

Home work

What will the interior spaces of the future look like? Here we look at the key trends and factors affecting new residential buildings currently being worked on around the world

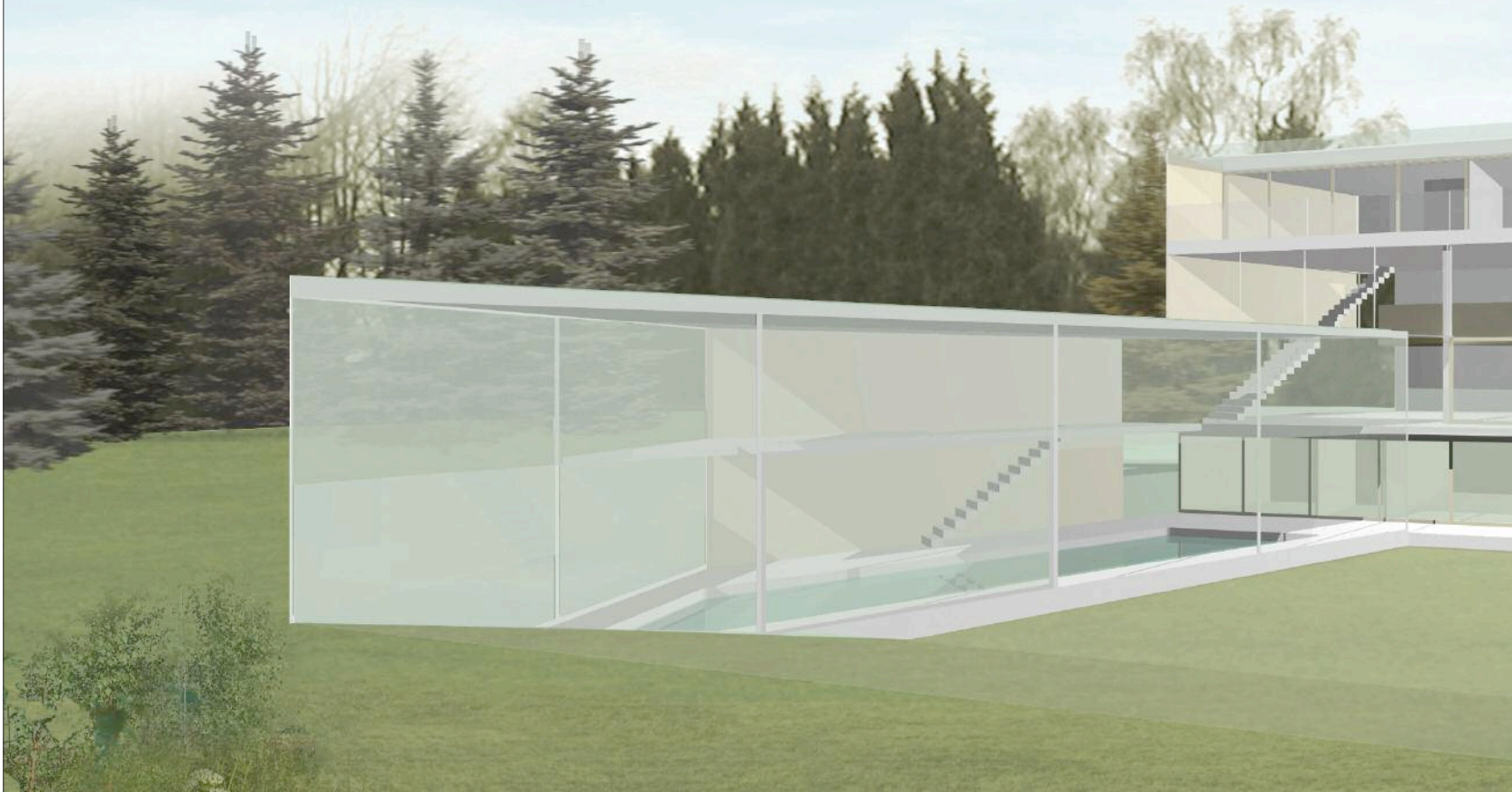
WORDS SARAH BROWNLEE

Mike Tonkin of Tonkin Liu sounds like the Indiana Jones of architecture when he says: 'We're lucky when we get a client who wants to go on an adventure. They don't know what they're going to get and we don't know what we're going to give them.'

