

DSDHA  
Principal Architect



Deborah Saunt  
Founder



David Hills  
Founder

## Project DETAILS

work finished in 2013

buyer alex monroe

client web link <http://www.alexmonroe.com/>

contractor neilcott construction limited

status Completed works

type Studios /



The Alex Monroe Studio, Snowfields is a new jewellery studio, sited within a stone's throw of The Shard in the Bermondsey Conservation Area, providing a showcase for Alex's growing international business.

Consisting of a handcrafted 3-storey addition to an existing Edwardian single-storey shop front, the building provides workshop and studio space, alongside a boutique store, with meeting and dining spaces on the upper levels as well as a roof terrace with views towards London Bridge.

The new building operates as a bespoke 'bookend' to the original terrace, creating a strong prow that completes the street frontage. The design maintains the continuity of the shop fronts, whilst the additional floors form a separate metal clad volume that sits lightly above.

As in Alex's previous studio in Iliffe Yard, South London (where DSDHA are based) connections with the outside world are critical to providing good working conditions, and every opportunity to connect with nature was therefore seized. Sliding doors to the workshop open onto the street and allow for interaction with the world, providing a place to extend one's view as a counterpoint to the focused work of the jewellers within. A balcony at the third floor extends the sense of openness in the dining/meeting room, and windows with a variety of outlooks are carefully placed to maximize engagement with the urban landscape. Individual activities hosted on each floor are connected by a spacious 'social' staircase, claimed as an additional exhibition space and place of chance encounter, mitigating the challenge of what is, in effect, a Pencil Building (a term coined in Japan to characterize narrow buildings on tiny sites. The facade is precious, precise and carefully made; it is designed to celebrate the 'art of making'. Featuring a slightly dark grey-bronze tonality the facade has a lustrous finish that subtly picks up on the surrounding buildings and their diverse tones and colours, and change in luminosity over the duration of the day).

The spacing of the vertical 'fins' on the elevation shifts selectively in front of windows to animate the facade and control views in and out of the building, introducing dynamism in the street, and de-scaling the building as a micro-tower in the company of both the Shard and Guy's Tower. The rhythm of the facade is accentuated with a double height glazed area on the south elevation, across the workshop and meeting room levels, offering unobstructed views to the surrounding area. The horizontal detail relates directly to the neighbouring terrace to reference, but not mimic, the context.

The building structure is constructed entirely from prefabricated structural timber panels, the use of which has removed 27.1 tonnes of CO2 from the atmosphere. Internally this simple structure is left visible. This raw finish provides a robust setting for the studio where all the built-in furniture has been made from the same timber specifically for each part of the jewellery making process. Over time the timber will reveal a patina of use, recording day-to-day life.



ENLARGE IMAGE



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