

IDEA LYC

Realms of the Mundane:
Viewpoint of an architectural practice

建築實踐觀

Cuadernos de Estudio



Monthly 01/12

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Process

Becoming an architect can be a simple enough decision but after reflecting on our development from the initial studies we completed in school to our current ongoing projects, we wonder just how much the pursuit of the profession has altered our individual personalities, moulding our character and refining our vision for the capital we live in and the daily routines of its inhabitants.

While an architect can have the ability to build a garden shed, he can also build a city, showing that the extrapolation of parameters is merely a matter of scale and perception rather than a concrete technique. Architectural knowledge is malleable; it flows to render context and user. Tension occurring between this dualism serves to heighten the design process.

This methodology is the essence of the following compendium, coalesced from a collection of our own images and words. The voice behind the eyes takes on a variety of discourses, critic and technician, urban planner and historian. Sometimes a rift can occur between these personalities, other times they speak in unison, evolving rhythm and harmony. This is the basis of the continuity and rigor of our approach.

We hope that you enjoy our month's musing.

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- The team at Studio Idealyc

03.01.2012

Interior Renovation Begins



Following a month of liaisons between ourselves, the clients and the contractor regarding the specification of the new interior of the topmost flat in Abbotsbury House work has now begun on constructing the extensive renovation of the property. Our role in the project has been to design the interior to accommodate the needs and desires of our client and we have been advising the client on the specification of all the components to ensure the most seamless internal configuration, from the orchestration of the concealed openings to the style of the radiators throughout the property.

We have conducted our first site inspection today to view the progress of the construction phase which has now begun. The stud walls are in the process of being implemented and they are beginning to suggest the completed layout of the flat.

Project SI_357
Abbotsbury House

03.01.2012

Kitchen Design



As the work on the interior furnishings of Westbourne Terraces continues we are beginning to consider a design for the kitchen of the property. We intend to maximise the space available to us so we have been studying the possible layout of cupboards and cabinets around the essential units such as the fridge and sink.

On a site visit conducted today to inspect the progress of the furniture we also took the opportunity to discuss with the joiners the ideas we have for the kitchen design and the opportunities available to us.

Project SI_150
Westbourne Terrace

03.01.2012

New Bespoke Office Furniture



To start the New Year we have designed a new series of desks for our office to increase the workspace that we have available to us. The new pieces of furniture were photographed in the offices of Paper Cavalier, a space previously used by Curro as a workshop while he was studying at the RCA and where he started the practice. The space itself was one of his earliest projects, experimenting with material and texture where can be appreciated in the photograph which shows the sealed concrete floor specified by him replacing a old laminated floor.

The design of the desk is based on the concept of addition and subtraction so the size of the desk unit can be varied in response to the limitations of the space and the requirements of the users. As a company increases its staff new desks can be added to the series. Utilising simply 25mm MDF built by our carpenters in less than 10 minutes, it is made of a series of pieces where the main aspect of the design is in the connection between the desk used as legs to support the desks. The arrangement can be altered and extended to form a developing pattern through the series.

Project SI_344
Redchurch Street

Site Model

From the inception of the practice, while Curro was still in education, he often had to travel to the periphery of London, as experienced by Ian Sinclair in his book "London Orbital". Therefore, the boundary of the M25 was crossed many times with the intention of investigating the conditions of the outskirts of London for the purpose of improving the living standards of commuters and residents in the suburbs.

This exercise, while restricted in its creative potential due to the limitation of the budget and timeframe, provided a strong grounding in the technical and practical aspects of the built environment.

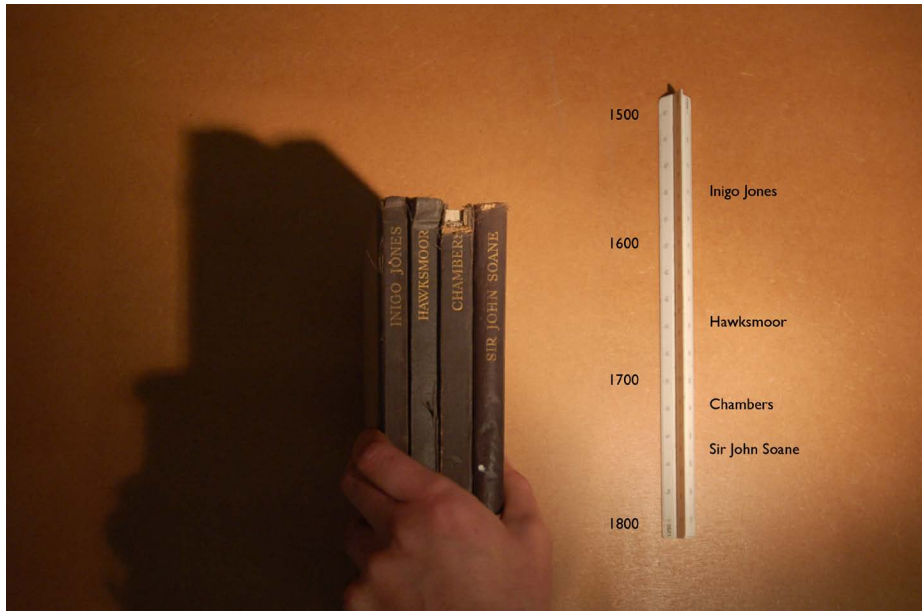
Now that the practice has grown and is more established in the local area of Shoreditch and its surroundings, the scope of our work has consequently grown with the addition of urban projects in the denser local environment, subject to the increasing ebb and flow of life that leaves its mark the district.

We were recently contacted by a client who has been made a victim of development with serious implications on his currently lifestyle due to the implementation of a large extension to a hotel metres from his living room. While this may be a normal occurrence in New York, subject to Koolhaas's "culture of congestion", London is generally resistant to overdevelopment in order to protect the local and residential characteristics of the site.

