

Britten-Pears Archive, Aldeburgh
Stanton-Williams for Britten-Pears
Foundation

Contract £2m. GIA 540m²

More touches of Scandinavian empiricism here at Stanton-Williams' archive of the manuscripts and personal collection of one of the UK's greatest 20th century composers. Nestled confidently but deferentially within the grounds of Benjamin Britten's Red House in Aldeburgh, the judges noted that 'the clarity and elegance of the building form belies the complex brief

and specialised demands of the archive'. And it's true. The high environmental conditioning demands of the collection are notable purely by their absence, seamlessly integrated into the meticulously detailed concrete and timber interiors and bespoke furniture.

Outside, red brick walls and crisply detailed openings come together to create extremely simple formal massing that, badly handled, can result in cacophony. But the architect has built its reputation on refined detailing, and here (and one hopes Britten would agree with us), it sings.



MICHAEL CAMERON

Finchingfield Guildhall, Braintree
Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects for Finchingfield
Guildhall Trust

Contract £1.25m. GIA 295m²

Built in 1470 by a Guild of priests to educate the boys of the village, the Guildhall has been a place of learning for over five centuries. Its postwar restoration was of poor quality and in 2008 a trust was set up to oversee the stripping back of the higgledy-piggledy oak structure and subsequent uncovering of past layers.

Every part of the mortice, tenon and peg structure has been sensitively restored, with new community functions of shop, library and placed within. The main hall has been restored to its full splendour, replete with burn marks on the timber from the long tapers that lit it. A 'beautifully judged renovation', said the judges.



HUGO GLENDINNING

High House Artists' Studios, Purfleet, Essex
HAT Projects for High House Production Park

Contract £1.8m. GIA 2,200m²

Acme Studios has supported the arts since 1972, and in commissioning this purpose-built, 39 studio and four live/work units in Thurrock, it is supporting architects too. Aspiring to be a world-class centre for technical skills, crafts and artistic production; High House Production Park is home to the likes of the off-site technical department of the Royal Opera House.

The scheme is a testament to HAT Projects' skill in creating an materially and spatially elegant building despite financial constraints. The judges saw High House as a prime example of what a proactive client/architect relationship can yield.



RICHARD DAVIES



ALEX FRANKLIN

Wildfowl Cottage
5th Studio for Stuart Duncan

Contract £100,000. GIA 37m²

It's seldom that a panic room is considered a thing of beauty, but here on the Cambridge fens, clad in timber shingles to complement the main refurbished grade II listed house, this small addition achieves the feat consummately. 5th Studio's design is a response to the client's need for an elevated extension to act as a refuge in the case of flooding, allowing continued occupation in the house until the waters receded.

But it is also an escape into light, with a huge horizontal window offering expansive views across the landscape and a sizeable light cannon drawing luminescence down into the space. It is a bijou thing this, but in its formal look and spatial richness, it sits confidently alongside the original building, with, in the way of the best architecture, one enriching the other.

RICHARD DAVIES



Private House, Suffolk
James Gorst Architects for a private
client

GIA 338m²

There's something quite Aalto-esque about this family home set into an inconspicuous lane of houses in a Suffolk village, but it takes a certain confidence in both massing and detailing to produce a home that's effectively just two brick boxes, and to carry it off with panache.

The simplicity of the plan reflects the clarity of needs of the occupants, with one box containing the kitchen and family room, and the other a large living room with bedrooms above. Simple forms, sophisticated visual and spatial connections create subtle drama across the courtyard space.

Of course, the success or failure such monolithic projects tends to rest on the quality of detailing, and here the choice of brick gives the facade a subtle texture; the window openings, parapets and metal cladding system all deftly managed as if to appear effortless.



PETER COOK

The Arboretum, Burnham
Cowper Griffith Architects

GIA 459m²

There is almost a civic presence to this one-off house set between protected woodlands and a flood plain in a historic village. A massive flint wall is juxtaposed with lightweight timber structure and cladding. The judges remarked on the impressive entrance sequence from the lower level entrance floor to the upper 'living' level 'through material progression and manipulation of light and views', including privacy; with ample use made of rooflights to draw daylight deep into living spaces.

With a range of materials evident on the facade, the judges were impressed by detailing at their interfaces, creating what they called 'an exceptional piece of architecture delivered by an outstanding practice.'