

IDEA LYC

Realms of the Mundane:
Viewpoint of an architectural practice

建築實踐觀

Cuadernos de Estudio



Monthly 05/12

Compiled by Studio Idealyc,

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Process

Growth and Creativity

This has been a month in which we, as a collective, have focussed on analysing the role of each member of the team, identifying our strengths to streamline the group effort as the core of the services we offer. The invigorated staff took on a new challenge, which we had not previously been able to allocate time for. This was the submission of ideas and designs to a number of competitions of multiple disciplines throughout the month. Giving us a fresh chance to exercise our creativity we have enjoyed the work for each entry and we are pleased to hear that one of our first proposals was Commended among the shortlisted entries.

While our workload is increasing after our experiences this last few weeks we will always reserve time to participate in events of this nature in the coming months. It is clear that involvement in the larger local and architectural community is fulfilling to our personal and public persona helping us to develop a stronger understanding of economic and technical aspects in design and social cohesion.

Continuing with the theme of new opportunities for the studio a series of usual projects have been assigned to us in May. Growing in numbers and experience we are moving from our regular small to medium residential schemes to larger commercial and educational projects in which the parameters of operation run on a different protocol.

Responding to these new levels of complexity Studio Idealyc has extended their current scope of architectural services, adding a new department specialising in Structural Engineering. This extra layer of assistance will be led by our new colleague Daniel Staines, a Chartered Structural Engineer with more than 20 years of experience dealing with all type of different structural projects.

Studio Idealyc are:

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

- The team at Studio Idealyc

Collaboration with Structural Engineers



Collaborating with structural engineers is something that we at Studio Idealyc partake in regularly. Within the initial stages of a project a healthy, communicative relationship with our structural engineers enables us to push a project along in the desired direction without deviating. Later on throughout the architectural process our meetings with structural engineers becomes more and more important in order to complete the final design to a rigorous standard.

It is not uncommon that a firm specialising in aesthetic pieces of building sculpture through creative knowledge once started out as a group of engineers, whos' expertise in the structure

of a building has led their involvement with the design aspect of architectural practice also. Understanding a building's structure and the way it is joined together in design is invaluable.

Working closely with engineers has enabled us to express ourselves with greater affect and precision. We find that a building's structure is not exclusive in its own right but a component of good architecture which works best when all components and intentions, both pragmatic and poetic coincide. These dual purposes co-exist together to produce a final product that can hold itself as architecture, sculpture and engineering.

Rising Mediation



We at Studio Idealyc have been appointed to undertake the submission of a project within the prestigious Hatton Garden Conservation Area. The aim of our proposal was to provide mediation between the basement and the ground floors, by means of placing in a lift into the property, driven by our clients desire to access the basement by other means than venturing round the whole circumference of his property, and that of next door, to obtain stock.

Situated on Clerkenwell road there is an eclectic mix of buildings, all organized and laid out in a medieval street pattern, as prominent in its distinction as it is its subtlety, easily overlooked as the majority of the buildings loom overhead numer-

ous stories high. The urban geography as a whole for the clerkenwell area is varied, with a level of complexity about it. The textural variety, the close urban mesh and intricate layout and street pattern make the area all the more personal but also starves it of open space.

This intimate layout and intense relationship between outdoor and indoor space, between buildings and people and between one building to the next, influenced our design. Remaining faithful to these deliberations we thought delicately about material choice, mainly glass and steel reflecting the opposite windows and positioning, partially hidden from view remaining inconspicuous.

04.05.2012

Healthy Competition

Competitions are common within the Arts; they bring and opportunity to express the individual aspects among a multitude of voices and styles. Although this is a theme picked up on in last month's entry, it was interesting to visit the office's of another practice, Studio 54, a few streets away from ourselves to interact with other practitioners and designers who entered the Architecture for Humanity competition held last week.

It was good to interact with likeminded professionals and to see again people who we have studied with in the years past. To have time out from the studio is healthy for reflection and clearing the mind, so challenges the next day can be faced with vigour.

