

IDEA LYC

Realms of the Mundane:
Viewpoint of an architectural practice

建築實踐觀

Cuadernos de Estudio



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Process

As over the last months we have seen the end of some of our long running projects, this month marks the beginning of a series of new involvements. We have begun work on site at a local residential project in E1 at which we are undertaking extensive alterations both inside and out, reshaping the interior around the client's needs and updating the exterior with unique cladding solutions. Throughout the build we have been developing details that demonstrate consideration of the phenomenological aspects of the dwelling as well as the practicalities of working with readily available components.

This month we have also developed a relationship with the architectural organisation, Open - City, arranging a series of events that have kept us busy. The first, a workshop held at Leadenhall Market, gave us the opportunity to engage with the capital's children and architects of the future as part of Junior Open House Festival. Working with the children we built structures of balloons that snaked across the historical building. We also had a chance to explore the labyrinth of the market and talk with the locals who gave us a fascinating insight into its history. Later in September we will be involved with Open - City's flagship event, Open - House where we will be opening our doors to the public to explore our workplace.

Our work in the many Conservation Areas of London also continues as we have been dealing with both the Planning department and Building Control for these sensitive schemes. Recently we have come across a house, now divided into flats that is deemed as Locally Listed, an interesting feature that defines the building as historically significant to the Borough on a local scale rather than nationally and therefore while the structure is not protected by the same legislation that governs those with an interest in Buildings listed by the Secretary of State, the council will treat the building with the same consideration as if it was Listed, judging any alterations against the character of the property and seeking to encourage the retention of the original features.

We hope you enjoy our month's monologues.

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Understanding User Needs



Buildings around London often house a mixture of styles; additional features which have been added during the building's lifetime to respond to the changing needs of the occupants. This cycle creates the diverse and eclectic landscape around us and while new land continues to become a rare commodity and demolition likewise remains an unsustainable solution to building problems we will continue to repeatedly build onto our existing structures.

Following our previous role for securing planning permission to undertake a series of alterations to this educational institution we have recently been contacted by St Giles School to investigate the current conditions of the property and recommend renovation work to re-

store the appearance. We visited the site with our latest member of the team, our Chartered Structural Engineer, to consider the issues regarding this work.

One of the most striking features of this project that we were asked to give our views on was a steel escape staircase installed at the rear of the building. Given that the school is expanding and they must ensure that there is adequate provisions for escape in the event of a fire it must be considered how many students and staff would be using the stairway. As discussed above this may be a case where the current needs of the users are not in line with the present state of the school and hence we must develop a plan of actions that is both practical and contextual.

07.06.2012

New Appointment in West Kensington



At Studio Idealyc we have been appointed to assist a couple who are undertaking renovation works to their new property obtained at an auction. While the terraces were originally uniform in their style and appearance, they have undergone a number of changes, especially at the rear of the property where the elevation takes on a more chaotic aspect. This is very common in residential properties as the street face of the building intends to uphold a symbolic rigid stance while the rear is designed based on a programmatic arrangement.

Our involvement in this new project will include the design of the internal arrangements as well as the proposal of a rear extension on the first floor balcony belonging to the property. The Council

who will be dealing with the application is Kensington and Chelsea and to achieve the best outcome for our client we will be engaging the Planning Department in a dialogue to assure that the completed scheme follows all the relevant policies.

It is interesting to note that while the properties each originally a single dwelling house, the whole terrace has now been separated into flats. This speaks volumes about the growing density of London from the Victorian period onwards and the price of housing related to this. Originally, these buildings would have been occupied by an affluent family who would use the extra space in the house as the servant quarters as well as opulent entertaining spaces to impress guests.

08.06.2012

RIBA Digital Photograph Competition 2012

Another month of competition entries begins with our submission of two photographs to the RIBA members' competition in which the photographer must explore Britain in search of the theme "Architecture 2012". With this brief in mind we travelled across London during the Bank Holiday weekend celebrations to capture the economic, social and physical character of the capital. We aimed for two images that could illustrate the dichotomy at the heart of the city, a conflict of the orderly and the chaotic.

Our first image, titled, "Ah Hoc Patriotism", is a shot of temporary flags that line the monumental 100 Victoria Embankment in a display of public support for the Monarchy, promoting national pride on the jubilee weekend. The curved, orderly stone facade is well matched with the periodic additional of flag between the repeating columns. The grandeur of the building is complimented by the staccato repetitions of the national symbol.