By recording the block in physical model to a scale of 1:500 we have captured a static image of the district, an island of development with a deep void at the centre, an interstitial space formed by two imposing buildings.



Pre-Twentieth Century British Architects



As many of our projects involve us dealing with the historic buildings of London, of which there are many, we have encountered a variety of elegant styles apparent in architecture before the extensive use of modern materials and standardized developments took hold. We have documented a timeline, marking the births of 4 of our favourite architect's whose work features prominently in and around London to indicate the period in which they would have worked.

These architects, in order, are Inigo Jones, Hawksmoor, Chambers and Sir John Soane. The earliest architect, Inigo Jones, brought the renaissance style to England and integrated it into his schemes for monumental commissions including Covent Garden, thus heralding the arrival of the modern style in England.

Nicholas Hawksmoor learnt under the direction of Sir Christopher Wren and his most notable works are the six London churches he designed after a total of 50 churches were commissioned in London in 1711. His influences were eclectic and sublimely merged, despite the fact that he was not able to visit the sites like many of his contemporaries and instead had to work from engravings made by others.

William Chambers initially studied the architecture of China before he was formally educated in Paris and was later appointed architect to the king. The influence of his early experiences is made apparent in his scheme for Kew Gardens although he later adapted a more reserved language, mixing the influences of Palladio and neoclassicism.

Sir John Soane is the most contemporary of the architects described above. He hoarded artifacts from his travels around the work as well as paintings by notable artists such as Hogarth and Canaletto, many of which can be seen at Sir John Soane's Museum in London. His architecture occurring in the period of transition between the Palladian School and later revival styles and his work set precedent for later architects following the development of the new revival of ancient classical ideas.

We have recently acquired the books shown in the photograph from a specialist dealer in the midlands well known for collectible items. We enjoy collecting architectural memorabilia, especially with a focus of first editions and short run catalogues from past events. We see this process as a key method of collating information essential for the development of the practice.

05.01.2012

New Appointment in Conservation Area



Today we visited a private residence in the St George in the East Conservation area. The site is located nearby one of Hawksmoor's six London churches notable for its bold use of symbolism in an attempt to engage with the local users in the East End. Hawksmoor looked to "Primitive Christian" ideas to develop the eclectic language of the building which draws on Roman, Gothic and Egyptian precedents among others. The spire of the church dominates the surroundings, watching over the area with a rich presence.

The Mews themselves, the location of our site, are two storey apartments built in a postmodern style around the 1980s. Each property exhibits a clear symmetry from the placement of the windows and the balcony with the entrance at the centre sheltered by the external space above. The appropriation and collage of a mix of historic and contemporary styles apparent in the design of the development is a key feature of early postmodern buildings. The supports for the balcony and the decoration around the semi circular first floor window are primarily used to ornament the façade, another critical aspect of postmodern theory.

Installation of Underfloor Heating



Work continues into the New Year on a rear extension that we are overseeing in our domestic project in West London. One of the most notable recent additions to the development is the new underfloor heating which is in the process of being installed prior to the overlaying of the floorboards and the acoustic insulation barrier. Many clients find the idea of underfloor heating attractive as it means that no radiators will be visible in the space.

Like an ordinary heating system, the heating used in the property connects to the boiler and the temperature is controlled by the flow of hot water through the pipes. This system is more expensive to implement compared with an electric system but the maintenance costs will be less in the future.

Previously the now obsolete chimney was used to heat properties and expel the excess fumes into the external environment. Now much of London is considered a smoke control area and most households that wish to continue to use their fireplace will need to seek exemption (if their appliance does not already hold this certificate) or will have to limit their consumption to authorized fuels.

10.01.2012

New Appointment in Historic Square



We have recently been appointed to seek planning permission for a client who owns a flat in Tredgar Square which forms the centre of Tredgar Square Conservation Area. While a large proportion of the area suffered extensive bombing during the Second World War, much the square itself remained intact making it one of the most beautiful existing examples of Georgian architecture.

The respective heights of the buildings remain almost exactly the same throughout the development, creating a strong sense of uniformity and integrity between the houses. Furthermore, the centre of each row is established by a series of pilasters and a central pediment that defines the symmetry of the terraces.

Project SI_406
Tredgar Square

10.01.2012

Lightwell and Cladding Studies



We have used OSB panels, a relatively cheap material employed for different construction purposes, to obtain a textured natural surface to contrast with the smooth purity of the white interior of much of the flat. Still in initial stages, we will be experimenting with the finish of the material to discover the best treatment to apply to create the most aesthetically pleasing product.

In the same space, natural daylight floods down through the skylights above. The overall composition of the theatre of light will be manipulated through a series of floor to ceiling bespoke doors which can be opened or closed to reveal or hide the effect depending on the needs of the user.

11.01.2012

Meeting On Site



As work continues on our extensive interior renovation we have met with the contractor and the client at the site to discuss the future work to be completed. At the top of the agenda was the bathroom which will involve a great deal of detailing and specification.

Also discussed were the radiators which will be partly recessed into a void in the walls to obtain a flush, sleek and unobtrusive look throughout the space. We are looking forward to the swift progression of this project and the realisation of our scheme.

Project SI_357
Abbotsbury House

12.01.2012

Removal of Victorian Bay



While the façade of a Georgian house is distinguished by its consistent, flush exterior, the bay window that is now one of the most recognisable elements of the British housing vernacular was developed for properties built in the Victorian period to increase the amount of natural daylight that entered the lower floors. This alteration was a response to the changing opinions at the time on the internal functional layout of houses.

One of the most recent alterations we have made to our extensive renovation of Hillview Gardens is the removal of the bay window at the front of the property. We have achieved the permission for this under Permitted Development rights as they allow an extension of up to 3 metres square to the porch of the property. By removing the bay we are responding to the needs of the client, increasing the size of the kitchen by squaring it off to improve the geometry and to accommodate the additional sink and oven required by the religious traditions of the Jewish community.

