SCRATCHING THE SURFACE
New London Facades by London Architects
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New London Architecture
The Building Centre
26 Store Street
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Scratching the Surface is part of the NLA/Building Centre exhibition programme made up of six major exhibitions a year which take on key themes to explore London and its built environment.

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The face of London is changing. Today's architects have an exciting range of traditional and new materials to choose from, and design and construction technology allows these to be applied with creative confidence.

Scratching the Surface explores the current state of the building envelope as proposed by London-based architects in their search for a contemporary interpretation of the London vernacular.

Their work demonstrates a diverse range of contemporary positions on design, the dialogues between the background and foreground, complex form and rectilinear geometry, sustainability, technological advancement, tradition and change, with each demanding an approach which is more than merely cosmetic.

The facade occupies a uniquely complex position as the public face of these new architectural approaches while integrating intelligent systems and environmental, material and structural functions. Scratching the Surface provides an insight into a world that is usually seen only from the outside.
The Southwark Child Development Centre is a new children's Primary Care centre situated on Peckham Road in South London. The highly constrained site sits amongst dark brick mansion blocks of uniform and monolithic scale. Responding to this context, the building takes the form of a dark glazed brick block. Resolving the interplay between the complex and colourful internal arrangement and the formal urban envelope is the main driver for the facade design.

The dark brick block is shown to be only a thin skin. Long horizontal window cuts reveal a staccato pattern of mullions which corresponds to the irregular room layout. Aluminium side-hung casement windows are set back behind the skin and allow the reveals to act by name, exposing the bricks' overall thinness.

Voids cut out behind the skin then break down the interior volume while allowing the exterior massing to remain intact. The upper level voids create private outdoor terraces. Voids cut between the three public lower levels are internal spaces which enable views between the floors to help visitors orientate themselves.

The principle of pulling brightly coloured elements through the facade is continued on the upper windows. Here bright sky-blue brise-soleil orient their visible surfaces to catch and reflect direct sunlight, preventing overheating and animating the facade.
Herringbone Houses, Wandsworth
Client
Lyford Investments Ltd
Architect
Alison Brooks Architects
Structural Consultant
Price & Myers
M&E/ H&S
Peter Deer & Associates
QS
Carruth Marshall
Landscape Design
Christopher Bradley-Hole
Completion date
Summer 2006

This project is a pair of 400m$^2$ houses and integrated landscape in a wooded back land site which overlooks the South London Bowls Club.

Each open-plan house is composed of two continuous planes of herringbone timber and graphite render surfaces forming walls, floors, decking and fences. These planes interlock and fold inward at the centre of the house to create a double height entrance hall open to the sky. This approach to the wrapping of spaces generates an apparent lightness to the houses which are conceived as an assembly of planar elements as opposed to “punched” masonry. The atrium holds a suspended timber staircase and galleries which lead to the first and second floor bedrooms. The carports are green roofs on expanded metal trays supported by stainless steel picture frames.

The living rooms are recessed behind deep overhangs that provide shade, direct views to the south-east and shelter the ground floor entrance areas. Adjacent to these are the three storey volumes oriented north south, containing bedrooms and family rooms. These elements also have recessed glazing at the 2nd floor level to reduce solar gain, increase a sense of privacy for the occupants and create space for greenery at the buildings upper levels.