Luckily for Tonkin, clients seem to share his spirit of adventure. Recently, the practice has been inundated with requests for penthouses, following on from the success of their awesome Roof Garden Apartment in Shoreditch, east London, a minimalist exercise in luxury and a sustainable one too. With issues of density to contend with in the capital, building up is becoming an increasingly attractive - and necessary - alternative, as Tonkin says. 'It makes a lot of sense to live vertically and own a piece of the sky.'

Tonkin Liu's projects are notable for their lack of interior walls - a contrivance that they feel makes for a more flexible space, an attribute that is high on most clients' wish lists. 'If you look at traditional homes, the spaces are separated out but families co-exist more than they used to,' he says. 'The generation gap doesn't really exist any more and parents and children are happier to all be in the same space.'

Housing typologies naturally evolve to mirror changes in society and lifestyle, but architects have their own way of doing things that will, to a certain degree, dictate layout and style. Architect James Gorst, who despite having a broad client base, admits to designing his fair share of 'Gucci-like' luxury apartments, favours Le Corbusier's concept of the 'promenade architecturale,' or the unfolding of spaces that



EPSOM DOWNS DEVELOPMENT Eldridge Smerin

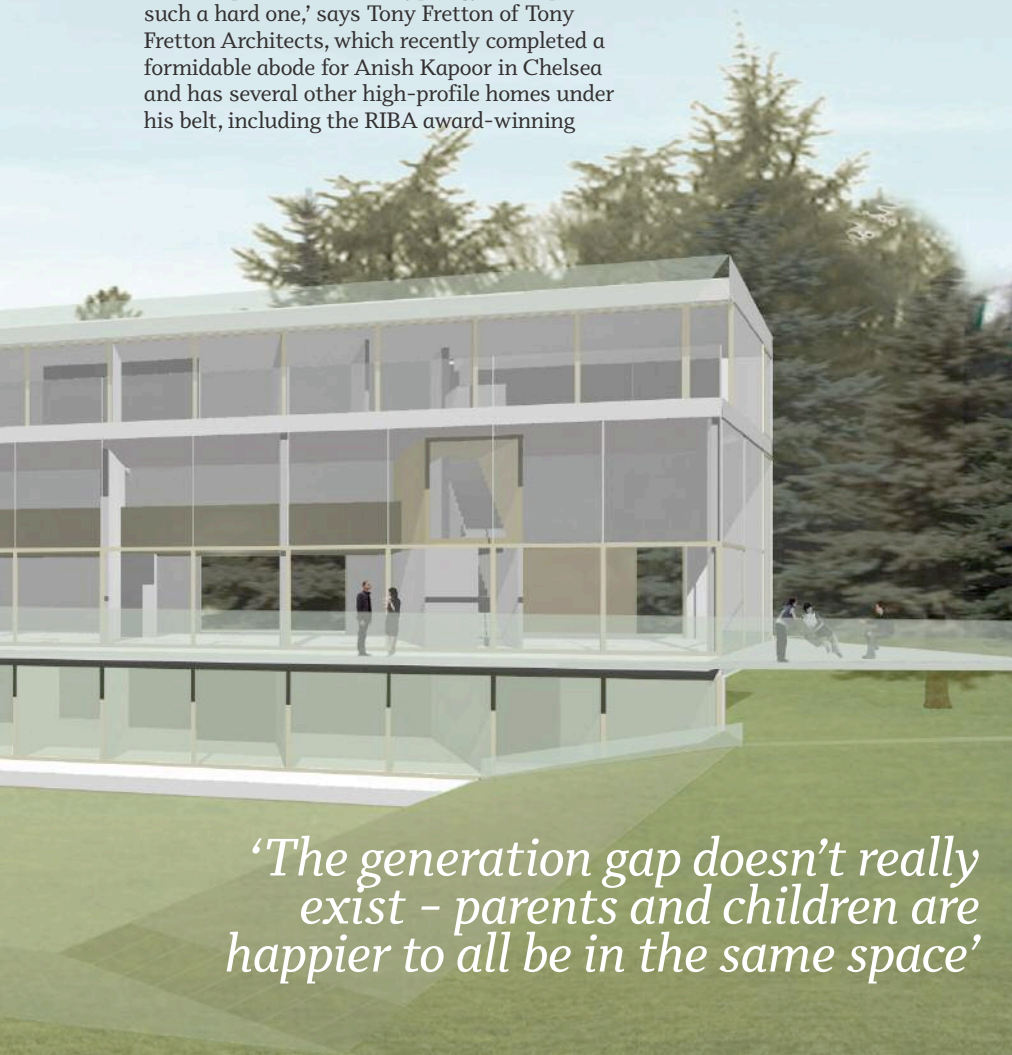


you get as you move through a building. ‘I’m interested in the spatial narrative of a building,’ Gorst explains. ‘To me, that suggests spaces that flow into each other rather than rooms that simply lead off a corridor.’ Most architects at the cutting edge of the discipline agree that clients generally demand at least one large, communal space in the home. But, of course, just how much space you can have depends on the site you’re working with and the budget, and in London, even the biggest budgets struggle to make room for architectural ambition.

‘The question of what typology to adopt is a such a hard one,’ says Tony Fretton of Tony Fretton Architects, which recently completed a formidable abode for Anish Kapoor in Chelsea and has several other high-profile homes under his belt, including the RIBA award-winning

COUNTRY STYLE

Eldridge Smerin’s design for a vast new home in Epsom facing the South Downs, makes space for a nanny’s quarters, with children’s play area and guest room on the same level



‘The generation gap doesn’t really exist - parents and children are happier to all be in the same space’

5 FRANKLIN PLACE UNStudio



ISLANDS IN THE SKY

The black metal bands sweeping around this building’s stunning facade, form balconies at various intervals. The apartments themselves are a mixture of duplex lofts, single-level homes and duplex penthouses, all designed to maximise light in the interior



COUNTRY HOUSE James Gorst

A 'MODERNIST CASTLE DROGO'

James Gorst is currently working on this development in the Midlands, to be built in the local stone. He got planning permission (PPS7 consent) for the 1,400 sq m design two years ago, but hopes to add 650 sq m to it



