



ALISON BROOKS ARCHITECTS

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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PRESS RELEASE

WINDWARD HOUSE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

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Alison Brooks Architects completes a monumental house for an art collector high above the Wye Valley

Alison Brooks Architects' latest house is set atop the highest point in Gloucestershire, overlooking the Wye Valley. The result of a ten-year collaboration, this new house and landscape project celebrates domestic living among an extraordinary collection of Indian and African tribal art. It includes the restoration and conversion of a late Georgian farmhouse into a gallery and office, a new fully accessible 'west wing', a sequence of walled gardens and a new pool gallery.

Set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Windward House is a gallery with people living in it – where the owners' art collection is like friends and family sharing the spaces of daily life. The house is also a journey. Intertwining old and new, its sequence of rooms, buildings and landscapes tell a story from the 18th century to today. Light is sculpted and funnelled from above and walls unfold, framing epic views across the meadows and forests to the Severn River. Artworks from the collection animate this journey, occupying plinths, ramps, niches and staircases.

The restored Windward Farmhouse acts as an historic threshold. Mirror-polished steel cladding announces its transformation, dissolving the mass of the original building's stone walls in reflections of the garden. Beyond the farmhouse the new west wing is a shadowy, quiet backdrop; its dark tones and cladding pattern inspired by the nearby Forest of Dean. The entire right half of the farmhouse has been opened to create a triple-height gallery. A walnut-panelled mezzanine and wood-burning fireplace echo the collection's material qualities.

Seen from the south, the two-storey west wing is set back, low-lying and partially embedded in the hillside, deferring to the 18th century farmhouse. The volume of the extension is positioned to interlock with the existing stone building. This creates intimate courtyard spaces between high garden walls sheltered from the pervasive wind. Serving as the owners' primary living space, the west wing is a variation of the atrium house typology and a nine-square structural grid, undulating in three dimensions to echo the topography of adjacent meadows. A deep first-floor roof terrace takes in the spectacular view to the south; the double-height living room overlooks a sloped pool of grasses. Its gently sloping green roofs are planted with native species of wildflowers.

Inside, the west wing is filled with light, open to the landscape and adapted to the needs of later life. Its sequence of double-height spaces offers a variety of light conditions and spatial qualities to accommodate sculptures, masks, shields, temple doors and paintings collected over four decades.

The west wing's pigmented concrete floor was conceived as a moulded terrain on which discrete objects rest: stone grotto, timber-clad service 'pod', steel staircase, looped plinths. Living, dining and cooking areas flow into each other and onto exterior terraces. The plan revolves around the concrete and marble kitchen island, reflecting the owners' dedication to entertaining and cooking. Washed with light from above, this vantage point enjoys both visual connection to the first-floor gallery and panoramic views to the four cardinal directions. Gardens, seasons and weather stage a continuously changing scenography.

Brooks' 'Stair for 100 Objects' is an installation in itself. Each tread is a 6mm thick 'loop' horizontally cantilevered from the stair's central spine, a vertical steel grillage with 100 cells to display the owners' treasured small works. Moving up into light, the stair leads to a first-floor gallery, bedrooms, study and a roof terrace. Every space offers perspectives both outward and inward, through rooms and across gardens.

The pool gallery is the culmination of the journey. Approached via a garden path, it is a stone-walled courtyard open to the sky. One wall has been 'thickened' to become a building containing changing facilities, guest accommodation, display space and storage. A quiet retreat for art, guests and grandchildren, the pool gallery celebrates local traditions of fieldstone masonry and precision carpentry.

Surrounding Windward House are 8.5 hectares of land, primarily wildflower meadow and orchards. The owners' long-term strategy is to restore and optimise the ecological value of the whole area through the repair and renewal of 2.5km of hedges with pollen-rich species, and the planting of 2,500 trees.

The client, David Clifford, says:

"Working with Alison Brooks and her project architects has been exhilarating. It has been a tremendous learning process. Our first lesson was that modern houses are designed from the inside. This was a novel approach for us – until now we had always lived in Georgian or Victorian houses."

