



'I fear we are eroding our heritage and identity, as we reproduce the same buildings globally'

Hank Dittmar
OPINION PAGE 7



Southwark's zinc estate
DSDHA metal studio facade **P.8**



Worlds beyond our wildest imaginings
Drawings transcend realities across the centuries **P.12**

BUILDING DESIGN ARCHITECTS' BEST LOVED WEEKLY

'Smear'd' RMJM boss quits to join rival practice

Jonathan French to start at Woods Bagot next week

David Rogers

Jonathan French has left RMJM days after an email in which his boss Peter Morrison questioned his leadership capabilities was leaked to the press.

French, who claimed he was the victim of a smear campaign by his former employer, has already landed himself a new job and begins work at Woods Bagot as its regional executive chair for Europe next Monday.

The 65 staff at Woods Bagot's office on Oxford Street in London were being briefed about his appointment as BD went to press.

French left RMJM at the end of last week and accepted his new job at the weekend. Discussions with Woods Bagot about his new role began after Morrison's email was leaked to the press last Tuesday, he said. "This situation emerged very, very quickly," he added.

He declined to go into detail about his time at RMJM, where he worked as Europe chief executive for just over 100 days, nor the circumstances of his departure but, asked about his new employer, he said: "Woods Bagot has explicit values. Honesty, integrity, being open with staff, dialogue with clients — those very much appeal."

Talking exclusively to BD, he added: "I am absolutely thrilled to have this job and genuinely delighted to join this illustrious business. I've had 25 years of successful work engaged with some significant practices such



Jonathan French: "Honesty, integrity, being open with staff, dialogue with clients — those very much appeal."

as EC Harris, Ove Arup and David Chipperfield. I have a good reputation in London particularly and a wide range of contacts. I'm thankful to be joining a successful and vibrant company."

French confirmed he was not taking legal action over the contents of Morrison's email. "I've not involved the lawyers at all."

In the email, Morrison, who was discussing with RMJM

group commercial director Declan Thompson about who would lead a proposed merger between its Europe and Middle East businesses, wrote: "There is just no possible way we can have Jonathan leading anything. There is no way we can give a big job to a guy that doesn't know the difference between cash and revenue."

The leaked email also included claims about French's "refusal

to travel economy [and] that he is paying himself before others [which] is bound to get out".

French will be expected to lead a drive into new overseas markets for Woods Bagot in a role that its group managing director Ross Donaldson said it had been looking to fill since the end of last year. "An opportunity to get a great guy came up and we embraced it."

Last week Thompson said he

did not want French to leave. "It would be a bad thing if he went and not something I would support."

But this week he said RMJM "feel let down" that he had got another job at a rival firm so quickly.

He said: "There was quite a bit of surprise among the team at the news. They feel let down. Neither I nor Peter Morrison was told [he was joining Woods Bagot]."

Architects barred from Westminster refurb job

A plan to overhaul the Palace of Westminster risks shutting architects out of the job because a PQO notice wants firms with turnovers in the millions of pounds.

The head of the RIBA's procurement reform group, Walter Menteth, said the conditions imposed mean just a handful of architects can bid.

The rules state that single bidders need a minimum turnover of £20 million. Alternatively bidders need to be part of a team that collectively has a turnover of the same figure — with at least one member having a turnover of £10 million.

"I'm not entirely sure who they think will submit a bid," he said. "It doesn't appear to be targeting architects. Normally the refurbishment of a prestigious building like this is run by an architect."

Firms will have until June 14 to come up with proposals. One of the options being considered is to move MPs and Lords out of the building while the work takes place.

The feasibility study has to be completed in a year, and bidders have been asked to look at two other options — carrying out the work over an indefinite period or completing it more quickly but keeping MPs and Lords at the site.



Question time at the palace.

Think BIM
Think Sika

Sika Sarnafil is the first flat roofing manufacturer to be BIM ready.

Visit www.nationalbimlibrary.com/sika-sarnafil to download our 23 flat roof BIM details.



