finally shielding the new space from the elements, was palpable.

The seamless way in which the staggeringly large pane of glass fitted into the scrupulously craft niche was a pivotal moment, and an affirmation that the thoroughly considered designs that we have created for this project are beginning to materialise beautifully. The or-

chestration of this feat demanded the careful maneuvering of numerous sub-contractors whose joint effort facilitated the smooth installation.

The project at Underwood Road elevates the concept of a dormer window to exciting new heights, with individually crafted elements that must be carefully incorporated as though one were assembling a machine. The intricacy and level of detail apparent in the design at this residential dwelling demonstrates the way in which all of the sensitively shaped individual components of the project at Underwood Road have now come together to create a strikingly different composition.

13.08.2012

New Commission for Design Services



This week we held our first meeting with the client for Clapham Road following our appointment to provide our assistance with the redesign of the space to incorporate a café and bakery. We have previously helped the client with the process of obtaining the lease for the property and we are pleased that the project is now steadily progression so we can look forward to the preparation of the design package.

When starting out in any capacity of scheme, the beginning, middle and end are all significant stages in the design process and need to be adequately identified to provide structure to the development of future work, guiding the output from the initial appraisal of the site to the production of tender docu-

ments. At university a project will be restricted by steps at which the work is assessed but when undertaking a material project the nature of the scheme and requirements of the client will in themselves designate those stages at which the work will be reviewed.

In a design project such as this, practice issues will guide the formation of the space but one of the most visual goals will be the creation of place, a meaningful location that users will enjoy and remember. During our early discussion we contemplated the various ways in which this had been previously achieved by other designers in projects that would form precedent for our own scheme, thus beginning with the zeitgeist as a platform for design.

15.08.2012

Registration with the ARB



At Studio Idealyc we would like to congratulate Fran, one of the key members of our team, who has become a member of the ARB and is now a UK recognised architect. Fran's hard work has been a driving force behind the studio's development and we thank him again here for his help.

The ARB is a statutory body established to maintain the architect's profession in the UK and they protect the title of "Architect". With the ultimate goal of attaining this prestigious title many students every year undertake the three stages of ARB qualifications in order to join the register of architects which is now available online but has been published in a hard copy since 1933 and kept in the British Architectural Library.

Becoming part of the ARB represents a landmark in every designer's career and it is a cause for celebration in our office. Following Fran, our colleague Nerea is now proceeding with her application to the ARB.

17.08.2012

The Banquet



An event or formal occasion always presents a landmark in time and is frequently held in a person's honour or to celebrate an achievement or famous date. The banquet is a primarily social function but often implies financial or political undertones. At Studio Idealyc we will be entertaining friends this weekend hosting an evening's dining in the office, converting our normal workspace into a pop up restaurant.

Famous banquets through history and literature spring quickly to mind. The archetype being perhaps The Last Supper, an event in turn that has been celebrated for centuries and is easily recognisable by the depiction of 12 disciples and Jesus. It seems that human nature demands a spectacle at the main event, a ritual to be performed or timeless words to be spoken.

A more macabre banquet famously written about was that held by Macbeth in Shakespeare's play following the deaths of Duncan and Banquo. The absence of Banquo at the newly crowned king's table grows in significance throughout the scene as Macbeth is tormented by the ghost of his former friend to the horror of his guests. In this example the banquet is the focal point for the build up of events, a nexus around which lives and emotions flow.

Planning application in Conservation Area



Following a period of experimentation with spaces and layouts we have agreed a proposal with our client at Brighton Grove which we will be submitting to the planning department. While the property is a small terrace house it is governed by a constraint typical to many locations in London, namely that it is in a Conservation Area.

The Hatcham Conservation Area bounds Brighton Grove which forms the south-east corner of the protected zone. The terrace houses primarily built using London's recognisable yellow stock brick were constructed in the Victorian period. It must be noted that it is not the purpose of Conservation Area policies to prevent alterations but rather to ensure

that they are completed in a manner sensitive to the area, respecting the period design features and idiosyncrasies that make the place unique.