14.01.2012

Extension to Family Home



Due to the busy weekly routines of London's many commuters it is often necessary to meet with clients at length on Saturdays when they are free to discuss their ideas with us and show us around their properties. We held one such meeting today with our clients in Kingsgate Road where we discussed possible extensions to their end of terrace house. Following our meeting we are now going ahead with feasibility studies for the development of the property to accommodate the family, rationalising and increasing the internal spaces to form a coherent series of meaningful regions for their home.

15.01.2012

Recent Appointment Heritage Islington



As we continue to study options for a two storey rear extension for a property in Moon Street for which we have recently been appointed to propose a two storey rear extension, we were surprised to discover that the roof had been significantly altered, retaining its original butterfly typology but with a notably lower profile which was evident from the state of the bricks above and below the previous line of the roof

It is clear that the present roof-scape has developed dramatically since the construction of the original rigid sequence of undulating roofs, as a result of the implementation of various modern technologies, installed by the owners as time has past and the existing designs have become obsolete or unsuited to the needs of the owners.

Project SI_400
Moon Street

16.01.2012

The Hut



On the way to visit our project near Hyde Park on site we passed by Spa Fields to see the building that represents to us the inception of the practice. The clear skies and cold, crisp afternoon provided the perfect setting to experience the site and the angular construction of our first project.

Now more than 3 years since the Hut was built the slow maturing of the copper cladding in the urban environment has begun with the darkening of the material and some regions of more advanced patination. In around 20 years time, once the slow chemical process has transformed the copper, the building will have the same green appearance synonymous with the Statue of Liberty and many monumental heritage buildings across the globe. This slow natural change is beginning to reflect the ebb and flow of the natural circadian and circannual rhythms that occur throughout the landscape of the park, along with the growth and development of the plant life in the vicinity.

Project SI_112
The Hut

17.01.2012

Nostalgia In The Office



It is often noted in architecture schools that the increasing reliance on computer technology and software displayed by students and professionals alike is having a detrimental effect on “analogue” skills such as free hand sketching and draftsmanship. We strive to keep alive the experimental process of design in the realm of the “real” with the production of physical models for many of our schemes.

Today however we went a step further and dusted off our old light-box to draft the details for the interior of a scheme. The process of overlaying and comparing is significant in the formulation of architectural drawings, arranging and attaching complementary components to meet the project’s requirements.

17.01.2012

Installation of New Structure



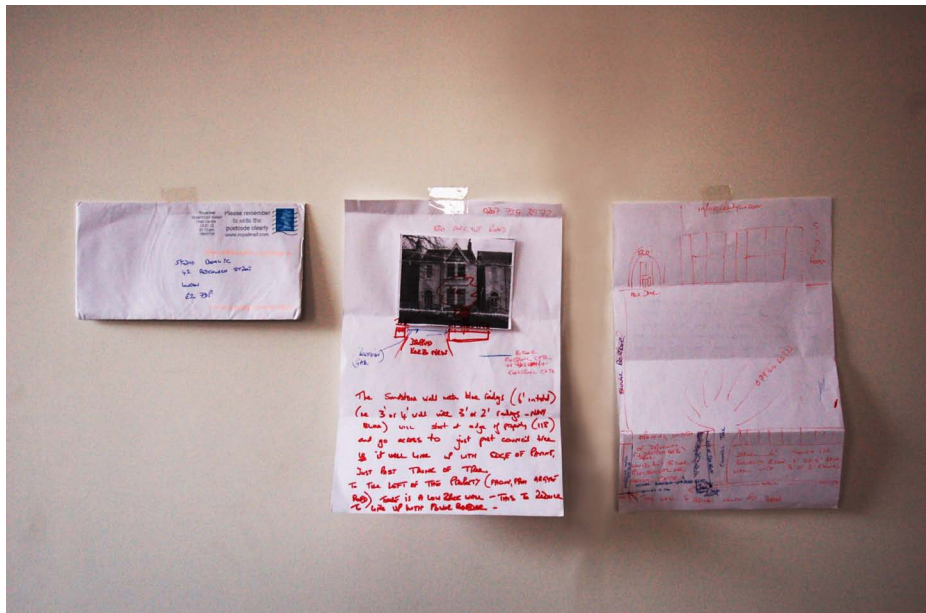
On site at our ongoing project in Hillview Gardens the second storey additional structure is being installed at the rear of the building to support the planned extension. The extension, built in line with the existing neighbouring rear projections will significantly increase the floor space of the small terrace house.

The installation of specialist components such as the steel requires the input of a sub-contractor, who is adept in a particular area of construction. Throughout the development of our scheme we, as project manager, must liaise with all the concerned parties, often establishing a balance of time and attention for all the professionals involved for the benefit of the construction works.

Project SI_330
Hillview Gardens

18.01.2012

Analogue Correspondence



When discussing design with our clients we often receive scanned images and plans edited in software such as Paint, however, occasionally we are sent a parcel of information, hand drawn sketches and diagrams to illustrate the ideas and requirements involved in the scheme. This analogue technique of correspondence is always enjoyable to participate in and it causes us to consider the way work was conducted in the past, with typewriters and drawings boards as well as the practice of calligraphy for the drafting of documents.

18.01.2012

Application of Render



To obscure the blockwork used to construct the extension that we are overseeing, a render has begun to be applied. First a “strike” coat is administered to the outer wall of the blockwork, this serves as the undercoat and is scored with deep grooves. These grooves improve the adhesion of the second layer which is applied smoothly to form the outer layer of the extension. The outer render is brought out to the lip of the DPC forming a visible base to the façade. Along with the first coat, a channel is used to reinforce the edges of the blockwork to prevent movement and cracks developing once the work is finished.

