

IDEA LYC

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

建築實踐觀

Cuadernos de Estudio



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Process

Literature plays an important role in education and development as well as reflective exercises and hence we value the rich imagery of Kafka and his capability for imagining sequences that do not exist or tally with reality and therefore became realms of the surreal. Life sometimes can seem a complex combination of events and episodes, weaving the lives together of the city's inhabitants. Sometimes the routine flow of life can be disrupted throwing us off course and leaving us on a strange island when we are castaways, shipwrecked on our own personality. In cases like this the surroundings can play an important part in our rehabilitation, providing the comfort and shelter needed to heal. Thus architecture is important not only for its physical presence but for the emotional support it can imbue.

The studio takes this opportunity to express our most deep sense of sorrow for the loss of our colleague's mother, which led her to travel across the water and back to her homeland to be with her family in this difficult time. In times of dislocation, a rigid awareness of direction is crucial to weather the transition that life demands of you. The support of others is also essential when passing through the tribulations of a journey that you cannot choose but most of us will have to tread this route at least once in our life.

It may seem strange in times like this but our colleague's first hand experience of cemetery buildings lead her to make a profound observation on the work of the important modernist Swedish architect Erik Gunnar Asplund, namely the The Woodland Chapel at the Enskede Cemetery in Stockholm. The ritual focus on avenues of trees mark a linear procession through which the mourners return the lost to nature. This is a lesson we all must learn, that the emotions of a place must retain the intrinsic and considered qualities required by the complex human being. Architecture therefore must not lose sight of the tectonic qualities of traditions and symbolic celebration as we move towards a society of forward thinking technologists we must look back at the history in order to learn and respect from that which has passed.

This third monologue is dedicated to Nerea Bermejo, our colleague, friend and a pillar in our practice's spirit.

Studio Idealyc are:

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- The team at Studio Idealyc

01.03.2012

Poetic Organisation

The more you linger on the subject of form the looser the term becomes and the further it can slip away. We believe form takes shape through meaning and purpose; and if that is so then Hillview Gardens is now becoming as solid as the earth beneath the site. What was a series of volumes a few days ago has transcended into a harmonic combination of horizontal and vertical lines, with each one giving purpose to the next and existing in the meaning of its predecessor.

When we use the word form it is very easy to mistake it for an adjective of motionlessness, in danger of becoming stagnant; when in fact architectural form becomes the outcome of a fluid process of design. Pushing the design along with a series of sketch models has helped us

form a cleaner composition, discovering the importance the relationship between the projecting planes holds and creating a dialogue with them in response. Opting out of several designs which featured a variety of planes contrasting with one another we have started to focus our attention more on the rhythmic beauty of symmetry. This is symmetry not to the point of appearing identical but instead venturing into the realm of architecture appreciating the elegance of its neighbour with no necessity to contrast. Going back to the basics of constructivism we have been intersecting planes with one another to produce constructive joints. We have found this easy on the most part, working primarily with rectangles, requiring little force but creating powerful dynamics of horizontal and vertical lines.



Transcendence, the Residential Staircase



One of a building's most fundamental aspects is the possibility of raising the user from the ground plane. This technique is employed for a variety of uses, for example, the skyscraper of New York grew in response to the vast density of the population on the small island while the huts of tribes, raised on wooden stilts to avoid flooding describes a practical response to site and natural conditions. Progress in the vertical axis need not be linear but instead can be staggered to create mezzanine floors and mediating junctions between key locations.

With this in mind, we held a discussion about the conversion of the topmost flat in an Edwardian property. The client is looking to review a number of internal alterations to the home as well as achieving additional space though a roof extension. While modification to the loft can increase the overall amount of habitable space in the apartment, the ra-

tionalisation of the lower levels can bring about a dynamic improvement in the living conditions. At present, the flat mediates between 4 levels, with partial, dispersed staircases that ascend the floors of the house. We believe that the reinstatement of the staircase as the central circulatory route in the property will solve the initial problems of distribution that are caused by tight spatial planning.