The site itself is very individual in its arrangement and placement, a terrace street accessible by a pedestrian pathway rather than a road. Rising above the butterfly roofs are a predominant set of clay chimneys, not overt in their ornamentation like those of the Arts and Crafts period but robust and practical. This earthy quality resonates in the brickwork surrounding the windows which, unlike the rest of the terrace, is red brick more commonly associated with developments in the North.

New Development at Parsons Street



As buildings grow out of their purposes and become unfit for adaptation or too costly to maintain they become a hindrance and the price of land in the city means that the site would be put to better use with the demolition rather than the conversion of the structure that inhabits it. This can be a difficult task when the building has held so much significance in a person's life but the rapidly changing times demands this sacrifice.

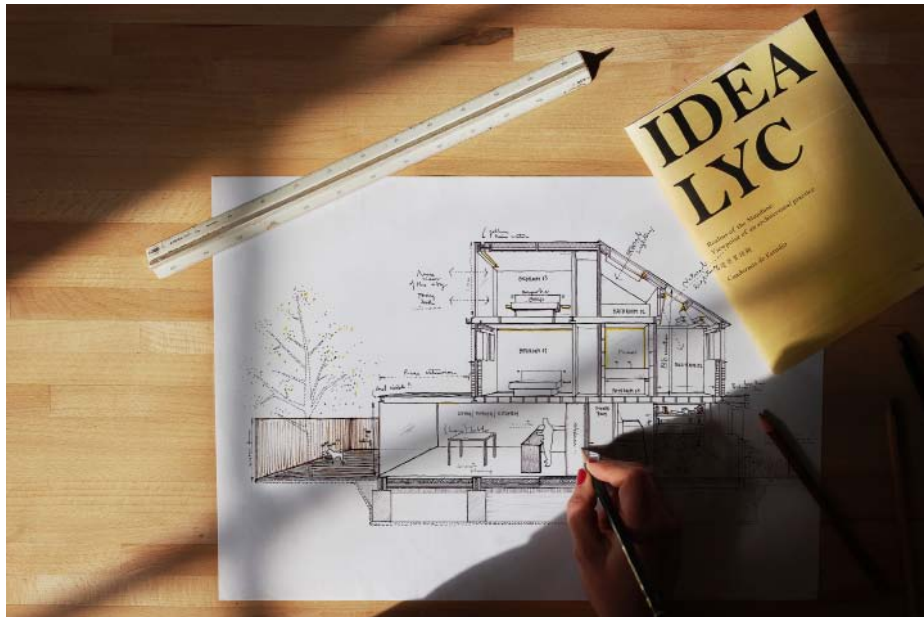
Appointed to develop alternative solutions to redevelopment of the site we have been considering the spatial arrangements of the new dwellings to be proposed along with the amenity and service spaces that are required to make life comfortable for the residents. When designing such spaces, the programme of the building must first be established and then the functions cross-referenced and allotted rules and priorities before the possible compositions can be de-

veloped. The restrictions of materials, construction methods and standards as well as planning requirements then add structure to the fluid diagrams and narrow down the parameters.

The client himself is very interested in the potential for sustainable technologies that a new build offers and our research into the various systems has been very enlightening. When addressing sustainable procedures there are two possible categories, active and passive solutions. Active methods make use of technology that processes environmental factors, for example solar or wind energy while passive techniques are embroidered into the design of the building. This category includes making use of the high thermal mass of concrete to mediate temperatures, a strategy that requires the concrete to be exposed in order to slowly warm throughout the day and then radiate heat during the evening.

23.08.2012

Illustrating Underwood



Architectural drawing can range from the technical, working drawings, to the abstract arrangement of line and colour that denotes the orchestration of spatial zones and suggests atmosphere. In between this spectrum is every manner of graphical representation illustrating individual styles and movements and functioning as an argument or defence of a critical position as well as an analysis of the assembly of parts and use of space.

Art and architecture are in some situations closely linked and in others divorced entirely; this is true of architectural drawing as much as in the buildings themselves. Many famous artists started their careers as architects and vice versa, for example, H.R. Giger, the surre-

alist and creator of *Alien*, studied architecture in Zurich while Le Corbusier was involved in the art movement known as Purism which was informed by his architectural studies.