Project SI_321
The Vale

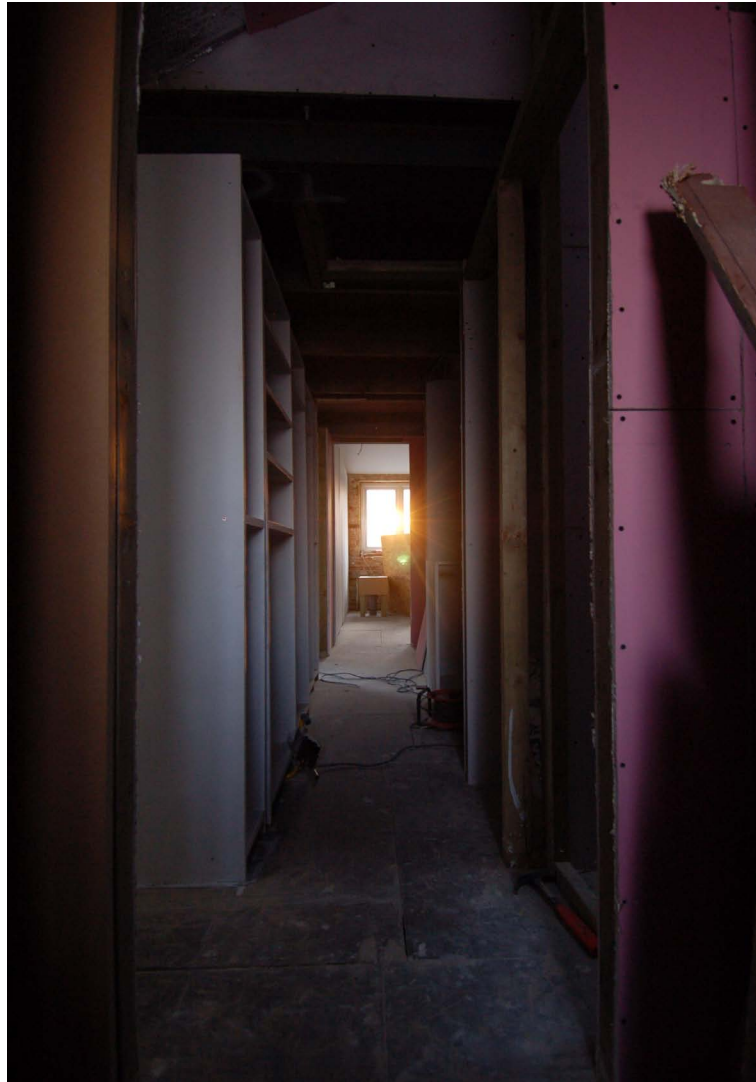
18.01.2012

Influence of the Sun

During formal education students are often criticised for the omission of elementary components of an architectural drawing. The inclusion of a North arrow is crucial for the accurate assessment of a scheme as it infers the movement of the sun throughout the day in relation to the openings in the building.

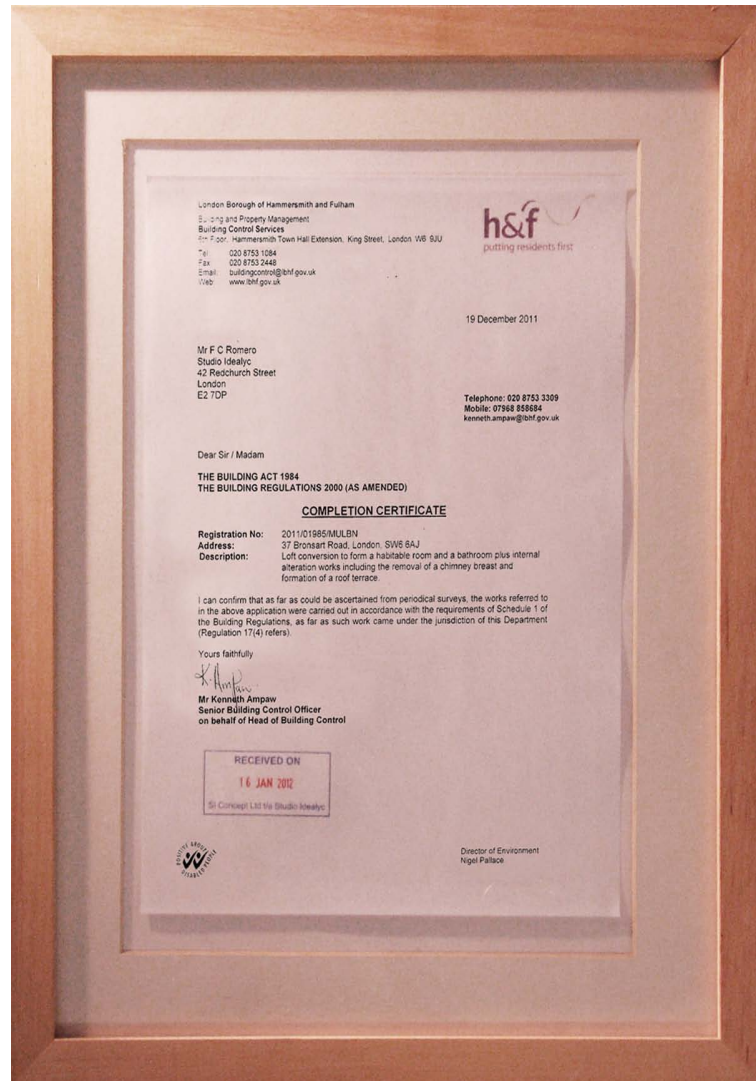
The position of our scheme in Westbourne Terrace, with the principal elevations facing East and West, is ideal for considering the effect of the direct intervention of solar rays. The sun rises facing the dining room, at its highest point it passes over the skylights installed and in the evening it sets directly in front of the bedroom window. The relationship of this celestial journey to the internal function of the rooms induces a sensory experience sustained across the day.