Creating a dialogue with our clients, it is important to establish a brief which can be thoroughly interrogated through the testing of interrelationships and relative spaces. No space is independent and thus every change has consequences on the design, every action has a reaction in a self referential cycle of cause and effect. Newton's 3 laws of motion and the conservation of energy, although scientific rules, act as metaphors for the design process.

Drink Anyone?



The public house symbolically, socially and geographically can be found located at the heart of the community in many societies and as such remains an integral part of, be it evident or not, every UK inhabitants life.

The public house was given birth out of domestic dwellings and subsequently has remained mothered by the concept of combined living and service ever since, often hosting the landlord and members of staff above the communal space found on the ground floor. A socio-cultural and historical analysis of licensed public house locations shows the relevance of context to our understanding of contemporary social and spatial relations within the public house. Moving into a contemporary socio-cultural milieu, which is more multi-faceted and indeed hugely more complex than that of previous generations, it is important to consider a context that can dramatically change over time, requiring rigorous stipulation and consideration

then towards ways of adapting. Oldenburg (1989) argues that places such as the public house are “the heart of a community’s social vitality and the grassroots of a democracy.” And as such the public house deserves careful architectural consideration to keep it functioning.

Among these above considerations we offer thought and insight into maximizing space for multi- purpose usage and offer unique opportunities to develop the space of the public house in accordance to new social trends and constant economic and democratic change. The changing use of the public house requires clever reinterpretation of existing space. For The White Bear pub in Hounslow, Middlesex, we developed the project accordingly, converting the first floor into living apartments, adapting the brief around a complex setting within a working pub. The pub sits on the corner of intersecting streets and, as can be seen, addresses two different typologies as a result.

Top of the Tower



The Westbourne Terrace houses and others within the immediate area in Paddington were said to be the most handsome in London; built to replicate the scale of Hyde Park Gardens and similarly, although less generously, set back from the main roads that surrounded them. Sited at the very summit of one of these five story luxurious terrace townhouse an idea grows, propagating inspiration; and in its early stages, excitement of the possibilities of what is to come.

Since the late 1800s Westbourne terrace has remained almost static in its evolution, only the infrastructure being further improved. The project, which hides behind the traditional façade of British grandeur, reaches out inside, offering a true purity of space; constrained only by mere walls it promises to infect the surrounding architecture, taken in through one of many windows, with its relaxed, prospered way of being. Being situated within a Listed Building, the project has certain constraints regarding the degree

of change the existing building is to be subject to. Subsequently we have been using these issues as inspiration to instigate innovative design solutions regarding space, light and material. Natural brick breaks through the predominantly white walls at given intervals, taking form from the skylights situated above, light is staggering across the rough surface in contrast to its smooth and vacant, almost inviting neighbour.

Walking through the space you are drawn around corners with natural and hidden artificial lighting of varying qualities and depth. As intricate and as consistent as the scale throughout the spaces are, there remains bold decisions there also, noticeably the giant doorway standing at least 3 metres in height and a 1 metre in width, leading to the sleeping area and kitchen. Decisions like this alone reflect that when moving around the project, nothing is certain but uncertainty, propagated through one's imagination and its poetic license to deviate.

09.03.2012

Fashion Shoot



To our surprise we opened the door one lunchtime to find that the wall of our building had been temporarily appropriated for use in a fashion shoot. This surreal scene in Chance Street is almost what we should come to expect from the creative district of Shoreditch as this is just a single example of the eclectic and eccentric practises we witness working on the vibrant Redchurch Street. From jazz outside the window to the bustling crowds on the first Thursday evening of the month, the alternative displays of culture constantly inspire us.

As in architecture, the context of the scene is of great importance in fashion photography. The evident balance or contrast of the overall composition can enlighten the scene, either bringing the undulations of fabric into stark relief through use of a simple, geometric set or reinforcing the design intentions

of the outfit through the complimentary composition of the backdrop. The design decisions will be made through an intense period of analysis, the purpose and ethos of the outfit interrogated for the appropriate solution.

The wall used in the shoot is a prime example of London yellow stock brick, synonymous with the capitals rich architectural heritage, from the Georgian terraces of the 18th century to the warehouses of Docklands, the murky brown brick has a earthly, natural quality, the spirit of which can be employed to add a human scale to a cotemporary or historic composition. When designing heritage architecture, designers often specify reclaimed yellow stock bricks, and while this technique is a form of recycling, it also offers a more authentic aesthetic, adding a sensitive maturity to a new building or extension.