Our work, exhibited on the walls of the studio, was part of the larger exhibition of numerous proposals including small to large scale interventions that sort to deal with the many injustices of London. Social and creative responses are currently exhibited in Rivington Street and can be seen by the public until the end of next week. We really recommend a visit to see all the fantastic ideas set forward.



09.05.2012

Thoughtful Materiality



Set with a view overlooking London's largest Royal Park, the cool, modern interior of Abbotsbury House, a recently completed project of ours, reflects the abundance of dense hardwood trees laid out facing it with dark rich wooden floors, emphasised by the contrasting sharpness that is brought about from the clean walls and furnishing which sits upon it.

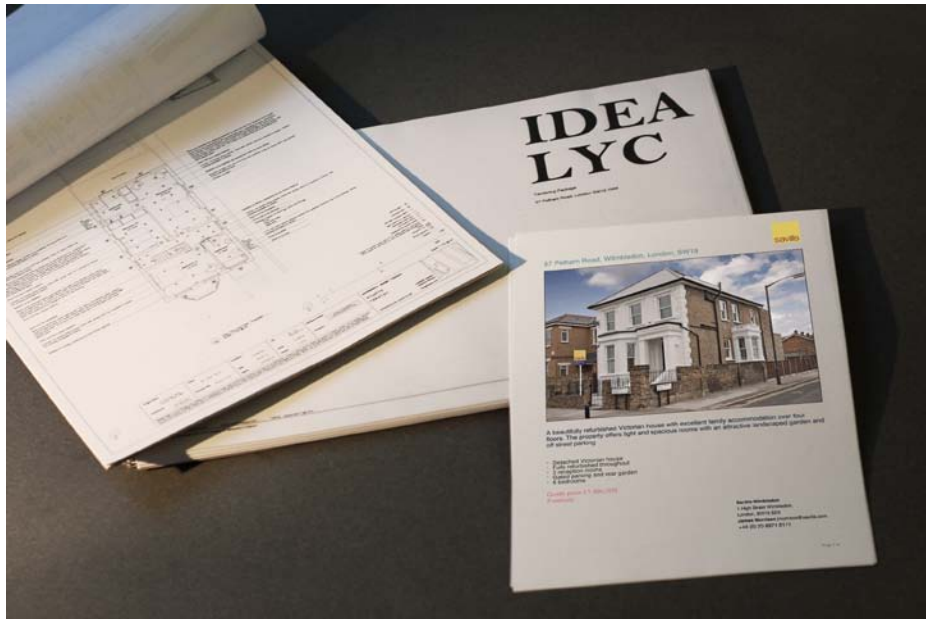
Material selection can throw up numerous surprises; a process of involvement that begs for ones nurtured senses but which nevertheless remains highly personal and subsequent to constant change. This change is something that interest us here at the office, where one day we can be set to use a fantastic,

detailed finish and the next, through no fault of our own something completely different. To write about the factors involved with these decisions would be to trace our whole lives back to childhood, collating a collage of personal experience that in the moment has an innate hold over our design choices. This makes architecture highly personal, and easy to identify with, ultimately resulting in a 'real' piece of sculpture.

Believing strongly in architecture, and following our feelings on the above paragraph through to plan we were able to design a space at Abbotsbury House which provides an arena for a wide range of perceptions, movements and social encounters.

15.05.2012

Adding Value



Having heard back from a client we worked with some time ago we were happy to hear that their property had doubled in price, with some simple internal alterations and some hard working builders. Our architectural influence on this occasion was applied with alternate reasons than for a personal dwelling to be lived in by the client, being part of the property development process that remains a legitimate and creative discourse to follow, requiring perseverance and the ability to see what is not often there.

In the specific case of this project the dwelling was an impressive buildings, boasting and eclectic mix of detail. The

exterior façade is made up of yellow brick on the side and features a stucco front. Unusual as this seems, the building lying on the corner of a T road addresses two different languages, and does so with prowess. The detailed cornices of the front façade are mirrored with aesthetic detail around the windows and there is more detail further still with the columns and arches holding up the porch containing emphasised friezes.