At Studio Idealyc we trust in the articulation of the drawing to test the interrelationship between environments and the arrangement of details within and without the building's envelope. Working on a drawing and working over a drawing become two repeated stages in the advancement and revision of a design, deconstructing the formal qualities through diagrammatic interpretations of the ordered lines and then building on the resulting composition.

New Appointment in The Lower Marsh Conservation Area

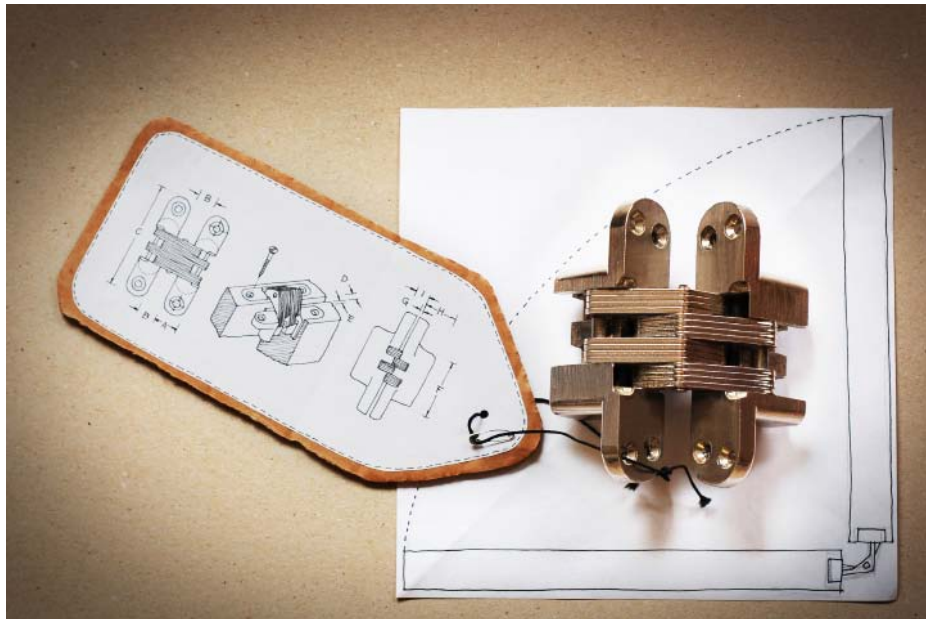
We have recently been appointed to undertake a feasibility study for a project in the historic Lower Marsh Conservation situated within the London Borough of Lambeth. The project will utilise our extensive past experience in working within many of the Conservation Areas that make up much of the fabric of the city, especially in terms of designing within the strict parameters and guidelines set in place by each Local Authority to protect the character and interest of each area.

The Lower Marsh is particularly interesting thanks to its role as a centre of trade and commerce in Lambeth harking back when the area was still quite separate from the rest of the city and a village in its own right. Once an area of inhabitable marshland, Lower Marsh was reclaimed from the Thames at the end of the eighteenth century and quickly grew in prominence and importance as a key trading zone in South London. The range of traders and artisans who occupied the area established and fuelled the renowned Lower Marsh Market, which still exists, albeit on a smaller scale, today.

This varied past of the Lower Marsh partly responsible for the rich architectural legacy the area is bestowed with, its eclectic mixture of Victorian three storey houses and shops, arranged in narrow clusters with individual facades and frontages, lend the cobbled streets of the Lower Marsh Conservation Area much of its unique personality. The rapid development of this trading hub over the course of two centuries is reflected in the myriad of architectural styles that we hope to contribute to with a contemporary response to the distinctive architectural language of The Lower Marsh.



Spatial Illusions



Now much of the external work at Underwood Road is well underway, we are able to turn our attention to the arrangement of the internal spaces of the property, most notably, the way in which we plan to link the spaces that we have carved out of the shell of the dwelling. The complex interior layout of the upper floors of the property play with the notion of private and public space, all of which can be transformed in an instant through the integration of a number of design features that have been integrated into the design of the dwelling.