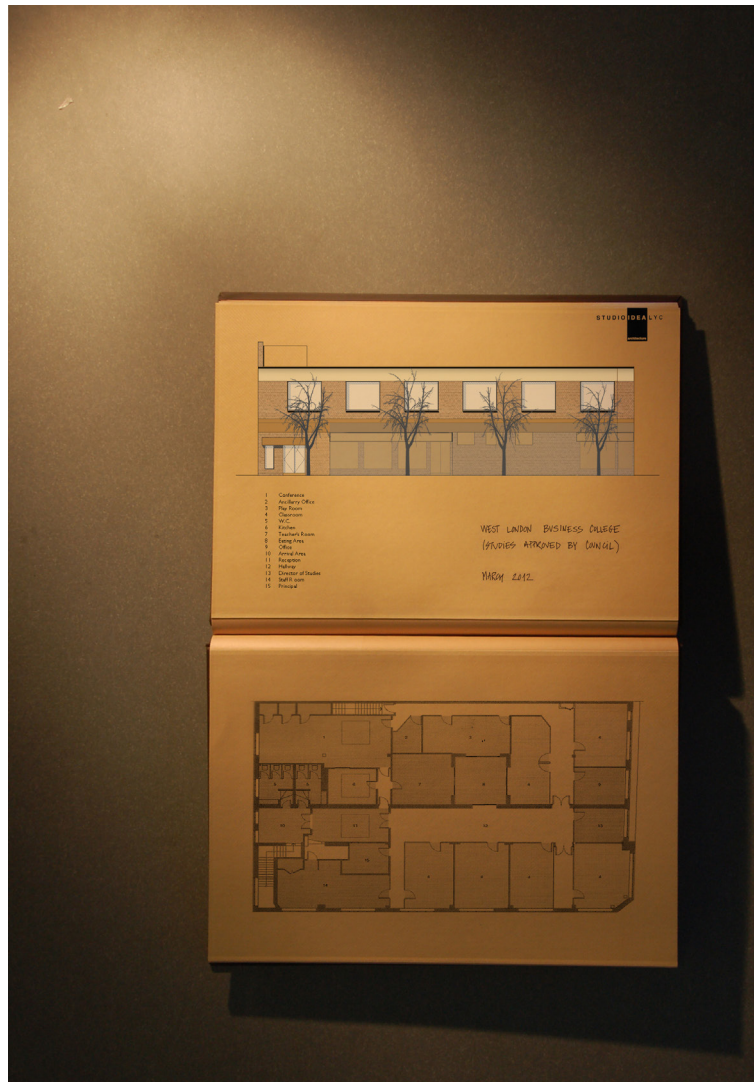
Planning Permission Secured for School

At Studio Idealyc we have recently obtained planning permission for the change of use for a school on a busy high road in Ealing. This is the second scheme of this nature we have been involved in, responding to the changing needs of the capital's students. While some residential schemes will only be considered in the immediate context of the neighbours, the commercial aspect of the application meant that the impact of the activity in the building on the local environment had to be carefully considered. The building is characteristic of an office from the 1960s, a layout which needed to be rationalised to fit the use of a contemporary school. As use will fluctuate throughout the day dependent on the function of the proposal, the established rhythms of the high street will be altered as if new streams were entering a wider river. This analogy, while perhaps inadequate for describing the complex rituals of the resident and the consumer, serves to highlight the unpredictable nature of the urban environment and its infrastructure.

The model of a river in chaos theory is subject to the initial conditions which

can vary minutely, yet have a vast impact on the end result of the system. While we can hypothetically predict the flow of the water given the correct data and the computing capacity, chaos ultimately sets in when turbulence is caused. Thus it is said that turbulence is the graveyard of theory, a limit that when passed, causes the delicate balance to tip and chaos to ensue. Determinism is therefore obsolete at this point as irregularity is the only given rule.