Producing a tendering package for our client enabled them to visualise an impressive project that reinstated much of the lost beauty, urging an innate reaction about the dwelling to embrace its heritage.

15.05.2012

Balloon Square

Our latest proposal was rather different from the dwellings that we usually devote our time designing. A competition entry aimed at giving something back to the community, involving children with a purpose to educate in architectural discourse, something which become an increasingly more prominent part of our lives as we grow up.

Our proposal will feature a workshop for children, run by our team from the studio, to take place in front of the St. Mary's Abchurch. Working closely with the children we will construct, out of balloons, a replica of the spire by which the events will be over seen. This will be an educational experience, offering an inspiring insight into architecture of the past, structure and spatial awareness, off of which will be made fun and hands on for the children to relate to.

The natural atmosphere of the square will be ornamented with the impossible aesthetic of the colourful balloons. The intensity of the contrasting, and therefore inherently emphasised, atmospheres inside the square will be counteracted by means of the placid location.



Influence of the Atelier



A scale model is a physical model, a representation of an object that is larger or smaller than the actual size of the object, which seeks to maintain the relative proportions of the physical size of the original object. Without creating a full size prototype scale models are used to test performance, aesthetic, scale and numerous other influences, otherwise hard to visualize in a two dimensional format.

Constructing a model, similar to constructing a building takes pre thought and planning so as all the pieces come together smoothly. Similar to a building the model remains an undetermined entity, constructed out of uncertainty until work ceases, designed to change and adapt along with the brief and the project. If done correctly it will realize a

design, influencing it respectively. A recent proposal required us to create a scale model, one that would push the design along with the desired affect of transcending paper drawings, falling on a visual impact and touch. This model is not only proving desirable for the continued fluidity of the proposal but will also be taken to the council where our design will be proposed.

This helps us to put into perspective what can sometime be hard to perceive, to configure increasing levels of detail into our projects and, with the maquette as a constant reference, we will be able to progress the scheme along with the client's brief, achieving a heightened clarity and increased control over the development of the project.

17.05.2012

Sketch Competition

Sketching is an elemental component of architectural design and practice. It is often said at Universities that due to the increasing reliance on technology students have lost the ability to draw freehand and therefore this practice is encouraged by tutors and professionals alike.

The art of sketching is a study in composition, the arrangement of components into the overall presentation of an article or collection of interrelated objects. Drawing allows the author to dissect nature and the manmade, to query the line, texture and geometry of the subject. This is why while sketching is in some ways outdated in terms of presentation it is still an important tool for studying the Built Environment.

With this in mind we begun work on our drawing for the "Sketch a Facade" competition hosted by the Architect's Journal and Kingspan Benchmark to illustrate Sir Basil Urwin Spence's Hyde Park Calvary Barracks. Considering the different attributes of the chosen building we decided to produce a series of sketches developing our initial pen drawing into a composition created by a mix of media and layers highlighting the process involved during the creation of our final piece. Our final submission can be viewed on the competition page of our website.



Sustainable Refurbishment



In some cases our client know what they want and the main part of our assistance is to deal with the more technical aspects of construction and planning. However it is always good to discuss the possibilities with our clients, building the brief between us so we can realise the most beneficial and pragmatic approach in order to solve problems that invariably and unpredictably appear throughout the course of the project.

One of the questions that arose in our recent meeting with a client to discuss the internal alterations to her new property was focused on the practicability of connecting her flat to the Gas Supplier, as after our initial inspection of the site one of the main features that was

evident was the lack fuel powered appliances. It conspired that the developer when altering the original building, a former Chapel, had neglected to install any gas supply and instead had opted to only provide electricity.

The fact that only electricity was used meant that running the property would prove to be very unsustainable given the high price of electricity required to run a building of this size. In the Current Building Regulations they have implemented advice to prevent this type of development in Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Power). While the regulations do not apply retrospectively they have been put in place to ensure that all new dwellings are more sustainable for the future.

