



## House for A Cellist

Islington, London

Architect : Unagru Architecture Urbanism  
Structural Engineer : Constant SD  
Landscape Designer : Emma Griffin Garden Design  
Contractor : Rimi Renovations  
Joinery : Progetto 172  
Photographer : Stale Eriksen, Nick Dearden

Completion Year : 2021  
Area : 110 sqm  
Budget : < £500,000

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### Design Statement

A radical transformation of a narrow Victorian terraced house. The project completely re-imagined the house by demolishing the existing extensions to rebuild a new rear extension, remodelling the first and second floors, and adding a roof terrace facing the garden. The new ground floor is a single, complex, flexible and narrative space that allows for living, working, and up to four people practising under a round roof light. It is composed of a rectangular volume carved and modelled by a wood and glass cube -the kitchen- a triangular wooden wedge - the stair and services- and a cylinder - a deep roof light.

This project is an extended investigation of narrative, complex, open living spaces. There are no doors or corridors on the ground floor: the entrance hall unfolds and is part of the rest of the house, navigating between an angled wood box and a squared wood-glass box, which in turn contain all the services that a contemporary house needs.

As we reach the centre of the house, we see how the service area disappears towards the left and allows the living area to widen up and open entirely towards the garden. The kitchen is behind us, sometimes hidden by sliding screens. The dining table is parallel to the service area and can be pushed to the side to create space for rehearsing. A round roof light marks and lights this intermediate, flexible space. Towards the garden, the room has a more regular shape and is completely open to the garden.

A key element of the design was the creation of a tranquil interior space for the owner, a professional cellist, to rehearse in. It was essential that this space needed to be calming, without clutter or distractions, and with a direct connection to the sky. We created an ideal rehearsal area, located at the rear of the property with clear views of the garden, underneath the roof light. The unusual circular roof light creates a point of interest to the interior, drawing natural daylight deep within and bringing interesting shapes and shadows into the home. Materials selected to offer a calming and peaceful pallet, we selected natural stone, including green, grey and white marble, oak flooring and joinery, offset by crisp white walls.

The environmental strategy was to adopt a “fabric first” approach that was compatible with the building. Where possible, the walls have been plastered in lime plaster to allow the wall's respiration and repointed from the outside with lime mortar. The rear extension is insulated beyond part-L requirements and covered with a roof garden that further enhances the thermal performance. Low-temperature underfloor pipes provide underfloor heating on all floors. The green roof retains rainwater reducing pressure on the sewer system, rivers and oceans; while it enhances the biodiversity in the area.

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