The comparison therefore to chaos theory allows us to begin to question the sporadic and unpredictable events that occur in the metropolis, often on a daily basis. A well recognised example of this can be gridlock, in cases when traffic comes to a stand still for no identifiable reason it is often due to the slight actions of a motorist acting as the initial condition and setting a chain of cause and effect which can build into this observable phenomena. Thus the urban environment has grown to a scale at which we cannot at present monitor and plan for every eventuality; nature exerts its invisible but undeniable influence over the cities of our time.



13.03.2012

New Appointment in Period House

When we visited Birdhurst Road we were confronted with everything large and proud in the world. This is architecture that shouts out, it appears in contrast to many of its neighbours that take a step back only to reiterating its presence. The building is significant in scale and whispers of detail, sparing itself from a muddy combination of the two. To the left of the house is a similar dwelling in size and age that had been converted into six flats, rented out to separate tenants, offering an insight into the scale of the floor plan of the project. To the right there is a new build block of flats standing four stories from ground level, one more than the property in question but at least three metres lower in its overall height. This gave us some indication as to the vastness of the volume to be found inside.

Stepping back for a more all encompassing view, sited directly opposite the front façade, we found ourselves staring into the past and considering what could become of the future, an interesting concept that when unraveled hosts possibilities of rediscovery and adventure.

The house was built in the 1800s and in the 1900s was converted into two separate dwellings. The way people lived in days gone by was that of a formal lifestyle that demanded separate rooms for each function: cooking, living and entertaining. In these less structured times, overlapping one space into another is much more natural to the way we live and use our homes. Possibilities surrounding separating the two houses start to emerge among the emerging rediscovery of what once was, a resurrection so to speak.



Understanding the Term, Hybrid



While Rome wasn't built in a day, it is equally difficult to start a house from the roof, downwards. However, due to availability of some of the sub-contractors we most like to work with, we are reinventing the construction process to fit timescale and budget as we often do on those schemes in which the design input and opportunities require a less conventional approach. We now know that, having passed the midpoint in the project's evolution, more attention that ever needs to be paid to the careful detailing and composition of the new dwelling.

One of the main principles of the Constructivists is that one must learn to seek out the basic principles of the material employed. Their varying strengths, grains and brittleness all affect the functionality of the overall component. To write you must first learn the alphabet, then put together words before finally the grammatical textures of a sentence

can be realistically approached. Applying this analogy to the principle of materiality, one has to learn to distinguish the properties of each element prior the composition is made. The tension of a design can be rooted in the respective joints between individual pieces, orchestrating an overall balance and formulation of meaning.

It is therefore our intention to complete a microcosm in the overall building, a precedent or reference point from which the finished product can be extrapolated and a manifesto for the principles of the construction to follow. With a benchmark that identifies the achievement that we would like to project throughout the house we can build on the new connections originally investigated, rigorously adapting the set of rules established to govern the composition of the later work.

15.03.2012

The Ritual of Bathing



Harking back to the classical period of Western History, one can easily recognise the similarities with today's cultural behaviours especially regarding how people choose to spend their recreational time. This is when one can express their true nature and revel in that which they enjoy. Bathing is a ritualistic exercise in which the human body interacts with water, solid meeting fluid in a rhythmic interval washing away the tribulations of the day. This behaviour can be immensely cathartic, even medicinal, as Hindus believe that immersion in the Ganges can wash away a person's impurities. The rushing water cleansing symbolic as well as physical stains marking the transition from one plane to another.

Taking on board these principles we have worked this relationship between human and water into a language in which architecture interacts with the

user, elevating the everyday experience of washing hands into a tactile moment of visual and tangible sensation. Specification of components is not always the choice of the architect so in those projects where we are commissioned to deliver a tailor made service, extra input is needed to justify these elements to the client who will eventually use them.

The space on this project becomes an installation, leaving the construction site to become a stage in the theatre where the austere pieces of Donald Judd may be used to express solid yet subtle messages. A considered arrangement coalesces to form a single work, either a temporary or permanent fixture. In some ways, the proposed detail will become a 1:1 scale model, a reminder of our school days in which representation was the key to communication when we were in front of an examination board and our work had to speak for itself.