Sliding doors with shadow gaps to match those incorporated into the walls and ceilings, create openings where walls once stood, whilst hinges that render themselves completely invisible when the bespoke floor to ceiling doors are closed ensure a seamless finish throughout the property. Even the dramatic expanse of glass that adorns

the rear façade of the new dormer in the loft space can be altered at the touch of a button, with the incorporation of an electric blind, that when lowered complements the rest of the simple white gallery like space. The playful manipulation of the interior spaces distorts the viewer's impression of the rooms, lending the environment an increased sense of openness and light.

Exploring different interior arrangements, allowing for multiple uses and functions in fact maximises the capabilities of the rooms of Underwood Road, whilst a range of architectural illusions mimic many of the features found in far more established architectural styles, yet in a contemporary context. The sliding doors that will separate many of the spaces experiment with the notion of 'in-between spaces' that are often found within traditional Japanese architecture.

Studio Excursions

This Bank Holiday Weekend some members of the Idealyc team took time out of the studio to appreciate some of the most striking architectural developments in Europe, absorbing works by architectural masters both old and new, in two of the continents most influential cities in terms of innovative design.

In Helsinki, Curro took a pilgrimage to home of seminal modernist architect Alvar Aalto, a pioneer of beautifully simple pure Scandinavian design. At the Alvar Aalto House, Curro was struck by rationality of the 80-year-old dwelling, which utilised building methods and techniques that surpasses those of many projects constructed today. The open layout and use of natural Scandinavian materials, with an abundance of wood, stone and glass have become cornerstones of contemporary design, yet when built, the house represented the very cutting edge of architectural design.

Meanwhile in Berlin, a city ravaged in the last century by war, tyranny and political upheaval, John experienced a wealth of striking contemporary architectural developments that have completely transformed the German capital since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Vast swathes of the city have been reinvented in the wake of reunification, with a wealth of renowned international architects, all making their own unique marks on the new fabric of the city. Most impressive though was the Neues Museum, by Chipperfield Architects. Chipperfield has re-imagined and reinvented much of the original character which was lost during the relentless bombing campaign the city was subject to in World War II, highlighted in the way in which he has achieved an astonishing blend of contemporary design in the shell of this former war ravaged museum, realising a complex balance of modern purist principles, combined with a highly decorative neo-classical design.



30.08.2012

Bespoke Steel Staircase at Underwood Road



The new steel staircase that will provide the link between the existing first floor of Underwood Road and the new master suite situated in the roof space has now been installed. The bespoke structure, once again challenges conventions in terms of materials and finishes that may be used in a residential environment. The expanses of glass, steel and exposed concrete flooring are now joined by a staircase that similarly challenges conventional residential design.

The staircase has been fabricated by a local artisan, and welded together on site, rising slowly towards the exceptional new space that has been carved

out of the former loft. The delicacy of the structure, which is constructed from steel that is only 10mm thick, is further accentuated in its positioning floating away from the wall, revealing a slim gap between the staircase and the exterior wall.

The installation of the staircase represents another milestone in the transformation of this once generic residential dwelling into a contemporary striking space, now bestowed with an incredibly light and spacious atmosphere that combines an innovative use of contemporary construction techniques along with remarkable modern design.

31.08.2012

Addiscombe Road



We have today been appointed to develop a property on Addiscombe Road, in the Borough of Croydon. The client wishes to construct a new gate in front of their property, which has an extensive driveway where their children play. Although our architectural designs often focus on creating improved environments for our clients, architectural planning can also involve the reconfiguration of the built environment to cater for more serious needs, such as ensuring the security of an environment.

The installation of a gate in a driveway of a property may not seem like a complicated architectural proposal, though many considerations must be taken into account during the conception of such

a design. The architectural language of the street was one factor that we had to consider carefully when developing the design, in order to maintain the aesthetic already in place, whilst we also had to ensure that any design implemented also sufficiently kept the clients children from running out onto the busy road in front of the property.

The project at Addiscombe Road demonstrates the way in which considered architectural design has a place in even what appear to be on the surface the most simple projects, in order to ensure that the finished product not only delivers on an visual level, though on a practical one also.