Sustainability summary

The strategy for Windward House was based on reducing energy consumption, excellent thermal envelope and avoiding the use of solid fuel heaters. Therefore, the house does not consume any energy from solid fuels: ground source heat pumps (GSHP), air source heat pumps (ASHP) and solar thermal panels provide the heating and hot water requirements. Electricity consumption is reduced by solar photovoltaic panels.

The main house has a GSHP from Ecoforest, a model which was designed to contain the latest advances in efficiency and economy. Also, the restored farmhouse has solar thermal panels fitted to the roof. The west wing has an extensive green roof, reducing rainwater runoff, and has been planted with native wildflowers to support local biodiversity.

The pool pavilion is served for heating and hot water by an ASHP, and a separate ASHP warms the swimming pool water. The swimming pool is black which provides 4°C advantage over the conventional blue pool, and the cover on the pool is designed to act as a solar thermal transmitter. In addition, there is a 4.5kWp solar PV system on the roof of the pool pavilion. Lastly, natural ventilation is provided to mitigate overheating.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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| Location: | Lydney, Gloucestershire, UK |
| Site (incl buildings): | 2.74 ha |
| Garden (not incl buildings): | 2.68 ha |
| Original house GIA: | 220m ² |
| West wing GIA: | 309m ² |
| Pool house GIA: | 94m ² |
| Total GIA: | 623m ² |
| Project timeline: | Phase 1: Windward farmhouse – 2013; Phase 2: west wing and landscape – 2015; Phase 3: pool house and walled garden – 2019 |
| Client: | David and Jenny Clifford |
| Architect: | Alison Brooks Architects |
| Project team: | Alison Brooks, Wanja Wechselberger, Wei Shan Chia, Sophie Bates, Christopher Smail, Sara Yabsley, Alex Nicholls, Christopher Curran, Antonio Callejon |
| Structural engineer: | Akera Engineers |
| Environmental/M&E engineers: | Peter Deer & Associates |
| Environmental consultant: | Bearwood Associates |
| Garden designer: | Stoney & Janson |
| Quantity surveyor: | Measur Construction Consultants |
| Gallery contractor: | E G Carter & Co Ltd |
| (west wing & Windward House) | |
| Contractor: | Barker & Barker |
| (landscape & pool house) | |
| Landscape contractor: | Trunkarb Tree Surgery |
| Environmental coordinator: | Helena Ronicle |
| Joinery: | Smith & Choyce Ltd |
| Glazing: | Fineline Aluminium |
| Photography: | © Paul Riddle |

Alison Brooks Architects

Since 1996, the architectural approach of Alison Brooks Architects has emerged from broad cultural research, with each project expressing a specific response to place, community and landscape. The practice's portfolio encompasses urban design, housing, education and buildings for the arts, and attracts international acclaim for its conceptual rigour, sculptural quality and ingenious detailing, best exemplified by the new Cohen Quadrangle for Exeter College, University of Oxford, winner of a Civic Trust Award (2021). ABA's growing body of public work includes The Quarterhouse Performing Arts Centre, Folkestone, and The Smile, the hugely successful landmark pavilion for the 2016 London Design Festival, which received over 30,000 visitors in just four weeks. ABA has been selected to contribute installations for the Venice Biennale four times, including ReCasting in 2018, and Home Ground in 2021. The largest project to date, The Passages in Vancouver, is a one million square meter mixed-use city block.



National and international awards include Dezeen Awards – Studio of the Year 2020; Building Design Housing Architect of the Year (2020 and 2012); Architect of the Year and Housing Architect of the Year 2012. In 2013 ABA was shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize for Newhall Be, which also received RIBA regional and national awards and was Supreme Winner at the 2013 Housing Design Awards. Alison Brooks Architects is the only UK practice to have won the RIBA's three most prestigious awards for architecture: the Stirling Prize for Accordia Cambridge (2008), the Manser Medal (2007) and the Stephen Lawrence Prize (2006). Alison Brooks was awarded Architects' Journal Woman Architect of the Year 2013.

alisonbrooksarchitects.com



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