The linear vista projecting geometrically from the dining room to the bedroom enhances the perception of this. Existing as a transitional space it houses an articulation of opened and concealed compartments which augment the shadows cast by the direct sunlight as it enters the flat at a low angle.



19.01.2012

Restoration of Original Features



We have recently received the completion certificate for building works conducted on a scheme which we developed in Bronsart Road, a street of terrace houses in Fulham. The certificate cost an additional fee to obtain but it is essential for future reference as it demonstrates that all the work completed complies with the current Building Regulations. With this scheme we took the Building Notice route, submitting the structural calculations and plans of the property to the council initially then liaising with the assigned Building Control Officer during the course of construction.

During the 80's and 90's many of the houses along the street were developed into flats, greatly increasing the density, and consequently, there are numerous loft extensions along the road. In our proposal for a rear loft extension and a roof terrace we took the opportunity to restore the original roofed bay on the front elevation that forms that pinnacle of many of the Victorian bays along the street. We also responded to the surrounding roof terraces which provided us with adequate evidence to use the building's rear wing typology to include an outdoor terrace in the development.

Project SL_345
Bronsart Road

Appointment to Grade 2 Listed Building



We have recently been appointed to assist a florist's shop in the submission of a Full Planning Application and Listed Building Consent for internal alterations to the ground floor of a Grade 2 Listed Building. The shop is located on the corner of Clerkenwell Road and Leather Lane, just parallel to the grand main arched entrance of the Radcliff Buildings. The main arch establishes the centre of the symmetry of the front elevation of Clerkenwell Road. Distinguished from the lower floors of the building, the upper residential flats are stepped back with an ornamented cast iron balcony at the base and large pilasters that give presence to the upper stories of the façade.

The protruding corners of the property are clad with glazed brick, a notably Victorian characteristic of design. This material was used as its smooth surface was easy to clean, a very useful property in the dark streets of the capital where the smoke of industry lay a thick layer of soot on the facades of buildings. It was not until smokeless zones were implemented in London in 1956 that historic buildings could begin to be cleaned, revealing the original colour of their cladding.

19.01.2012

The Process of Detailing



From the beginning of our studies it became apparent that long work hours were a significant part of the architects' lifestyle. We have continued this practice to our efforts in the studio as we often hold meetings with our clients once their working day is complete. Today we met with our client from North London to discuss the design of the kitchen in our extensive renovation of a terrace property in Hillview Gardens. The limited budget available for the scheme has given us the opportunity to consider developing our own bespoke designs for the kitchen, integrating the appliances, worktop and storage spaces into a single working system that is designed to suit the needs of our client and his family.

Through discussing the proposals for the scheme we were able to rigorously test our ideas, integrating new designs and resolving issues as they arise. Establishing a feedback loop of this nature with our clients is essential for our design process, a method of testing and refining that helps us progress towards the final design which takes into account the lifestyle of our clients, practical issues and aesthetic choices as well as the geometric properties of the space, all factors that contribute towards the holistic design strategy generated.

19.01.2012

Specification of Wood Flooring



When specifying a major element of an interior renovation such as the flooring there are a lot of factors to consider. The aesthetic and tactile qualities of the material are paramount as the feature will form the pedestal of a client's living space, a surface on which to walk, sit and lie in the private comforts of the home. Additional to the appearance and feel of the surface the underlying solid material itself has a variety of properties that have both advantages and disadvantages that must be judged against the unique situation of the overall design.

The floorboard that we are looking at using for our scheme in Westbourne Terrace are produced in two distinguished varieties, solid and engineered, each with their own properties that will ultimately inform our decision. A solid wood floor

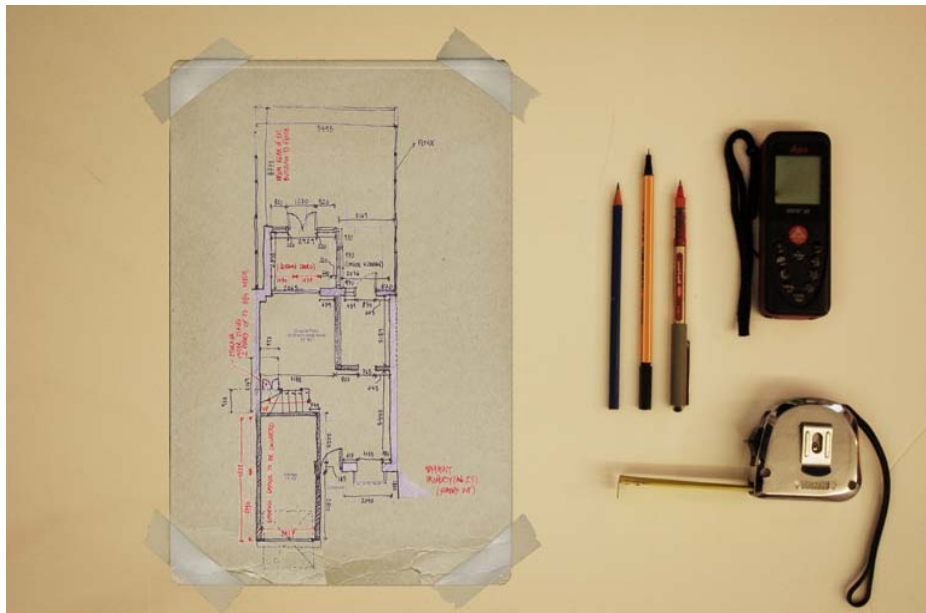
can be retreated and sanded a number of times, this not only greatly increases its shelf life but it also means that its appearance can be altered through the use of different treatments if one so wishes. However, solid wood is particularly susceptible to movement caused by moisture and temperature, if the conditions of the building are not adequate the wood will warp and disfigure over time. For example, it is particularly unsuitable to install solid wood in the basement level of a property where these conditions are most apparent. Engineered wood is detailed to reduce this effect and improve the stability of the material. It is made up of layers of wood joined by an adhesive; this process of manufacture reduces the effect of expansion and contraction on the wood.