The second picture, titled, "The Occupy Movement in the Historic Capital", records the opposed camps of Triton Court, a rigid art deco statue to the establishment and the Occupy London camp in Finsbury Square squats in opposition, highlighting concerns with inequality. This image is far less organised and stripped of pageantry, yet remains expressive in appearance.

Project SI_344
Redchurch Street





Appointment to home at Underwood Road

We have been appointed to complete a striking project at a residential property on Underwood Road, East London. Having received planning permission for the complete overhaul of the 1980's property in a quiet residential area of the city, we are now in the process of compiling a package for tender, which we plan to send to a variety of builders that we have collaborated with in the past.

The project, which is situated close to our offices, represents a flagship development for the practice, incorporating a series of exciting and experimental design features into what on the surface is a very unassuming property. A rear extension, combined with a complete reorganization of the internal partitions throughout the property will compliment the spectacular conversion and expansion into the buildings roof space, complete with a stunning glazed façade overlooking the city.

The project's design will represent an amalgamation of our design expertise with work beginning on the complete overhaul of the property commencing as soon as we receive quotations and anticipated timeframes from all of the parties involved.

10.06.2012

Meeting with Client



We met today the clients of a property on Birkdale Road, Ealing, to discuss a series of alterations we are planning to undertake on the property. The extensive developments to the property will include a new side and rear extension, as well as the conversion of the loft space into a habitable environment.

These expansive changes have presented the challenge of carrying out large - scale works whilst also remaining within the confines of permitted development rights. We have thus organised the new proposals for the property so that we are able to incorporate the maximum possible space into the design of the new additions to the home whilst also not exceeding any of the strict planning regulations that are in place.

In utilising the planning laws to our advantage rather than disadvantage, we have been able to design a scheme that fully responds to the clients brief whilst also successfully passing through the planning department.

Local list at Mowbray Road



We have been appointed to redesign and extend a flat within this large period property on Mowbray Road, in the London Borough of Brent. The flat occupies one half of the ground floor and part of the first floor within this locally listed Victorian property. The fact that the property is locally listed presents a few challenges to us as a practice, and although the property does not come under the protection properties that are nationally listed enjoy, and alterations or modifications to the property will come under extra scrutiny when passing through the local authorities planning department.

Brent Council's own agenda regarding locally listed building decrees that 'attention can be drawn to the particular character or importance of a building in the local streetscene when it is affected by some form of development

proposal,' and when considering potential schemes for the property, we will implement the same level of meticulous planning combined with extremely sympathetic design used when approaching the conversion of a listed building.

This once large family home, with separate rooms for living, dining and cooking has now been transformed into a habitable environment for three separate groups of people. Large individual rooms now contain entire living spaces, with kitchens and dining areas all combined into the single space. The project at Mowbray Road highlights the need, especially in burgeoning cities such as London, to fiercely protect our beautiful architectural heritage, but also the need that many have to be able to freely adapt it in order to allow for contemporary styles of living.

Working in Conservation Areas



Following another recently completed project on Vivian Road, the owner of another property on the same street, with the challenge of rearranging the interior layout of the house, approached us. Keeping in mind that the building lies within a conservation area, implementing schemes such as this are not always as simple as they may initially appear.

Factors such as ensuring the provenance of materials, matching architectural details, and installing the correct fixtures and fittings appropriate to age of a property also have an impact on the level of expense and time scale involved in developing a building in a conservation area.

Having gained the commission through word of mouth, the project on Vivian Road further highlights the studio's commitment and ability to deliver outstanding architectural design despite often facing limiting parameters. We have found that design can flourish through limitations as they call for creative alternatives to the status quo.

19.06.2012

Project Underway at Underwood Road



Our latest project for us to take to the construction stage is Underwood Road, a residential house in East London. We are currently liaising with the builders on site, visiting frequently to discuss the detailing of the next stage. With a project that is moving quickly during construction, it is always important to stay a step ahead of the work while appraising the current situation of the site. This balancing act informs the future stages of the scheme while delivering quality throughout.

The project is currently in the early stages of development and with the demolition completed swiftly the shell of the extension is now being constructed. This involves firstly the implementation of the additional steel structure, speci-

fied by our Chartered Structural Engineer, and secondly, the assembly of the timber frame which forms the skeleton of the design around which we will wrap the cladding.