INTRICATE SETTING

Despite planners' initial objections, DSDHA's complex zinc facade for a jeweller's studio meshes comfortably with the urban patchwork of its London neighbours, writes **Ellis Woodman**

Pictures by Dennis Gilbert/View

One of London's defining features has long been the stark confrontation of buildings of radically varying type, scale and architectural expression that has resulted from the city's considerable and sometimes violent history and its perennial suspicion of planning. In the immediate environs of London Bridge we find these disjunctions — which generous observers tend to celebrate as the product of this country's innately picturesque sensibility — exacerbated to the point of parody. Forged by a motley cast of off-the-leash Victorian rail engineers, trigger-happy Luftwaffe pilots and 21st century politicians hell-bent on maintaining the capital's alleged status as a World Class City, this corner of south London presents as frenetic an urban experience as is to be found anywhere west of Tokyo. Retreat a hundred metres to the south, however, and peace reasserts itself. The looming mass of the Shard and the Guy's Hospital tower may be inescapable, but the streets here are bricky, tree-lined, lightly trafficked and designated as a conservation area. As Alex Monroe and his architect DSDHA discovered, to build here is to encounter a very different set of expectations from those governing the urban bacchanalia up the road.

In business for 25 years, Monroe is an internationally admired designer of silver and gold jewellery whose creations can often be found adorning the necks of Sienna Miller, Carey Mulligan and Emma Watson. What began as a one-man operation now employs a dozen staff and produces stock that is sold in over 100 outlets in the UK alone. The studio has historically been based in Kennington — in the same complex as DSDHA — and continues to make its boutique range from here. However, in 2009 Monroe bought a property on Snowfields, one of the principal

streets in the conservation area to the south of London Bridge, with the aim of establishing a shop and a set of studios where his bespoke products could be manufactured.

The building he bought was a tiny, Edwardian-era shop, the last in a run of retail units that extends down one side of the street. However, it was distinguished from its neighbours in one key respect: where the other shops formed the base to four floors of housing, Monroe's was a single-storey structure, although with planning granted for a brick addition, housing three improbably diminutive apartments on top.

The brief he set DSDHA was essentially to add three rooms — a studio, workshop and meeting room — maintaining

The shop has been co-opted as a relatively crude plinth supporting a structure that is, very literally, a jewel box

the ground floor as a shop and adapting the basement to house a dispatch facility. The practice duly developed a scheme on the basis of a structure in KLH engineered timber, which would be faced in a facade of finely wrought zinc. This choice was motivated by a desire to reflect the nature of the manufacturing going on within the building but the planners proved resistant, demanding a treatment that they deemed more sympathetic to the street's predominant expression in brick. A compromise was eventually reached in the form of terracotta — a material that DSDHA was already exploring for use in its now completed retail building on London's South Molton Street.

Construction began, with the KLH cross-laminated timber structure trucked in from Switzerland and installed in just two days. DSDHA's design leaves the engineered timber exposed internally and employs the same material for the construction of built-in furniture so once the interior was very largely complete.

However, at this point the specified terracotta rainscreen subcontractor repriced its package of work at a considerably higher level than its previous estimates. Alternative firms were approached but returned costs that were three times that originally quoted. And so a two-year stalemate ensued, while Monroe occupied the unclad building. The situation was resolved only when DSDHA's Deborah Saunt picked up the phone and resumed negotiations with the planners. This time, thankfully, they recognised the merits of the practice's original proposal and the zinc facade was finally installed.