Reading a Building

During the early days of our practice, our first clients were builders in need of assistance with their projects and from these humble beginnings we often found work through word of mouth. It is this process that has led us to visit the next-door neighbour of one of our past clients this weekend to assist them with a similar request.

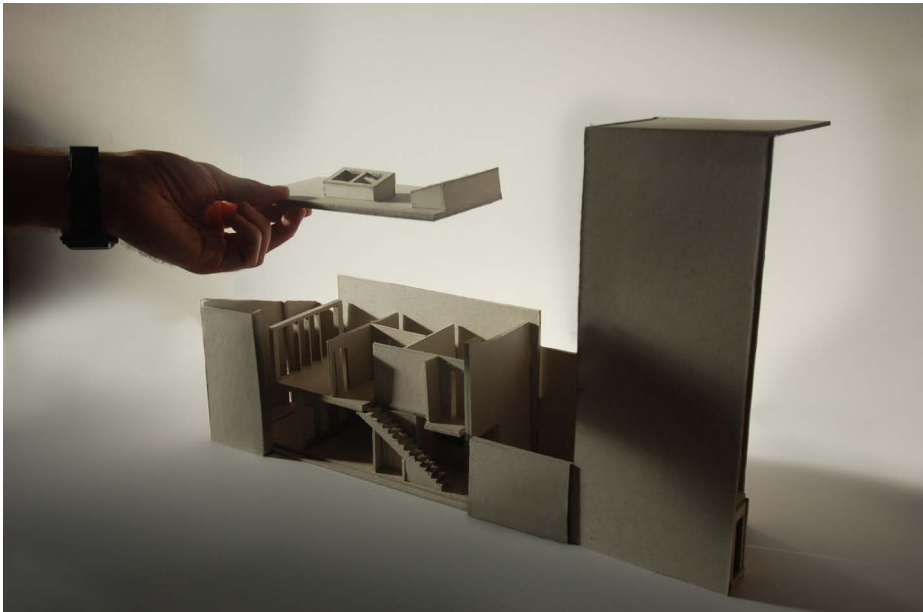
While our marketing method has developed, the essential tools of our operation remain the same. The system of surveying is consistent and repeated throughout our appointments as the starting point of our involvement. This initial mapping of the building helps us to capture the essence of the existing conditions of the site, assimilating the aspects of each individual case to help us establish its potential before we input the data into our system.

On our journeys across the capital we often intersect the commuter routes, traveling against the flow, into rather than out of the suburban housing belts, which help us to trace the origins of London's residential history and its continuous development. We often witness the rise of modern developments, made more prominent by the surrounding subtleties of the period dwellings. This trend in new housing is reflected critically though the awarding of the Carbuncle Cup, presented each year to the ugliest buildings in Britain.



23.01.2012

Sketch Model



We have built a sketch model of our project in the heart of Shoreditch to visualise the interior spaces in relation to the dark, overshadowed spaces of our scheme for a small private residence in the largely developed area. The model has a series of removable sections which will allow us to plug-in new proposals for the upper floors and test the ingress of daylight into the proposed spaces.

The scale of the model allows the observer to visualise the interior as well as the exterior of the home so that through manipulation of the spaces and light sources it can demonstrate the changes in the quality of the daylight that penetrates the façade. The simplification of the solid walls and boundaries of the building into simple gray-board assists the purpose of the model, distilling the basic elements of the arrangement into rooms and openings that can be scrutinised. With this maquette as a reference tool we will be able to develop the scheme along with the client's brief, helping him to achieve the most advantageous alterations to the envelope of the building.

New Project in Suburban Conservation Area

We have recently been appointed to assist our clients with obtaining permission to convert their garage into a habitable room. The area itself has now become obsolete and is only used as storage as their car does not fit inside. Although evidently a recent development, the property is situated on the edge of Wandsworth Common Conservation Area, consequently, this means that the Permitted Development rights do not apply and furthermore, the character of the local surrounding will have to feature in the application, throughout which we will support our sensitivity to the construction of the existing streetscape.

The area itself is in some aspects reminiscent of a village green with surrounding examples of Victorian Gothic residential architecture as well as the dominant St. Mark's Church, a Grade 2* Listed Building. As the area became a suburb of an expanding London it achieved a greater consistency in its range of building typologies, all of which centred around the common, a wide open space for the workers to enjoy at the weekend. It is this idyllic scene of the capital's Victorian suburbs that the council have designated for protection.

The modern development in which the property resides is arranged in the formation of a cul-de-sac, or close as the road's name. This typology that occurs in urban planning was first used in modern urban development in the UK for the arrangement of the new suburbs. This use of the dead end was apparent in the design of Welwyn Garden City which reflects the planning theories of Ebenezer Howard. The garden city movement supported the development of suburban towns separated by agricultural land with the intention of consolidating and lessening the divide between nature and the dense urban centres that were emerging. Somewhat paradoxically, the cypress tree sited in the area of planting around Arundel Close is associated with death and common among cemeteries. This can ironically be seen to reflect the phase, dead end road, used to describe cul-de-sacs.



Rehabilitation



Looking back at our project in Crimsworth Road, the rough, damaged state of a home, once the shelter of a working family during the Blitz, reminds us of the work of Gordon Matta-Clark, an American artist, who, although trained as an architect, preferred to deconstruct buildings rather than construct them. His work expressed the entropy that occurs quickly in disused buildings and by dislocating the literal cut he had made of a building from its site, into a gallery, he drew on the theory behind the Readymades of Marcel Duchamp.