Securing Planning Permission for 4 Roof Terraces

To some it may sound like a minor task, adding a roof terrace to a property, but beyond the simple construction work there is a web of bureaucracy that one has to navigate to successfully and lawfully implement a roof terrace. We are often approached by clients who are considering the possibility of a roof terrace when they see the potential, perhaps on a rear extension or roof of a neighbour but the only way we can accurately advise would be following careful analysis of the site lines and overlooking issues involved.

The Council's Policies are designed to protect the interests, health and privacy of all the Borough's inhabitants and they must be adhered to strictly or otherwise demonstrated with competence and clarity to be non applicable or adverse given the site and individual case. In the application that we recently have

had granted it is noted in the decision notice that while our design is contrary to some of the Council's Policies, the design of the terraces satisfies the planning department in this scenario and the scheme has been granted, securing permission for 4 residents to add roof terraces with hardwood decking and metal screening to their properties.

Further complications were caused in the progress of the application due to the properties being situated in the prestigious Fournier Street and Brick Lane Conservation Area, metres away from the busy Spitalfields Market. This meant that not only was the social aspect of the development carefully considered but the aesthetic nature of the proposed development was also scrutinised according to the historic element of the facade and urban environment.



Alterations to Listed Building



We have been appointed to work on a tall Georgian terrace property to develop a series of proposals for alterations involving the internal layout and the external envelope with a view to redesigning the space to fit the needs of a young couple in their first home. Due to its historic facade and rich past the building is registered as a Grade 2 Listed Building. This status has a number of implications on the owner of the property as, in a way, they take on the responsibility to maintain the appearance.

We have a vast experience working on Listed Buildings and we are able to advise on the possibility of all alterations to properties of this nature. Our ethos is to always respect the existing building as we know that architecture is often a projection of past hence the importance of understanding what is behind us to be able to look ahead. As the habits and technologies of societies change so do

the dwellings and in this way we often seek to find a balance between the old and the new, respecting the crisp lines and geometries of London's Georgian terraces while using the shell as a veil to shroud and ornament the programmatic layout within.

Our first step in the project was to build a model of the property and the surrounding site in context. To work in 3 dimensions in real space is the most pure way of developing a well considered scheme and hence physical modelling is an important tool in the studio. The model serves two very simple but crucial purposes, in the first case it can assist in development as described previously and secondly it can be used as an illustrative diagram, a simplification and simulation of the actual to communicate a concept, massing, use of materials or geometry.

Planning Department Visit to Site



While it is common for the planning officer dealing with a case to arrange a visit to the premises in question it is unusual to have such a large audience for a small domestic scheme. However at our project in Vivian Road, part of the Driffield Road Conservation Area, any change to the status quo of the historic roof scape of the street would have to be a very carefully considered decision.

Due to this not only the officer dealing with the case visited the site but also the Head of Tower Hamlets Strategic Applications Manager of Development and Renewal and another Senior Planning Officer. Their purpose on site was to check the veracity our proposal and our statement that the development was not visible from the public highway. Using an orange cord we marked out the boundaries of the proposal at 1:1 scale so our jury could consider the feasibility of our scheme.

While the scheme is a roof extension it involved careful manipulation of the parameters in which technical knowledge and creativity were combined with our sensitive approach to Planning in Conservation Areas. We were glad that our demonstration proved that our claims regarding the lack of visibility were justified and we await the outcome of the case from the Council.

24.05.2012

The Idea of Team



The well worn phrase, “there is no I in team” is often brought up in the office environment and teamwork is encouraged from a young age. In a small office it is key that members of the group are able to work well together and here at Studio Idealyc our service is defined by the team that offers it. This is in keeping with the idea of an Atelier, a collaboration between the members whose joint input helps to drive a shared project.

We each are aware of our roles in the studio and the interaction between disciplines is crucial for the delivery of the overall scheme. Individual talents and specialisations must be nurtured while incorporated into the system to main-

tain the machine. The amount of hours the team spends together means that we are all well acquainted and hence when it is the birthday of one of our own we are inclined to celebrate in our own unique style!