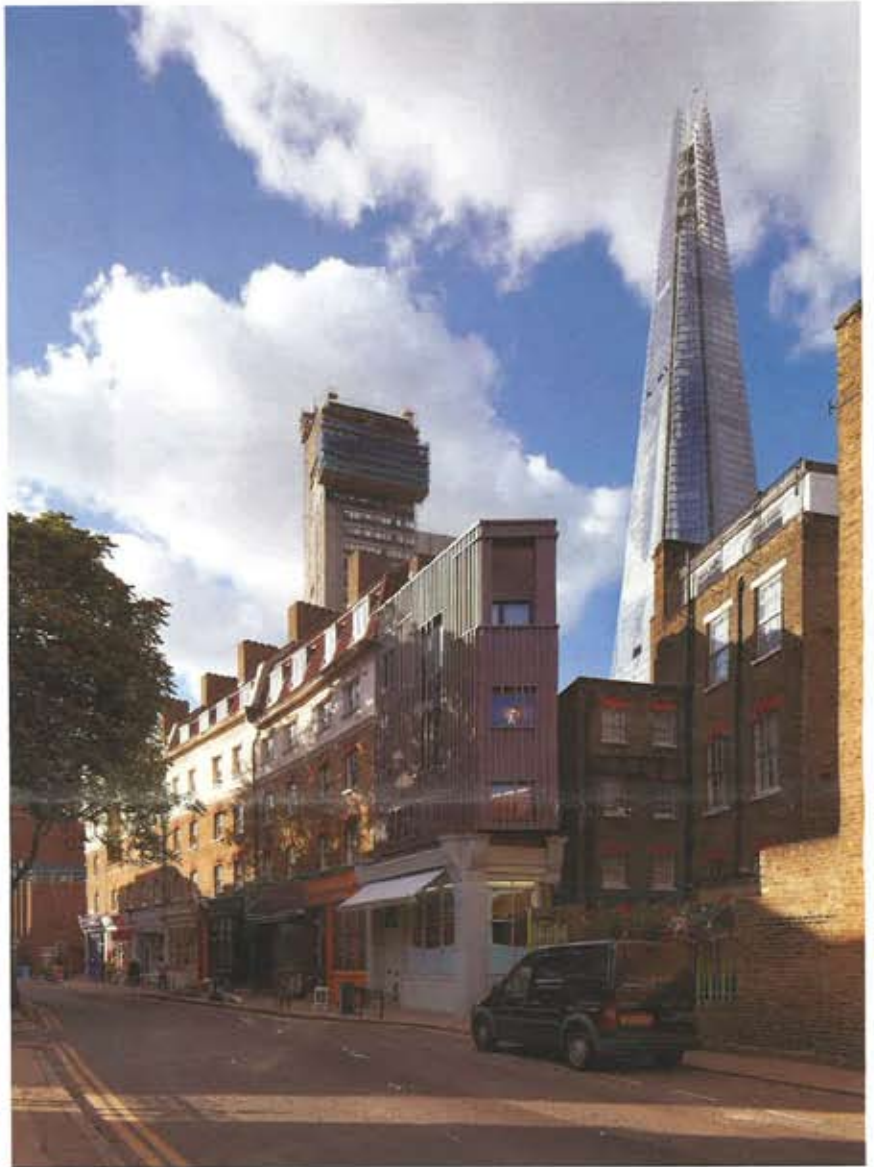
To see the completed building is to wonder what all the fuss was about. Patinated to a dark grey-bronze the cladding presents a close tonal relationship to the surrounding masonry while its articulation as a series of closely packed vertical battens conveys an intricacy that is more than the match of its neighbours. In fact, where the adjoining facades grow successively less refined from storey to storey, the sense here is that the shop has been co-opted as a relatively crude plinth supporting a structure that is, very literally, a jewel box.

The addition's autonomy from its base is stressed by its modest cantilevering beyond the shop's footprint at the end facing down the street. That gesture also emphasises its nature as a flatiron — a form that has been a recurrent motif in DSDHA's recent output, characterising both its South Molton Street building and its residential