Working with Lawful Development



We conduct many of our discussions with clients through emails, phone calls and internet conference calls and even sharing our screen display in real time to illustrate several issues with the work in progress. However, we always enjoy meeting people in person in our studio as this gives us the opportunity to exhibit our work in a most personalised service, discussing the sketches of proposed schemes.

In the case of College Road, the peculiar nature of the property meant that a meeting would be the best way to discuss the opportunity for development. The property in question is a terrace dwelling house that it appropriates two streets, not only offering two different direct routes of access but also presenting the chance to use the parameters of the Permitted Development Rights

to achieve a greater deal of extending a property without having to seek Full Planning Permission. Some of the regulations laid down by Lawful Development are not restricted by concrete figures but by ratios which means that the larger the garden, the greater the size of the outbuilding that can be erected.

In some cases this means that innovative solutions can be found to utilise the restrictions in a positive and beneficial response to the idiosyncratic qualities of the individual site. Processing many applications of this nature throughout the year we have gained an insight into those aspects of the Permitted Development Rights that are often complex and occasionally contradictory in properties that do not follow the standardised view that the legislation takes of British Housing.

20.03.2012

A Retrospective

Creating a new brochure for the company we have had a chance to look back over the projects we have completed, considering the development of the practice and the motives that drive our production. Looking over projects that span a variety of scales and uses it is important to establish the underlying issues that we are confronting with a forward thinking and holistic view of the design process. Situated at the heart of our philosophy is the human body itself, a natural figure that nevertheless seeks the machined beauty of right angles, often contrasted against the biological undulations of an organic setting. All actions and preferences for design and living draw on the paradox of the natural and the artificial, this is especially evident in the appropriation and subtle manipulation of raw materials to form architecture that revels in the craftsmanship of its production and the treatment of ma-

terials arranged in its composition.

Collating and re-presenting the information already established is a creative process in itself, as projects are viewed through the lens of experience we are consciously and unconsciously selectively sorting the multitude of schemes for the pieces that are important to us. Those projects that have taught us the most are acknowledged throughout with emphasis placed not only on the finished product itself but the method in which we arrived at the final outcome. The past cannot be altered and instead traces are left that tell the presence of history, both physical and psychological. Recognition of this notion is fundamental to us given our work in London, a city with a rich and varied heritage, and hence our retrospective becomes a manifesto of the past, talking about our present and the future.



21.03.2012

Convenience and Density



An architecture of convenience has influenced our cultures shore to shore and will continue to do so, as we are no longer submissive to time and its twisted grip which feeds off control. It is often thought that we require eight hours sleep at night to function, when in fact researchers believe that the working class of the past took sleep in two, four hour breaks, so as to accomplish more with their time. So society and class has influenced our sleeping patterns just as architecture does today. The Nordic culture has given us ice hotels, propagated from the land with the only material available to them.

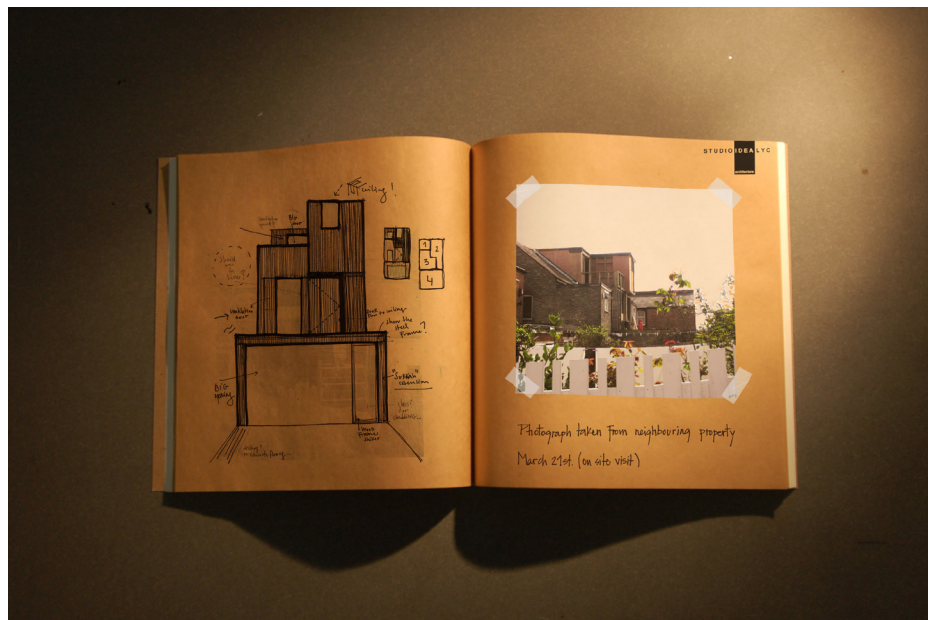
The way of life in as Tokyo is as intense and dominant as the high rises that litter it, and therefore requires a convenient architecture to aid its running. From this we see the creation of the sleeper capsule hotels. These hotels embrace the