'A house now is technically as complex as an office building, especially when building in hot tubs and swimming pools'

Red House. Kapoor's house is a deep space and is a backland site, so it hardly has any external facade to it. It is primarily a long interior with internal facades which means the building looks in on itself rather than out to the world.' The typology is reminiscent, he suggests, of the long courtyard houses that can be found in China and the Middle East. Generally, Fretton delivers a series of inter-related rooms rather than open plan spaces, but everything depends on the client's lifestyle. 'We're doing an ambassadors house where there has to be a very large room for entertaining,' he adds. 'Clients who entertain a lot often want extremely large spaces but also a family area that's separate from that. It very much depends upon their social circuitry.'

Wealthy households bring with them their own, very particular, set of demands, many of which have remained unchanged for centuries. Staff accommodation (or at least a room for a housekeeper) must be factored into most projects. Eldridge Smerin's design for a vast new home in Epsom facing the South Downs, makes space for a nanny's quarters with children's play area and guest room on the same level. In terms of style, it may be a million miles away from the grand Georgian terrace house with servants and kitchen relegated to the basement, but the necessity is there all the same.

Exclusive to the 21st century, however, is the need for a plant room - as Fretton points out, 'a house now is technically as complex as a small office building,' especially when you're building

in such luxuries as hot tubs and swimming pools. With space at a premium in the city, the ideal is inevitably to build a home in the countryside where you can, theoretically, indulge in as many leisure facilities as you like with enough space for an entire service wing if necessary. Gorst is currently working on a country house project in the Midlands to be built in the local stone. He got planning permission (PPS7 consent) for the 1,400 sq m design two years ago, but with plans to add 650 sq m to it, it's due to go back to committee with a recommendation for approval. 'A modernist Castle Drogo is how I'd describe it,' says Gorst, who has no interest in designing a mock-Tudor

mansion or any other form of reproduction architecture most often associated with country houses.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) was introduced in 2004, supposedly to encourage the building of 'outstanding' modern homes in the countryside as opposed to pastiche country piles. Under the guidance, isolated homes can be built in the countryside if the architecture is deemed to be 'ground-breaking' enough, which was an exciting prospect for architects such as Gorst. But the reality is not quite so straightforward, with few schemes making it through the planning process. 'It was brought in to encourage exceptional design but it doesn't