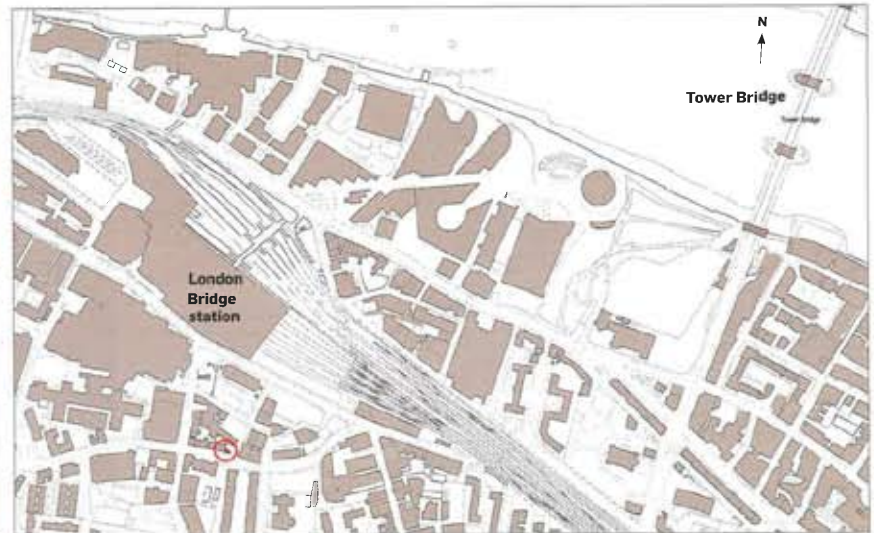
The zinc cladding responds to the lines of the neighbouring facade.



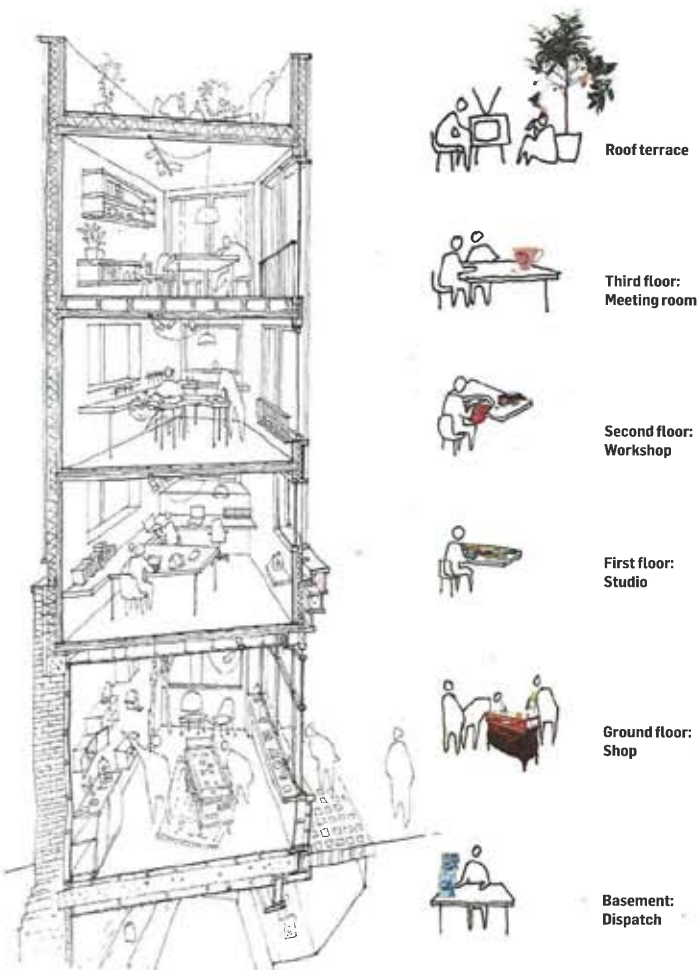
The building reads as a micro-tower in relation to the Shard and the tower of Guy's Hospital.



SITE PLAN



SECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE



The internal furniture is built of the same KLH timber as has been employed for the primary structure.



tower at the Olympic Village. If a coincidence, it is nonetheless one that testifies to the fact that London property prices have reached a point where sites that would formerly have lain dormant on account of their difficult geometries are now seen as representing attractive development opportunities.

The three storeys of the extension are essentially of a common plan and section, each comprising a single room accessed off a wide winding stair. However, the facades present a more complex impression. Exploiting the potential to draw light from all three sides — a particular advantage given the nature of the work being conducted inside — the architect has liberally populated each elevation with openings. Most are modestly dimensioned but the treatment has been aggrandised through the introduction of a double-height opening — incorporating a pair of stacked Juliet balconies — on the main street frontage and a further pulpit-like balcony at the top of the end elevation.