user for short periods of time, from a few hours to twenty minutes and appear as a direct result of society's high demands.

Inspired by a curiosity for such architecture, we decided to embrace this lifestyle choice ourselves and produce something of equal convenience and necessity. A floor to ceiling unit stretched along the wall standing three metres high and nine metres long, is the total embrace of compact living. This is part of a conversion of an old warehouse into an work and living unit, responding to the needs of the busy inhabitants of the space. Employing pneumatic hinges, we have installed a fold down bed that reveals itself at the whim of its master and retreats just as obediently. Curiosity can lead to invention and invention results in curiosity, a truly productive cycle that we hope to translate into future projects.

23.03.2012

The Visual Topic



While we spend a great deal of our time preparing Planning Applications and Building Regulation packages in the studio, it is just as important to spend time in the dynamic environment of the construction site working with our builders guiding their efforts to achieve the results that we are looking for. In this process of creation there are many factors that will influence the final output since the transformation of a building is not a linear journey.

One of the pillars of our working methodology is striving to deliver the complete composition from the initial conceptual stage to the final implementation of bespoke details which the practice believe can be affordable as long as they are built on our terms. Hence in projects

like this we become the driving force behind the scheme coalescing the roles of contractor, project manager, quality control and ultimately the conductor of the performance, keeping in check the multiple disciplines that need to operate in harmony to achieve a successful design.

Photography is an indispensable tool in our practice. It helps with the recording and communication between ourselves and our clients allowing better representation from multiple perspectives, including those of the surrounding inhabitants as well as the users of the building itself. This is an architecture of responsibility, considering carefully the private and public aspects involved in the creation and day to day operation of a new home.

Advertising Architecture



The term Media Façade is often associated with over-dimensional screens and animated and illuminated advertising, like such places as our very own Times Square, or areas of New York and Hong Kong. The façade itself then becomes dematerialised being turned into an advertising medium for sending messages. This pushes the building into the background and serves only as a backdrop for the light show, which then takes precedence as the main attraction.

The world of advertising in recent times has evolved dramatically and to some degree in response to the architecture it inhabits. In contrast to mechanical media façades, where surfaces are haptic and tangible, the use of projections is being applied, forming an intangible content beyond the surface onto which

pictures are projected. The challenge is the interaction of the surfaces, the technology and the content of the projections.

Media architecture does not only take shape as the corporate high-rises that accumulate within the grounds of the city though, it actually starts a lot closer to home. A new project that we undertook was a realisation of this when having to apply for planning permission for the erection of a sign on what deserves to be a clean frontal façade. The curb on the façade and its site location on the corner of a street suggests that it was probably designed originally to incorporate some form of advertisement and that the barbaric placing of a large corporate sign onto the façade could and should be avoided.

Office Mobile Arrangements



When we think of having an office meeting, sometimes we think more about the contents of our discussions and less about the venue in where the event will be held. Those readers who follow our news will agree, from the information documented in previous entries, that one of the main intentions of our studio is to apply constant effort with the aim of always wanting to create a repertoire of solutions, often for the same design.

The concept of going against the term standardisation is always in our mind. A strategy used to develop this process is our constant approach to developing studies through different languages, some of which do not need to be necessarily related to the lineal aspect of architecture. While the team in the studio tends to discuss the news which the media bombard us with on a daily basis, we also enjoy experimenting with new materials, annotating social concepts, urban reactions, and in general, always

observing the diversity of the events that succeed in London, the city in where we all live and work. As observers we need to look objectively at the behaviours and actions of the inhabitants of the capital.