During our most recent site visit we considered the relationship between the exterior and the interior. This is most apparent in the specification of a large piece of unobstructed glazing and opening for ventilation that is intended to bring both light and fresh air to the space. While a building provides shelter, it should not isolate the individual from the outside and hence the careful placement of a window can draw the eye to attractive vistas that occur in the local urban landscape.

19.06.2012

Upcoming Workshop at Leadenhall Market



Following our competition entry for the “Open-Up” contest held by Open-City we have been selected to host a workshop with children at the Walbrook Building on Sunday between 11am and 1pm. Based on our original proposal for an outdoor event involving “balloon structures” we have developed a group activity in which our aim is to engage with the young children’s ambitions and encourage teamwork to achieve the largest possible pyramid form, adding balloons from the ground upwards as the project rises from a single balloon to a monolithic mass.

The Open-City organisation, responsible for the popular Open House event held across the capital, is celebrating its

twentieth anniversary this year and in this time their contribution to the architectural awareness of the city and its inhabitants is commendable. Their involvement spans many areas of public and city life, from working alongside councils and developers when developing local proposals to educating pupils across London via classroom programmes and summer academies.

Studio Idealc are very excited to be involved in the work of this prestigious venture and we are looking forward to running the activity at the weekend. We welcome you to join us with your children to help us with the challenge we have set ourselves and learn about the structure of buildings along the way.

Victoria Park, Post-Industrial Revolution Amenity Space



We have recently been appointed to complete the detailed specification of a house situated in one of the Conservation Areas of Hackney. The property itself was built in the 1930s and still bears many of the original features reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement such as the tall chimney and arched entrance, specified to accentuate a rural aspect to the urban dwelling.

The Conservation Area in which the property lies was originally set up in 1977 and later extended in 1994 and is known as the Victoria Park Conservation Area. The area spans a large space covered by both Hackney Council and Tower Hamlets Council and is made pri-

marily of property of "Victorian vintage" according to the original report submitted in 1976.

While now seen as attractive and quaint properties, the protected Victorian terraces of the Victoria Park Conservation Area mark the site of great social upheaval related to the industrial revolution when the area surrounding Victoria Park was littered with brick kilns manufacturing the construction materials to drive the development of the growing capital. It was in response to the lack of amenity space that the residents of the area appealed to Queen Victoria to create the green space that the Conservation Area is now named after.

21.06.2012

Revealing the Loft Space at Underwood Road



The site at Underwood Road has been transformed into a hive of activity with work now well under way. Many of the interior walls have now been removed, and the installation of two large steel joists which each span the entire width of the house is complete. Work has begun on the removal of the first floor ceiling which has dramatically opened up the entire property, revealing the roof space which will soon be dramatically altered with the installation of a large timber clad dormer.

The removal of the interior walls also gives an impression as to how the newly devised floor plans will improve the circulation throughout the property, opening up the spaces, maximising the impact of the large panoramic window that will be installed in the roof.

The project at Underwood Road successfully demonstrates how a property that once offered an extremely traditional and cramped means of habitation can, through intelligent design, be transformed into a contemporary, spacious living unit.

25.06.2012

New Appointment at Wellwood Road

We have recently completed a survey of a property of Wellwood Road, Ilford. The property, situated in east London, is located just minutes from the Olympic Park, in this densely populated part of London.

The client wishes to extend the property at the rear with a two- storey extension, creating a large open plan living space looking onto the garden of the property. The Victorian property is richly ornamented, a design feature that must be respected when proposing modern alterations, where the success of the final outcome will undoubtedly be judged upon the level of harmony obtained between the original and the contemporary structures.

The client also hopes to extend upwards into the properties substantial roof space, and we are currently investigating the possibility of rebuilding the gable end of the roof in order to maximise the area that can be utilised. The project would involve the construction of a large dormer, which when combined with the new ground floor extension would exploit the house to it's fullest extent.



27.06.2012

Balloon City

This weekend the team gathered together on Sunday morning to host "Balloon City", an event held on behalf of The Open-City Organisation Junior Open House Festival. For two hours we were situated at the centre of the Grade II* Listed Building, Leadenhall Market, building balloon structures with the help of the participating children and their parents. We were overwhelmed with help from passers by, curious at our attempt to control the balloons in the windy market, and everyone had a very enjoyable time.

The location, Leadenhall Market, was a fantastic venue to be allocated and the authentic decorated structures were a delight for the eyes, with multiple pathways of sculptural stucco and rich colour transversing the tall ceiling. The building itself was exciting to explore, a small maze with mysterious passageways lit dimly from the glazed ceiling, it seemed to act as a metaphor for the narrow streets of historic London and forms a contrast to the vast expanse of development the surrounded the building.