Before being acquired at a public auction, the derelict house was the residence of a group of squatters who were living there without hot water, although they still managed to get an internet connection to the outside world thanks to the neighbour's unprotected wireless router. We met the inhabitants during our initial visit to the site and participated in the negotiations for their relocation. Ironically, they were paid more to move than we received in architectural fees!

Our work on the property included the full refurbishment of the broken building, beginning with all the necessary paperwork and bureaucracy involved in obtaining Planning Permission and Build-

ing Regulations approval along with the structural calculations for the property. Our design, while limited, coalesced the key characteristics of the property, enhancing the interior of the new loft and roof terrace with cool, crisp lines as well as rationalising the internal space of the Victorian dwelling.

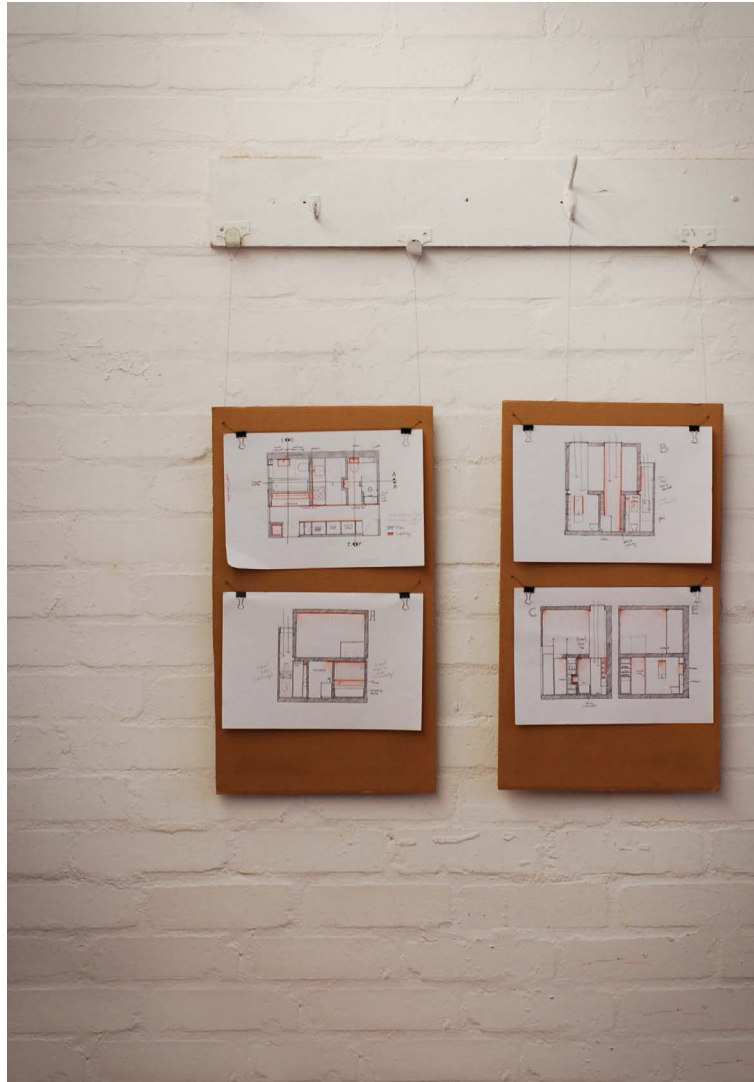
One of our successes was persuading our client to restore the wooden sash windows that would have originally adorned the front elevation of the property, although the new openings are double glazed, guaranteeing a higher U-Value and reduced noise disturbance, this represents the triumph of our views on the conservation of London's housing, protecting the details and the craftsmanship evident in the process of building homes with natural materials.

Now time has passed and after a few months since our initial measurement survey we returned to the site this weekend and we were pleased to find that it seems to have returned to its original state. Reaching the end of the project we can reflect now upon the cyclic process of deterioration and redevelopment, emphasized by the fact that the house is now returning to real-estate market, although with a much larger value.

The Role of Mapping

Permeating the design process, from the initial site studies to the detailing of bespoke elements, is the formation of diagrams. Diagrams can be abstract or concrete, qualitative or quantitative but their main purpose is to communicate a state or intention to the reader. We employ the use of this technique to develop our ideas and discuss them with our client on a regular basis. This input - output cycle helps us to configure increasing levels of detail into our schemes.

The scale and nature of our project at Westbourne Terrace allows us to implement this methodology to its full effect, returning frequently to the site to address and readdress our scheme at varying levels of design. As a young practice we see this modus operandi as a loyal continuation of the basic principles established during our years of formal architectural education. To bring about the emergence of the intrinsic principles and orchestrate the evolving conditions we see this system as paramount to the conclusion of a successful scheme.



27.01.2012

Bygone Urban Fabric



Today we held a successful meeting with a client for one of our residential schemes in which we are involved at present. The house itself has a plethora of beautiful, original details and architectural ornamentation, characteristic of the Victorian era with traces of the Gothic Revival style. The house is a monument to the pre World War 2 Plumstead and now sits in an irregular urban landscape among a variety of twentieth century common examples of British housing developments. It is clear that, unlike the standardised typologies that surround it, the dwelling has been carefully designed by the original architect to be site specific, reflecting the passage of the sun in the positioning of the two bays on the property's façade. The heavy, tectonic use of bricks to construct the envelope gives the building a stoic, robust appear-

ance, typical of similar caretakers' dwellings in Victorian Parks, in which the issue of surveillance was elemental to the architectural brief.