ROOF GARDEN APARTMENT Tonkin Liu/Richard Rogers

RICHARD BRYANT

THE HIGH LIFE

The Roof Garden apartment in Shoreditch, east London, is a minimalist and sustainable exercise in luxury. Tonkin Liu's projects are notable for their lack of interior walls - which makes for a more flexible space, an attribute high on most clients' wish lists



ANISH KAPOOR'S HOUSE Tony Fretton

CHELSEA CHALLENGE

Anish Kapoor's house is a deep space with a long interior and internal facades which means the building looks in on itself rather than out to the world. The typology is reminiscent, Fretton suggests, of the long courtyard houses found in China and the Middle East

There is still demand for authentic lofts, as well as outrageously luxurious new-build apartments

seem to be having that effect,' says architect Anthony Hudson, who is behind some exceptional modern homes including Baggy House and the Light House in Derbyshire. Smerin, who has had several concepts accepted under PPS7, sees things rather differently: 'I think the perception is that in urban areas modernism comes hand in hand with regeneration and that in the country everything's much more conservative, but that's not our experience.' The practice is currently working on projects in Surrey (the Epsom property mentioned previously), Somerset and Kent, all of which have swimming pools, incidentally.

There's clearly a huge market for high-end contemporary housing, be it in the city or neatly ensconced in the Scottish Highlands, but how do you reconcile clients' thirst for luxury without resorting to pastiche? 'If there is a sense of luxury it results, as far as I'm concerned, from the deployment of pure architectural values,' says Gorst. 'If the architecture is not right then no end of conspicuous consumption can salvage it.' And yet he readily concedes: 'The modern businessman who commissions a large house in the country is no different to his eighteenth century Whig forbear. It would be disingenuous on our part if we didn't acknowledge the symbolic role of architecture as an expression of power, cultural sophistication or economic prowess.'

Superior levels of craftsmanship and the sourcing of quality materials used discretely is the contemporary mark of luxury, it would seem. Anish Kapoor's house, for example, is a symphony in stone: Hopton Wood and Mandale Fossil limestone, as used in modernist sculptures, doesn't come cheap. Hudson agrees that few clients want to shout about their wealth. Instead they want 'something special and appropriate' but for those who do want to flash it about there is always going to be architecture to suit.

There have been murmurings that our love of loft apartments is on the wane. It's true that the proliferation of loft-lite schemes - 'loft-style' apartments rather than the real thing - has watered down what was previously the ideal for city living but there is still demand for authentic lofts as well as outrageously luxurious new-build apartments such as One Hyde Park by Candy and Candy, due for completion in 2010, and the mammoth Chelsea Barracks project. Both developments will feature architecture by Rogers Stirk Harbour and Partners, with interior design by Candy and Candy.

However, one of the most exciting luxury apartment schemes is underway across the pond in downtown Manhattan. Designed by UNStudio, 5 Franklin Place is touted as a 'beautiful re-interpretation of standard domestic architecture.' The black metal bands that sweep around the building's facade, form

balconies at various intervals, making for a stunning facade but the apartments themselves are something else with a choice of duplex lofts, single-level homes and soaring duplex penthouses all designed to maximise light in the interior and with plenty of space to swing a panther. With prices ranging from \$2 million up to \$16 million, it may be at the uber-exclusive end of the scale, but if this is what 'owning a piece of the sky' can amount to, the future looks very bright indeed *idfx*

THE LIGHT HOUSE Anthony Hudson**SUN WORSHIPPER**

This 360 sq m house in Belper, Derbyshire, incorporates solid red stone, timber and glass, the building culminates in a two-storey glass sun lounge that protrudes 5m from the Western elevation. Energy use is reduced via low-tech measures, such as solar gain and recycled heat