

This image Allies and Morrison's Highbury Square, two new housing blocks flanking the original Arsenal Stadium in north London



EXHIBITION

The British Housing exhibition is an antidote to the 'carnavalesque' LFA, says Shumi Bose

Evolving Norms of British Housing, until 20 July at the RIBA, 66 Portland Place, London W1N 4AD

Amid some of the London Festival of Architecture's (LFA's) more carnivalesque events are pockets of activity that are firmly anchored to the ground. Evolving Norms of British Housing is one such show – a small exhibition of new housing design, showcasing 14 practices' recent contributions to this sector.

Curated by Matthew Lloyd of Matthew Lloyd Architects, Alex Ely and Michael Howe of mæ architects, Sam Price of engineer Price & Myers, and urban designer Mandar Puranik, a sense of peer appreciation and critique

permeates the show, lending the exhibition acuity. Broadly speaking, the schemes portrayed are modest in spirit; none seek to assert their own aesthetic individualism. Prosaic concerns and context shape the majority of designs. Most illustrate particular concerns for laconic contextuality, a flexibility, interspatial engagement and, most of all, a fashionable regard for free and unilateral access to outside space.

mæ contributes five housing typologies to the exhibition, which range from a five-bedroom detached house to a two-bedroom terrace. Though claiming to reference 19th-century American domestic architecture, a distinctly English feel is evoked by the graphics, which depict parapets overlooking cricket games and wildflower meadows. An even more bucolic resolve is held by DRDH Architects, with their pattern-book scheme derived from the notion of a village green. Learning from the 'anatomy' of a traditional English village, DRDH's plan focuses on the quality of relationships between the spaces enclosed and defined by the buildings.

In their humble sensitivity, some of the designs seem anthropomorphically communicative. Penoyre & Prasad's Elsdale Street scheme, part of the government's Rough Sleepers Initiative, presents a rounded brick corner which, like a solid and protective arm, nurtures an interior garden. Matthew Lloyd describes a Hawkins\Brown scheme as reassuring and untroubled. Others have perhaps allowed the recent economic tremors to consider building reuse: Tom Russell Architects, for example, has increased ceiling heights in its Milton Keynes development to accommodate future retail space.

The exhibition is accompanied by an excellent booklet. Essays from the curators illuminate their choices, providing a welcome level of analysis to this modest, unassuming show about unassuming architecture.

Resume: This show should be to the LFA as a strong black coffee is to a drunkard

LINCOLN DEGREE SHOW 2008

Ed Frith of Moving Architecture visits Lincoln School of Architecture's show

Lincoln School of Architecture end-of-year show, now closed, Architecture Building, Brayford Campus, Lincoln LN6 7TS

The School of Architecture at Lincoln (which relocated from Hull in 2003) has a rich tradition: Leslie Martin was its first head of school and Cho Padamsee introduced the country's first work-based learning in the '70s. I was unprepared for the slick new Brayford Pool campus, and for Rick Mather's School of Architecture building. Its vortex void sucked me up and spat me out into studios exhibiting lively student work, with projects ranging from exquisite Formalism to radical politics in urban planning, and with the laser-cutter producing everything from 1:1 studies of musical instruments to market landscapes.

Degree students playing hard included Matthew Rust with his birch-faced ply instrument and star student Mark King with his House for J Ballard (a character from the 1996 film *Crash*). King suspended a crashed car in the exhibition, alongside explorations