During the meeting we established the routine of the occupants and considered the use of the space throughout the house. The positioning of the rear has presented the chance to establish a concealed garden area, acting as a void to bring diffuse daylight into the kitchen and provide a focus point for users of the worktops facing the windows. While a compact location can present issues, we believe that the private, hidden nature of the site will present a clear opportunity to improve the function of new spaces without coming into conflict with the original features of this charismatic

27.01.2012

Blank Canvas

In myths of rebirth, a death and loss must occur before restoration and resurrection can begin. We reflected on this cycle after our first visit to a newly acquired property, owned by a young couple who intend to start again with the interior of their new flat in South London. Upon taking up ownership the occupants took the opportunity to express themselves, along with their friends, by applying graffiti to the existing internal walls of the house. It was a surprise to find this behind the façade of an Edwardian house as the interior looked more like it had been occupied by Warhol and the members of his enigmatic Factory.

We often find that our building has been covered by the traces of urban artists. Their audience is the everyday pedestrian and visitors to the monthly well known event taking place on the last Thursday of the month along Redchurch Street, a vibrant passage of East London which features in the latest REM music video "UBerlin" which, apart from including a glance of our office, records the large variety of scribblings along the road. While we have never attempted to remove these artworks we were certainly startled to find similar markings within the rooms of a new appointment. We are glad that the property was not Listed as we would currently be liaising with the Metropolitan Police rather than the Building Control officer!



Ornament is Not a Crime

Behind the Gothic Lonsdale Square in Islington, in the Victorian streets of North London, there was a hive of activity in which artisans of old trades operated, serving the city with their architectural wares from cast iron railings to carved stone pediments. The industrial aspect of the area has long since become extinct but a remnant of the area's heritage can still be found, hidden in a small workshop. The local family business belonging to two brothers specialises in the creation of stone compositions for outdoor use. Through the use of moulds and sand, they cast and give form to a multitude of architectural ornaments, often required for houses in need of restoration with certain historic value.

As we are attracted to heritage architecture, we are now taking the opportunity to discover the process through which the buildings and fragments are constructed. After a day of viewing tile showrooms with a client, whose flat in a Listed Building we are extensively renovating, we introduced him to this way of working to propose an alternative solution to cladding some of his internal walls. It is important to understand the intrinsic properties of a material before integrating it into an architectural composition hence our belief that experimentation must be carried out in the workshop environment before the finished product is installed.



30.01.2012

Passing of Plans



Recently we have received confirmation from Camden Council that the drawings and documentation, submitted for a roof extension, part of a larger scheme for a domestic property in Kingsgate Road, have been approved to comply with the Building Regulations from the Building Control department. While for a project of relatively minor scale and complexity in a residential scheme, a Building Notice application is adequate, some clients prefer the more rigorous specification that is provided with the drawings completed for a Full Plans Application. This type of submission is compulsory during the construction of any commercial or larger schemes where members of the public will use the space.

The package is primarily developed to comply with the Building Regulations and it covers all relevant Parts, from Part A (Structural Safety) to Part P (Electrical Safety). However, the information provided is adequate to form the base of a tender and construction package from which a contractor can provide a quotation and complete the works as they are specified. At the conclusion of a project, the work will have to satisfy the final inspection from a Building Control officer who will check that it was completed as specified in the plans that have been passed.

Project SI_341
Kingsgate Road

Consultation for Conservation



On Thursday we met with a Conservation Officer from Islington Council to discuss the internal and external alterations to a domestic property in a quiet residential street in N1, recently acquired by our client. The house in question is an early Victorian terrace with a butterfly roof and many features which are evidently later additions such as a concrete bomb shelter in the rear garden. We seek to rationalise the interior including the replacement of a series of galvanized steel framed openings for hardwood timber sash windows to follow the original architect's specification in the 19th century.

Our meeting with the Conservation Area Officer helped us to establish the aspects of the development which must be conserved and other elements that could be developed with a scheme sympathetic to the existing envelope that

does not detract from the period character of the terrace. With projects of this nature it is essential to consult with the Conservation Officer before submitting an application, as attention will be paid to the details of the scheme, including the specification of the materials and the proportions that are used.

The immediate context of the site means that a two storey rear extension will be a crucial response to the overshadowing existing conditions created by two brick protruding masses that bound the rear of the property. It is clear that an extension must not replicate the heavy imposition of the existing context, however, we discussed the possibility of responding to current low-quality architectural surroundings with a practical proposal that expresses the order and balance that reflects the detailing and geometry of the original terrace.

30.01.2012

Concrete: Immorality and Purity

When the properties of concrete were rediscovered after being lost for over a thousand years, the sculptable, liquid quality of the material was viewed with anxiety and apprehension by the architects of the day. The lack of prescribed form that the substance presented was seen as immoral and consequently established architects shied away from specifying it in their designs. The compressive qualities of the material however were employed by some engineers of the time, reinforcing monolithic feats of infrastructure that contributed towards the industrial age.

In our experimentation with concrete we now celebrate its intrinsic properties, the condensing of its fluid, chaotic state at birth into pure solid matter. Through manipulation of the mould we have distorted the surface to emboss and impress the material's face. The resulting form describes the negative space around the casting block, reversing the perceptible imprint of the indentation. It is crucial to form a laboratory of ideas through which the properties of a substance are tested by translating the production process into a series of events inducing transformation and metamorphosis. As an example, the properties of the material used to sculpt the concrete will imbue the surface of the finished product with the characteristics of the vessel, leaving traces of the component's fabrication.



Mutual Ownership



With many alterations to a residential dwelling utilising the supporting wall that is frequently situated on the boundary of properties, the Party Wall etc. Act, established in 1997, is an essential legal document that prescribes procedure for protecting both owners from changes that may affect the integrity of both houses. The initiation of communication, as described in the act, is simple to follow and the owner proposing the changes, however can serve the notice, if a dispute arises, a Party Wall Surveyor can be appointed to mediate between the concerned neighbours.

In the case of Hillview Gardens, the existing extension belonging to the neighbour has proved beneficial to the construction of the scheme. The wall straddles the boundary, becoming a party wall which we can use to form the cavity which will insulate the development. The addition will also form the mutual expansion of the rear space and the new internal space now covers the sheer wall that protruded from the neighbouring home.