

**PRESS ENQUIRIES**

Claire Curtice Publicists
claire@clairecurtice.co.uk
+ 44 (0) 7775 562 264

PRESS RELEASE**OVERCAST HOUSE, HARINGEY, LONDON****02/2021**

Overcast House is a single-storey rear extension to a Victorian house in north London, creating a flexible ground floor space which accommodates working-from-home while reconfiguring the house to make it a home for life.

The project name speaks of a central strategy to bring indirect light into the space and references the 'shadow catcher' external skin – pigmented cast concrete blocks that model shadows on the rear façade even in the absence of direct sun.

The homeowners – Keiko Cummings, a Japanese personal colour consultant and graphic designer, and her husband, Alan, an academic – appointed Office S&M to enlarge their ground floor kitchen and make it suitable for use as a consultation space. The client's passionate interest in colour and light made for a rewarding process of dialogue, experimentation and discovery for architect and client.

The project relocates Keiko's studio space, which was formerly in the front of the house with a south-facing aspect. Changing sunlight and shadows made it hard to maintain colour consistency when she met her clients.

A primary requirement for the new space was constant, even light – conditions necessary for the owner to undertake colour analysis for her work. The brief for a well-lit space that would be shielded from direct sunlight was an unusual challenge. The narrow house also needed to accommodate a table seating 10 people for consultations and a ground floor shower to futureproof the home.

The architects' response has been to make use of north light in the new extension. Carefully shaped rooflights shield the windows from direct sun, while a flat rooflight deeper in plan is protected by the existing house. These sawtooth rooflights are more commonly used in art galleries and old factories than homes, letting in even north light throughout the day, rather than direct sunlight which changes colour drastically. The arrangement allowed the architects to carefully control the lighting conditions inside.

The extension is constructed in timber, which has a much lower embodied carbon than a brick or blockwork inner skin and creates the thinnest structure possible. It is clad in an external skin of bespoke pigmented scalloped concrete blocks developed by Office S&M with Mortise Concrete. This creates a more modulated elevation than would be achieved with ubiquitous brick. A complementary green downpipe theatrically celebrates the exit of rainwater from the roof.

The route from the hall entrance to the consultation space was a key consideration. It has been designed so that the signs of everyday life (shower room, toilet and kitchen cupboards)

can be concealed from view; when clients attend consultations, they enter a serene studio space. The diagonal orientation of floor planks draws guests into the space, and the sharp angle of the toilet wall – a space saving strategy – echoes the angular shape of the rooflights in section.

Inside, gold leaf evens out and warms up the north light and incoming light, and it is combined with a palette of ‘trending’ colours. Neo-Mint (Pantone colour of 2020) is used to soften the industrial quality of the steel beams, which now function as a display for a Victorian glassware collection; and colour blocking in tiles of Millennial Pink (Pantone colour of 2018) visually enlarges the small bathroom.

An exploratory colour selection has resulted in an effective workspace, expansive kitchen and a new convivial space for entertaining; all glowing with gentle shadowless light. The project was completed during the Covid-19 pandemic and has accommodated a variety of activities, including daily rituals like yoga, effectively demonstrating its adaptability.

Hugh McEwen, Partner, Office S&M, and project architect, said:

“It’s a very iterative process for us to reach each solution. With the ‘shadow catchers’ we worked closely with Mortise Concrete, who developed colour samples, then large-scale tests, and finally the full-size blocks. At the same time, in the office we made renders, drawings and 1:1 models of the blocks out of card to test how they caught the shadow, and we worked with the engineer to make sure they were the correct thickness to be self-supporting.”

Press enquiries:

Claire Curtice Publicists
+ 44 (0) 7775 562 264
mail@clairecurtice.co.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

| | |
|--|---|
| Address: | 35 Chesterfield Gardens, Haringey, London N4 1JL |
| Site area: | Alan and Keiko Cummings |
| Gross internal area in m²: | Before 94m ² , after 114m ² (25m ² increase) |
| Date of appointment: | June 2018 |
| Appointment: | Tender |
| Start on site: | September 2019 |
| Practical completion: | February 2020 |
| Final construction cost: | £150,000 inc VAT |
| Architect: | Office S&M |
| Project architect: | Hugh McEwen |
| Design team: | Hugh McEwen, Catrina Stewart, Beth Bird |
| Engineer: | Stephen Foster, Foster Structures |
| Contractor: | Ylber Gashi, YG Builders Ltd |
| Building control: | Butler and Young |
| QS: | SJB Projects |
| Furniture build: | Ylber Gashi, YG Builders Ltd |
| Concrete blocks: | Mortise Concrete |
| Kitchen surfaces: | InOpera |
| Light switches: | Swtch and Buster and Punch |
| Kitchen: | DIY Kitchens |
| Tiles: | Fired Earth |
| Lights: | Molts Lighting |
| Windows and doors: | Velfac |
| Toilet: | Toto |
| Photography: | © Megan Taylor |



Office S&M

Established by Catrina Stewart and Hugh McEwen, Office S&M is an award-winning architecture practice working with a 50/50 split of public and private clients on individual homes, new-build housing, workspace retrofit and public realm projects.

The practice engages clients and users in a collaborative process, experimenting with colours and materials to deliver joyful and unexpected spaces and places; elevating the everyday with exuberance.

Office S&M responds to the context of each project – house, street or neighbourhood – acknowledging the existing, while deploying colour and narrative inventively to create drama.

Built projects include: Valetta House (2017), winner of NLA Don't Move, Improve! 2018 'Best use of materials' award; Salmen House (2017); Finsbury Park High Street shops (2017); Janus House (2018); and Mo-tel House (2020), all in London. Current projects include: a new-build house in East Sussex; the Green Room in Newham; Nag's Head Market in Holloway; and a housing development at Chipstead Way in Croydon.

Recent achievements include: winning Building Design's Young Architect of the Year Award (2020); inclusion in the Architects' Journal's 40 under 40 – a showcase of architecture's brightest up-and-coming talent (2020); and recognition as a Rising Star by RIBA Journal (2019). Office S&M will feature in The Architecture Foundation's New Architects 4 (2021).

officesandm.com

@officesandm



Photograph © Megan Taylor