

# The House Doctor



Having designed living spaces for some of London's most prestigious clients architect Gregory Phillips relishes a challenge.

by Sarah Smith

Despite his quiet resolve Gregory Phillips admits his job is a "ridiculously hard challenge", but having won numerous architectural awards for his work he must be doing something right. Known for high quality residential design the firm's end product is always contemporary, elegant and comfortable. Clients range from premiership footballers, musicians, record producers, fashion designers and film directors to entrepreneurs, city financiers and traders.

On the high street his work can be seen at Coffee Republic outlets including branches on The Strand, South Moulton Street and King's Road. It is now ten years since Phillips created the template copied by other coffee bar chains with the then revolutionary serving counters that replaced traditional waitresses. "I take it that imitation is flattery," he jokes.

Architecture is in Phillips' blood. He best describes this passion as having "a concern for the spaces that I inhabited." He studied at Bristol University then at the Glasgow School of Architecture, which is within the famous Glasgow School of Art.

Phillips describes the most enjoyable aspect of his work as always having the hope of creating something "outstanding and appreciated." The building that has received the highest accolades is a house refurbishment with a substantial glass box extension in Kew, south

London. It has won national and international awards with press coverage around the world. Indeed Phillips is experiencing a flurry of success. His other two most recently completed projects, namely a new house in Salisbury and a converted duplex apartment building with sloped glazing in Tabernacle Street, EC2, have also won awards.

Working on new houses along with substantial extensions and renovations gives the practise the opportunity to really flourish. "We use natural materials and ensure our projects are bathed in light, spacious and practical," explains Phillips. "Where possible we love to create double height spaces and



*Opposite page: House extension and refurbishment, Kew living room with view to garden. Project has won Bentley International award 2005 for best interior design as well as a Daily Mail UK property award and Design and Decoration award. Photo: Peter Johnstone*

*Left: Tabernacle Street duplex apartment, double-height living space, Wenge parquet floor, sloped aluminium glazing and stainless steel balustrades. Photo: Paul Smoothy*

*Above: Tabernacle Street exterior of apartment building renovation and extension with sloped glazing. Photo: Paul Smoothy*

orchestrate the flow of spaces with a building." The most elaborate residential project to date was a 12,000sq ft new build modern house in Highgate, north London, with a seven-figure budget.

Members of the Capital's art scene are also fans of Phillips' work. As well as designing exhibition spaces in central London such as Anthony d'Offay Gallery, Stephen Friedman Gallery, Sprovieri Gallery, and Sadie Coles HQ, he has carried out commissions to design space to house private collections for the likes of ex-Virgin MD Simon Draper, interior designer and journalist Doris Lockhart-Saatchi and the elusive figure behind the Ted Baker fashion label. He believes the key is "making the space conducive to looking at and appreciating the art rather than making a bold architectural statement."

The firm's design ethos is "think like them, then think for them." Usually clients are embarking on their largest ever building projects when commissioning the architects so it's all about asking the right questions. "If we know what to ask then it is easier to find the right answers," Phillips explains. "We aim to know what our clients want but have not yet thought of."

Phillips believes the rare quality of the practice's work is being able to "listen very carefully to clients. We attempt to create the absolute best out of every situation," he continues. "We have a great sense of how people want their lifestyle to be accommodated."

Influenced by everything from traditional Japanese merchants' houses to the work of the early modern movement masters such as Mies Van Der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Alva Aalto, Phillips' work has an impeccable attention to detail. His favourite materials to work in are stone, timber, leather, stainless steel and glass.



*Left: Exterior of extension, Kew illustrating 10.5m glazing which opens up. Photo: Paul Johnstone*

*Above: Rear of house with "mini-me" artist studio in garden. Photo: Paul Johnstone*

Phillips enjoys the civility and elegance of the well proportioned Georgian buildings near his Great Cumberland Place, W1 office. In fact, with a home in Hampstead, he finds London a very special place to live and work. "I love the historic architecture, the Georgian squares, churches, public buildings, parks, culture, the restaurants and the fact you can always find new things," he enthuses.

As a member of the British Interior Design Association (RIBA) Phillips offers his decorating finesse too. He believes this is "crucial". Obviously wanting the best for his clients Phillips will explain his views on what works, alongside the architecture, in terms of garden design, interiors and bespoke furniture design.

There are no boundaries that his work cannot cross when it comes to houses achieved by a careful blend of transition between interior and exterior spaces. "In a world where people specialise my speciality is residential design and understanding and creating appropriate homes rather than insides or outsides," he enthuses. Indeed, in 2004 the firm won an award for the best contemporary residential room presented at the Design and Decoration Awards with judges praising, "the full height glazed wall which provided continuity with the exterior."

His eye for modern aesthetics and scaleable beauty was developed while starting out as a young architect at David Chipperfield's practice. Here he worked on a wide range of scales from multi-million pound projects to furniture design.

Phillips continued the Chipperfield ethos when he set up his own practise 14 years ago. "I consider design work as vital to all scales," he says. While Chipperfield concentrated on ambitious museums overseas Phillips' path drew him towards buildings he could actually see being built, which led him to focusing on work in London.



With a team of six, the firm has built up a reputation for successfully working with local authority planning departments. He believes the key to this is communication and understanding the issues important to case officers and working to answer any concerns. "However my understanding of the situation," he emphasises, "does not lessen my resolve in trying to create wonderful modern buildings for my clients."

The following few months sees more new builds as well as substantial extensions and renovations in London along with an apartment hotel and bar in Leicester. Phillips is happiest when he is working on projects "others feel are difficult challenges." After all, "I think it keeps you young being challenged everyday."

[www.gregoryphillips.com](http://www.gregoryphillips.com)

*Above left: Award Winning New Build House Near Salisbury built for a fashion designer. The house is designed as a 'modern' barn located adjacent to the trees. Looking at part of 'fishing' room that overlooks the double height kitchen/dining area. Floors in Oak, balustrade in glass with leather handrail.*

*Above top: Kew residence bathroom. Photo: Paul Johnstone*

*Above: Tabernacle Street apartment, sunken jacuzzi bath. Photo: Paul Smoothy*