

# THE HERMITAGE

NOT YOUR AVERAGE EXTENSION, THIS. PRESTIGE PROPERTIES VISITS THE MODERNIST HIDEAWAY OF ONE OF THE UK'S LEADING FASHION MAGNATES

The Hermitage Annexe, designed by Gregory Phillips Architects, had a difficult birth. The Hermitage itself is an early 19th century Grade II listed building and set in a deeply-wooded piece of unspoilt countryside. The house's owner, the man behind the Ted Baker empire, needed extra accommodation for himself and two sons. They love tranquil pursuits, especially fishing. He asked Gregory Phillips to design a modern house that would not disrupt its woodland setting.

Planning difficulties had previously been insurmountable but Gregory Phillips used the existence of a garage to prove precedent for building on the site. There was no chance of a totally new start, but planners were cleverly persuaded into accepting Gregory Phillips' design: a two storey re-interpretation of a barn with pitched roof and timber coat. The garage was

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Main image: The upper floor sitting room is furnished with treasures from the owner's travels. The coffee table is made from a Japanese door







demolished and the building appears as a single storey building from three of its elevations though in fact there are two with entry at mid-level. Not only did the architects manage to secure planning consent, one of their special skills, but after all the objections, The Hermitage Annexe won the 2004 award for new building by the Salisbury Civic Society. Gregory Phillips summed up the challenge at the time: "The client wanted a striking building but I had to fit that in with planning requirements. So the idea was an up-to-date reinterpretation of an old building type. There's no need to throw out your heritage; you can use traditional techniques and still create a modern building."

The resulting house is a superb example of a project that is both contemporary and yet sympathetic to its environment – it melts harmoniously into its setting. It is a separate structure set apart from the house. Phillips chose the least aggressive position: pushed into the hillside, partly submerged at one end, clad with untreated timber. It melts into the trees and presents no challenge to the picturesque design and setting of the Hermitage itself. The successful juxtaposition of traditional and modern design preserves the integrity of both styles – there is no leading towards the repro in the new building which in many subtle ways recalls an ancient barn. Here is a retreat from the world: a place for a man and his sons to "go fishing" enjoying perfect peace. This feel is emphasised by the use of natural materials such as glass, leather, clay tile, oak, bamboo, but also steel, concrete and new wallpaper.

The Salisbury judges summed up this house's special character perfectly: "The surprise

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**GREGORY PHILLIPS ARCHITECTS**

Gregory Phillips is a London based architect in private practice since 1991. As a student of the Mackintosh college of art and subsequently as a young architect with David Chipperfield he developed an appreciation for modern aesthetics and technologies, with an emphasis on crafting beautiful things regardless of size. The practice finds as much enjoyment in designing a chair as in a masterplan.

Praised for high professional standards by the Architecture Foundation in their guide to the best young practices in Britain the practice puts client satisfaction high on its list of priorities. Phillips is committed to maximising his client's resources, and the potential in every project is

spotted and coaxed into reality. His skill in dealing with complicated planning issues is worth noting, and his objective in every job is to be pro-active in foreseeing danger zones thus reducing stress for his clients so that they enjoy the experience from concept to completion.

Most recent accolades for Gregory Phillips include a Salisbury Civic Society award for The Hermitage Annexe. This new timber frame house, which exemplifies the practice's interest in carefully considered relationships between interior and exterior spaces, was designed as a separate addition to an existing listed 19th century cottage. The Design and Decoration Award was also won by Gregory Phillips Architects in June 2004 for the best contemporary

residential room in a vast modernist extension in Kew.

Gregory's clients range from plc development companies to individuals including film directors, film producers, musicians, city financiers, fashion designers and art collectors.

"This highly competent practice aims to combine design ability with professionalism to deliver solutions that exceed client expectations. Working with the ethos 'think like them, then think for them', much of the current work is repeat commissions.

A broad spread of work includes a number of interiors, as well as buildings involving complex planning issues. Innovative projects are not necessarily high-tech but use traditional materials in new ways. This is described as 'modern/traditional'.

Careful detailing encourages a high level of craftsmanship. Construction is generally rugged and designed to last, and sustainability issues underpin designs where possible'

*The Architecture Foundation, New Architects 2: A guide to Britain's best young architectural practices'*





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was to enter the annexe and find an interior bursting with positive character, quirky and individual and yet achieving a coherence that only the sourest-natured visitor could fail to find welcoming and attractive. The fluid treatment of the interior space, the variety of specially designed decorative treatments and the imaginative use of electrical mechanisms met with applause. Though essentially simple, the exterior showed precise attention to detail giving it a sharp geometry and modern edge. The flush eaves and concealed gutters, the cut out balcony to the gable, the way alternate boards of the cladding were carried across the narrow windows, the careful positioning and shapes of windows to suit someone sitting in bed in the morning or looking out from the living room at eye level across the woodland floor at night - all these played their part in a tightly considered whole. The complete acceptance by the building of the trees which come in up close and almost envelop its rear elevation emphasises the successful relationship it had achieved with the listed cottage and its setting".

GREGORY PHILLIPS ARCHITECTS  
66 Great Cumberland Place London W1H 7FD , 0207 724 3040  
[www.gregoryphillips.com](http://www.gregoryphillips.com)