The composition has been further enriched through the

development of the cladding. Selective zinc battens have been carried across the windows' face, suppressing the openings' visual impact and asserting a reading of the building as a unitary volume of ambiguous scale. That choice allows it to forge a particularly compelling relationship to the two towers against which it is read when viewed from the east. The disparity in size between Monroe's studio and the closely neighbouring Shard and Guy's Hospital tower could hardly be more pronounced but, when we see them together, it is not this that registers but rather their common figurative quality. We understand them as an ensemble.

The building's ambition to transcend its essential abstraction and establish a complicity with the encompassing city also informs the way that the battens develop up the height of the facade.

At a certain point they reduce in depth, the moment of change corresponding to a string course that divides the adjacent facade into zones of brick and roughcast render.

Higher still they transition to an open array — a balustrade to the generously planted roof terrace — on a line that accords with the neighbouring eaves.

The language may be DSDHA's own but the sensibility guiding these judgements is perhaps not so far from that of Tony Fretton's now 20-year-old Lisson Gallery. As there, the building makes a picture of the world around it, drawing seemingly irreconcilable parts into an artistically considered whole. In a London that grows ever more heterogeneous by the year, it is a strategy that carries continued relevance.

PROJECT TEAM

- Architect**
DSDHA
- Client** Alex Monroe
- Contractor** Neilcott Construction
- Structural engineer**
Structure Workshop
- Services engineer**
Con-Serv
- Quantity surveyor**
Robert Martell & Partners
- Facade consultant**
Procure



The ground-floor shop.



A winding stair is supported off a full-height KLH fin wall.

KEY TECHNICAL ISSUES

UNFOLDED ELEVATION



Street facade

End facade Rear facade

Tolerance of KLH structure

The design of the superstructure had to reconcile the fine tolerances required for the KLH panels set against the larger tolerances of the existing site conditions at Snowsfields.

The prefabricated KLH panels were assembled on site within two days. These had to then fit against an existing Victorian brick party wall that deviated from true vertical in places by as much as 75mm. Careful surveying of the existing conditions and development of robust and flexible interface details were all part of the ambition to ensure that the timber construction responds to the existing site seamlessly.

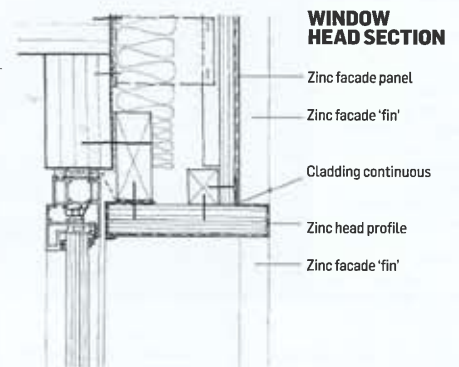
Bespoke nature of facade

A bespoke metal facade system was designed for the building using pigmented zinc to create a hand-crafted rainscreen. The design process was a collaborative one, with DSDHA working alongside a rainscreen facade consultant and a traditional zinc roof installer.

The team worked together resolving a range of technical issues, such as minimising visible joints, interfaces between cladding at the windows and the constraints of on-site fabrication, while maintaining the original design intent. The detailed design process to achieve the fine vertical profiles in front of apertures was particularly challenging, requiring an internal steel support as well as the complex on-site folding of the zinc sheets to ensure that no folded seams are visible from the street.

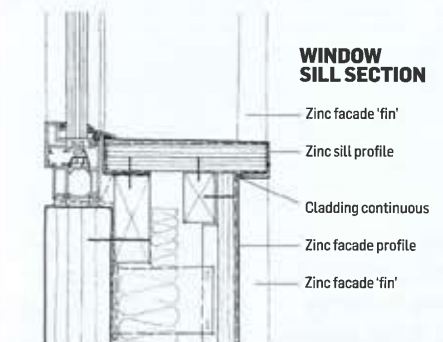


Detail of the zinc cladding.



WINDOW HEAD SECTION

Zinc facade panel
Zinc facade 'fin'
Cladding continuous
Zinc head profile
Zinc facade 'fin'



WINDOW SILL SECTION

Zinc facade 'fin'
Zinc sill profile
Cladding continuous
Zinc facade profile
Zinc facade 'fin'