



Surman Weston

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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PRESS RELEASE

DITTON HILL HOUSE

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Ditton Hill House is a new-build, two-storey detached house built on a suburban street in Surbiton. With its pitched roof and pure white walls, it might at first glance seem at odds with its neighbours in this leafy district of west London. However, its form and materialisation are strongly informed by the local vernacular, and its design has emerged from the careful orchestration of subtle references to it.

With its traditional A-frame elevation the house borrows the language of mock-Tudor ubiquitous in the suburbs, and turns it on its head by expressing it in a steel frame – the materiality of modernity. The inherent strength of the steel exoskeleton permitted a thinning of the structural steel, which helps to express the pitched form diagrammatically as if it were drawn by a child. In the garden elevation, Crittall-style glazing offers a contemporary twist on the leaded windows synonymous with the mock-Tudor genre. These materials are combined with slurried brick infill panels, another nod to mock-Tudor building techniques.

The whiteness of the exterior continues a long tradition of modern white villas and civic buildings which dates back to the 1930s. The Grade II-listed Art Deco masterpiece Surbiton train station by James Robb Scott became a constant reference point for the architects during the four year delivery process.

Designed for the founder of bohemian fashion brand Star Mela, the client's brief was for a contemporary house with an industrial aesthetic, which would be much more than a simple minimalist open-plan box.

The route through the house is designed to offer a range of spatial experiences. You enter directly into the vertically proportioned triple-height entrance hall. This voluminous hall functions as an intermediary space – a sort of internal courtyard – so the materials are deliberately raw, with exposed blockwork walls and roughly-screeded concrete floors.

From the light and height of the entrance hall, you step down under the stairs into a darker hallway space beneath a heavyweight concrete soffit, before you move into the more domesticated spaces, arriving in the living room. Passing from the hallway into the living room, there is a dramatic change in spatial quality, from compression to expansiveness, as the ceiling height increases and panoramic rear windows provide an uninterrupted view of the garden.

The material palette becomes increasingly warmer, with timber floors underfoot and softer plaster walls acting as counterpoints to the steel roof and floor decks that run throughout the house. The exposed decks add texture to the interior palette and were seen as a modern interpretation of exposed Tudor timber beams.

Upstairs, bedrooms and bathrooms are housed within the "loft space", which, at five metres in height and primarily lit from above, has an almost church-like peaceful quality.



Access to the garden was a priority of the client. On the upper floor the master bedroom opens onto an enclosed balcony, where she can enjoy views of the sky and trees.

Percy Weston, director, Surman Weston, says:

“Externally the idea of melding the vernacular Tudor and industrial aesthetic was an important design driver for us. Internally we have created a plan which has a variety of scales, from the small intimate spaces, like the study, to the grand scale of the living/dining room. The ground floor living spaces are deliberately cellular, but can also open up into a sequence of sociable, enfilade spaces.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

Address	Uplands, Surbiton, Kingston upon Thames KT6 5EH
Construction cost	£600,000
GIA	264 m ²
Client	Amanda Winship
Architect	Surman Weston
Project Architect	Percy Weston
Structural Engineer	Structure Workshop
Services Engineer	Synergy
Ecology Consultant	Astute ecology
Contractor	Wadey Builders
Metalwork Fabricator	Elite Metalcraft
Photography	© Johan Dehlin

Surman Weston is a London-based architecture studio established in 2014 by Tom Surman and Percy Weston.

Eschewing a house style, the practice has developed a portfolio of unique developments that are contextually sensitive, with careful consideration of materiality, construction technique, use and function.

Built works to date include new-build annexes such as Lantern Studio, Brockley, 2016; Cork Study, north London, 2015; and extensive refurbishments such as Mayow Road, Sydenham, 2017; Replica House Studio, Islington, 2018 – where the studio is currently based; and Makepeace Mansions, Highgate, London, 2019.

In 2017 the practice converted a school caretaker’s cottage at Brunswick Park Primary School into a specialist cookery classroom and they subsequently won the commission for the design of Hackney School of Food, an initiative of LEAP Federation and Chefs in Schools, which is currently under construction at Mandeville Primary School, Clapton.

Committed to the process of making, the studio has developed a number of bespoke products, fittings and furniture, including Wedge Table, a minimal chandelier and a contemporary door knob. Tom and Percy are regular tutors for the undergraduate course at the University of Cambridge, and have taught and lectured at institutions including the Royal College of Art and the University of Westminster.

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