Discipline and regime have to balance with creativity and freedom to create work that is both technically thorough and conscientiously designed. We allocate our time in these studio developing those aspects of each individual member of the team that helps to improve the quality of the communal work thanks to the combination of single specialisations.

25.05.2012

Green Light for Bakery in Stockwell Park Conservation Area



Today we met with the clients from a commercial scheme in the Stockwell Park Conservation Area who have leased a property from Galliard Homes on the ground level of a Victorian warehouse that has been refurbished within a mixed use scheme.

The clients saw the scope to open a bakery in the area and enlisted our help to deal with the planning and construction issues involved in the scheme. These range from the legal, to the technical as well as the creative arrangement of the space. As the building is in a Conservation Area, this aspect adds an extra layer of complexity to the planning issues around the implementation of the scheme and demands a carefully considered approach.

Knowing the budget gives a good chance to allocate a potential part of the scope of future works to be designed accordingly. When working with the budget it is important to know where to invest the money to obtain a good finish and unique results, making every visit to the shop a memorable experience, an important feature of good architecture.

28.05.2012

New Local Appointment



While we conduct our work in and around London, often travelling to the suburbs to survey family homes we also are involved in many schemes closer to the office. Many of the nearby residential and commercial properties are located in Conservation Areas due to the rich history of the East End and we always relish the opportunity to delve into the past to unearth the records of times past.

Like many of the projects we have completed, Baxendale Street is a Victorian terrace property with a typical Butterfly roof also known as a London roof. The robust yet elegant construction provides the opportunity for a number of alterations to be proposed yet the feasibility

of development is often site specific and subject to the balancing of a variety of factors, from visibility and overshadowing to the design of geometries and openings.

The property is situated just off the historic street of Columbia Road, well recognised for its flower market and vibrant atmosphere on Sundays when the traders are selling their wares from street stands along the road. The area is transformed from a quiet East End terrace where the shops are mostly closed throughout the week to a thriving avenue of temporary gardens, bringing the flourish of nature into the urban passage for a few hours.

Working with Disabilities



Today we met with a new client who has appointed us to assist with the design and construction of a two storey extension to her property. The extension will provide her with much needed additional space to accommodate her growing family and a disabled child. Fortunately for her, the property is well located to allow the possible extension of both storeys, being at the end of a terrace in a plot shielded from the busy roadway by a row of tall trees.

In many cases it can be difficult to successfully implement a two storey rear extension due to the additional massing effect on the existing lines of sight from neighbouring properties, however, in this scenario the property's location means that this can be proposed without any

detrimental effect on the neighbours. In projects such as this, our role as designers as well as advisors means we have to take into account the multitude of legislation and deal with the applications that must be granted before work can go ahead.

While it may be considered that the scope of creativity is limited in schemes such as this where it is more appropriate to follow a conventional method, being familiar with these types of projects puts us in a better position to advise our clients following the numerous experiences we have had with our projects. Despite this there are still chances to design, a skill which can thrive when the parameters are restricted, calling for innovative solutions.

31.05.2012

Red Herring at St. Jacques

Following on from our success in the "Open Up" competition for which we were commended among the 10 short-listed entry, we have submitted our entry for The !!!!!!!!! Competition hosted by Reality Cues. The project involved the manipulation of given photographs to re-present the subject matter in light of the author's artistic styles and theory.

Working from the image of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Saint-Jacques Tower in Paris our interpretation of this photograph led us to question the role of the modern metropolis among the historic monuments of the past. Beginning the writings of Koolhaas we devised a collage of the new and old, guided by the Dadaist principles of Kurt Schwitters and the dystopian visions of the future played out in classic films such as Ridley Scott's "Bladerunner" and Fritz Lang's "Metropolis".

The resulting composition, using the discordant colours of Frank Stella, brings together the modern notions of climate change within the architectural community and the concerns with density in the rapidly growing world cities. In contrast to the digital medium with which the image was devised, there is an analogue, cut and paste aspect to the piece that contrast the nihilistic dada with the bright prints of Warhol to create a subversive clash of culture and elements.

