

THE MODERN HOUSE



Ardingly, West Sussex
Sold

Munnion Road

This wonderfully unorthodox house on Munnion Road in the village of Ardingly, West Sussex is the only residential house conceived by architect Will Alsop OBE RA. Better known for large and notably colourful public buildings such as the Stirling Prize-winning Peckham Library, the architect here applied his playful approach to re-think the idea of a common garden extension to an existing 1960s house.

The deceptively modest single-storey front of the house conceals Alsop's striking barrel-vaulted addition to the rear, created in shiny aluminium and punctuated with his signature porthole windows.

The architect worked with the current owners on the design as part of a Channel 4 programme. During the renovations, he completely reconfigured the plan internally to create cosy bedrooms at the front of the house, so that the living spaces open completely to the garden.

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Alsop suggested widening the door of the existing bungalow, and this entrance leads through the middle of the house to the voluminous living space at the back. He surmised his own practice when describing architecture as ‘the only profession that actually deals in joy and delight’ and this modest project encapsulates his attitude to buildings.

Alsop’s single-room extension is deceptively large, with double-height ceilings and doors that open completely to the south-facing garden. At one end is the living room arranged around a FireBug wood burning stove and at the other is the kitchen. The structure of the room has been left exposed, with pine beams supported by steel uprights that hold aloft the smooth curve of the roof.

The three bedrooms retain their mid-century spirit, some with original parquet floors. Each looks onto the gently sloping garden that encloses the house.

Will Alsop was a self-styled enfant terrible of the architectural world, whose practice took on six different guises over his four decades of work. His most celebrated building was Peckham Library, a bright green inverted L-shape crowned by an orange ellipse. Winner of the Stirling prize in 2000, the double-height reading room sits atop the architect’s trademark spindly columns. Seemingly the design has had the desired effect, as the library welcomes three times the borough’s average of 15- to 17-year-old members. A similar library in Ontario, Canada was later joined by two underground stations (after Alsop’s success with London’s North Greenwich Station).

Alsop went to Northampton Art School before studying in London at the Architectural Association (AA), where he became runner-up in the competition for the Pompidou Centre in Paris aged only 23. Towards the end of his career Alsop found success in China and aLL designs, a collective of young and established international architects and designers started under his leadership, continues to practice.

This house won a mid-Sussex design Award in 2018. There is a private parking space behind the house.

Munnion Road lies at the edge of Ardingly village, amongst the rolling countryside of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural beauty. The village has a bakery, a pub and a primary school while nearby Lindfield has more amenities. Ardingly College is a well-respected independent school.

Hayward’s Heath train station is a ten-minute drive from the house, and has connections to London Victoria in 45 minutes.

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About

The Modern House is an estate agency that helps people live in more thoughtful and beautiful ways. We believe in design as a powerful force for good. Inspired by the principles of modernism, we represent design-led homes across the UK which celebrate light, space and a truth to materials. Esquire credits The Modern House with “rewriting the rulebook on estate agency” and GQ voted us “one of the best things in the world”.