Most our meetings are normally arranged either in our studio or on site, but today thanks to the generosity of the currently unpredictable British weather we have experienced an additional unexpected alternative under a glorious sun. During this new experience, three members of our practice have been able to demonstrate Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes of fame, almost becoming actors in a surreal street scenario. We found a practical solution discovering a new meeting place, appropriating part of the pavement outside our office in Chance Street and taking on the role of temporary thespians while we were directly observed by a busy part of the Shoreditch's curious public.

Beauty in Austerity

As we often say there is not better way to devise the best outcome than experimenting with materials and connections ourselves. For our project in Hillview Gardens, in Hendon, we have tested a number of techniques and alternatives for transforming an ordinary piece of low cost decking that will be primarily used for underfoot areas of the garden into a panel that can be used to comprehensively clad the entire rear aspect of the outbuilding.

Colour, texture and pattern all relates to the sensory experience of the robust outer material. By using decking designed to take the load of a person we intend to give the building an air of permanence and solidity, while also accentuating the verticality of the structure through the alignment of the routed gaps in the panel originally specified to assure a better grip when walking over this. In a sense the lines themselves form a coded layer of ornamentation.

Black, while not always associated with the natural surroundings, is the result of the staining of the timber with oil, allowing the grain to come to the fore and setting back the fragility and inconsistencies in the timbers natural composure. This layer works in a practical sense as it only bring stability to the appearance but it also physically protects the wood from taking on water and consequently any possibility of deterioration, rotting or warping, this is especially important when considering using this material as the external covering to a building.



29.03.2012

Living in the Moment



The option of using metaphors helps in the perception of reader from children's literature to philosophical texts, allowing a more clear and prominent vision of what the writer is trying to express. Subsequently this notion applies to situations such as walking forwards while looking backwards which could seem blind sighted to some, ignorant of what could become. Here in the practice we believe it is a necessary to remain submissive, to a certain extent, to our past, our experiences, our feelings, our emotions and memories, not in order to replicate, but to stimulate those images seen before.

Architecture is essentially extremely personal, a reflection of our own being. This intense individual connection, which the architecture wears so proud, is essen-

tial to create space with true meaning, rich in history despite its newborn form. Some would argue that it remains a burden on the buildings functional purpose but we put to them that surely a buildings function, to the most poetic part, is to insight and provoke emotion, in short, to truly live.

The forms evident in the image taken from our project in Westbourne Terrace reflects a presence, which offers scope for interpretation, while remaining bold in its stance. Thoughts of projection and of intrusion bubble up as you see the beam reaching out through the wall. These images are tinted with the raw element of industry with visible bolts holding together the beams overhead. Light, form the moment

SI Table



The three dimensional territories of architecture and furniture are bound somewhat, with both taking influence largely from one another, both residing in each other's shadow. The connection between the two comes about from similar ideals, expressions of function and similarly of aesthetic.

However different both appear in scale when compared with one another, they congeal in size when placed within the context of their defining purpose, their existence, because while appearing different in scale to one another, they remain functional in scale when revolving about the human forms and its desired processes. In this respect they both become functional objects of use and aid and experience, architecture shrinking to human scale and respectively, furniture growing.

The manipulation of form, space, colour, texture and issues revolving around material and gravity are common to ar-

chitecture and furniture alike. Just as in architecture we believe furniture should be born from a specific context, a desire to amalgamate with its surroundings, to search for a unity, a flow that only careful consideration and tact could bring about. From this we brought into the office, designed by ourselves for ourselves, the SI Table. It was designed to sit in the studio, working with the space, seemingly filling in previous voids. More than that, our daily process, our unique signature-working pattern that defines Studio Idealyc, became as much the context as the building in which the table sits. Nurtured around tasks that we perform on a daily basis the table would be better described as another member of the Studio Idealyc team. We used thick MDF, 25mm width, as the chief building material, leaving it raw and untouched, complementing the Shoreditch warehouse where it resides and its similar density and over exaggerated scale.