Situated just outside of the Market is the Lloyd's of London Building by Rogers Stirk Harbour Architects, which on first glance seems in direct opposition to the old market. The building is a prime example of the High-Tech movement in modern architecture and expresses the functional aspect of the design on the exterior which itself presents its own futurist ornamentation. While seemingly based on different principles and designed in different periods of time there are also striking similarities between the Lloyd's Building and Leadenhall Market. These are aptly illustrated in the observation of a council employee that the ribbed ceiling of the market resembles Giger's Alien, a visual reference that is frequently cited when considering Richard Roger's seminal design.



Cladding the new extension at Underwood Road



Our latest site visit to Underwood Road has allowed us to further develop the design of the roof extension to the rear of the property. With the beautiful cedar cladding now almost fully in place, we can really begin to appreciate the lightness and variety the natural wood lends to the design, especially when compared to the dark severe slate additions to many of the neighbouring properties.

With the timber frame now in place, it is now also possible to gain a sense of the relationship the large opening in the timber frame will create between the outside world and the property, opening up the roof space to the surrounding environment. In particular, the juxtaposition of a large evergreen tree situated in the

adjacent properties garden is especially pleasing against the natural yet precisely crafted cedar cladding.

Ingenious features incorporated into the timber framed extension also help to maintain the purity of the design, such as an inventive guttering system integrated into the extension's flat roof, ensuring that there is no need for any external drainage to be on show. A felt lined trough that has been carved in the flat roof collects any excess rainwater, which is then deposited into an internal drainage pipe that has been built in to the exterior cladding of the extension, cleverly preserving the addition's simple form.

Provision of Bicycle Storage at Ommaney Road



The recent conversion of a Victorian town house at Ommaney Road, situated in the London Borough of Lewisham, has recently been approved by the local authority on the condition of the inclusion of a bicycle storage facility into the proposal of the design.

Where once a provision for an appropriate amount of car parking may have been essential in successfully gaining planning permission for the conversion of a single dwelling into multiple flats, it speaks volumes about the increasing trend for cycling in the city, in the wake of rising fuel and transport costs combined with the general public's greater environmental conscience.

In the future we envisage the provision of such facilities to increasingly be specified in the planning stages, with schemes such as the Barclay's Bike format rolling out across the capital, as well as the inauguration of more and more bicycle lanes, making cycling a sensible, cost effective and environmentally sound alternative to driving. As architects representing a range of clients, we have ensured that we are catering to this increasing trend at Ommaney Road.

Hidden Functions and Exposed Geometries



Rigorous design means monitoring work on site at every step of the construction work as details that are implemented in the early stages can affect the finish of the final product. In our scheme at Underwood Road, measures need to be taken in order to hide the mechanical and electrical works servicing the building so that the overall design is not forced to become submissive to those features of the construction.

The ethos of hidden details continues to the storage spaces of the interior, flat panels will obscure the clutter of everyday life from the occupants yet can be completely folded away, making visible the complete contents of the unit. By simplifying a space, it does not neces-

sarily mean detracting from the overall effect, yet it means that like a painting by Mondrian, every line placed is carefully weighted based on its impact on the composition.

By disguising the ordinary, a space seeks the extraordinary, a room that reveals secrets and stimulates the senses, respecting not only the visual aspect of the materials but also the tactile pleasures of the smooth and rough, warm and cool surfaces as well as the percussion sound of use on the room such as the shuffle of footsteps. Rather than a manipulation of the truth, the scene brings to the fore the realities of architecture and the world we dwell in.

30.06.2012

Redecoration of our Shoreditch Offices

We are currently in the process of completely overhauling our offices in Shoreditch just in time for the London Open House Weekend on the 22 & 23 September. The weekend, which this year celebrates its twentieth anniversary; sees over 700 different buildings across London open their doors to the general public.

Newly plastered white ceilings combined with Venetian plaster walls will provide the backdrop to a series of events and exhibits that we are planning to hold over the course of the open house. The white gallery like spaces will provide an open environment in which to work and create, whilst the process of clearing the office, refurbishing and improving our surroundings is almost ritualistic, rejuvenating every aspect of the studio.

The aim of the Open House event is to give the public an impression of the way in which we work, opening up the studio with the aim of showcasing the essence of Studio Idealyc.

