

# THE MODERN HOUSE



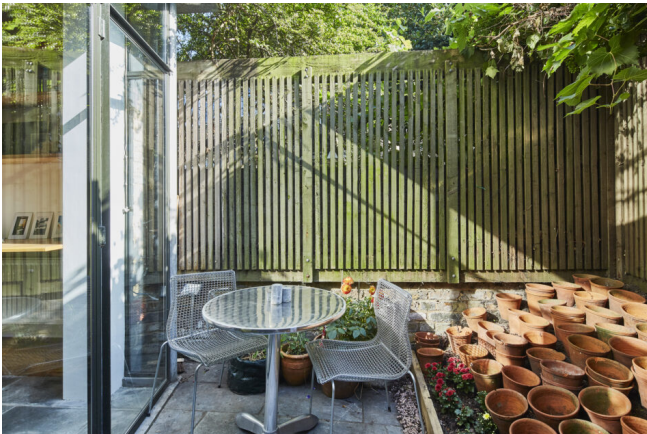
*Elfort Road, London N5*  
*Sold*

## Venus

Built in Highbury in 1998, Venus is the first residential project completed by award-winning architectural practice Chance de Silva. Inspired by the machiya, or traditional wooden town houses of Kyoto, Venus addresses the street in a private, reserved manner, before opening out on the upper storeys to truly dramatic effect. It has a private garden at the rear, as well as a balcony.

At street-level, the facade of recycled London brick stock appears to join with a neighbouring garden wall. As the eye travels up to the first and second floors the elegant tones of post-patinated copper loom up and out, allowing leafy views to the rear, while a modern interpretation of the characteristic glazing, known in Japan as mushiko mado, creates privacy from the street below.

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The Kyoto townhouses are normally formed of wooden lattice work on the ground floors and Chance de Silva cleverly reference this in the woodwork lining one side of the entrance hall. There are narrow oak floorboards underfoot and Douglas Fir louvres form two sets of doors leading down to the ground floor reception room; a space which the current owners have used variously as a study and bedroom.

This space has exposed brick along one side of the plan and a beautiful steel pillar positioned in front of full height, steel-framed glazing which opens out onto the paved garden at the rear. Elegant slate tiles run underfoot, out into the garden; combined with the thin-framed glazing, they seek to dissolve the boundary between inside and out, allowing life and light to flow freely across the plan. A bathroom with micro-tiles, high-level windows and a wood-clad bath occupies the remainder of the ground floor.

An elegant steel staircase leads up to the first floor. Glass bricks allow light to pour across the staircase and dining area. This floor is configured largely as an open-plan reception room. There are oak floorboards underfoot, leading to full-height glazing at the rear and balcony, overlooking the garden below and the neighbouring treetops. As with the ground floor, this space has brickwork along one aspect; on this floor it has been painted white.

A kitchen is positioned to the other side of the staircase. It has wooden worktops and all of its original fittings. A gridded metal screen allows light in, while lateral windows wrap the kitchen counter offering views over the street. The ceiling is partially vaulted, mirroring the sweeping barrel-vault of the mezzanine above.

An open-tread steel staircase leads up to the mezzanine level. It is here that the sweeping arch of the ceiling and the volume inherent with such a feature, become immediately apparent. Further sections of glazing wrap the rear of the plan, as well as the front, over the kitchen. A balustrade of steel mesh accentuates this sense of light and volume.

You can read a full interview with architects Stephen Chance and Wendy de Silva, who have recently revisited Venus, over twenty years since they first designed the house here. Of the design, they have remarked, "The project had a big influence on our later work. There are number of design features that we have reused... I think we've always striven to recreate the qualities of warmth and toughness and light, and the flexible uses of space, on all the subsequent projects."

Venus is named after a former fashion workshop called Venus Fashions, positioned on Elfort Road in leafy North London. Elfort Road is a quiet residential street a short walk from Arsenal Tube station.

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The house is perfectly positioned for the best of Highbury, Islington and neighbouring Stoke Newington. The much-admired shops and restaurants of Highbury are all within easy reach, including Godfrey's butchers, Bourne's fishmongers, Da Mario deli and the original outpost of La Fromagerie, all at Highbury Barn. More local favourites include Westerns Laundry, Farang, The Highbury Arts Club and the Highbury Library. Blackstock Road, Holloway Road and Stoke Newington all offer a great selection of coffee shops, bars and restaurants.

Local green spaces include Highbury Fields and Clissold Park, as well as smaller parks such as the Ecology Centre by Drayton Park and the Olden Garden community garden on Whistler Street.

Venus is excellently positioned for transport. Arsenal is the closest Tube station running Piccadilly line services citywide. Highbury & Islington station (for Overground and Victoria Line services) is a walk away through Highbury Fields, via tennis courts, a playground and a swimming pool. Overground services run from Drayton Park, as well as services to Paris's Gare du Nord, via St Pancras International, making Paris only two stops from the house.

You can read more about Venus and Chance de Silva in our Open House feature [here](#).

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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”.