



INTERVIEW...

Feilden Fowles

Fergus Feilden and Edmund Fowles believe the future is in slower architecture that has malleable qualities to stand it in good stead

How would you describe your ethos?

Our approach is both academic and hands-on; we research techniques and relevant precedents while making large scale mock-ups and testing the physical and visual properties of materials. Our ambition is to make fine buildings with integrity that are both tectonic in their expression and, above all, socially and environmentally responsible.

What are your main aspirations?

A core objective is to create architecture that is socially sustainable and fulfils the wishes of those that we work with and who will occupy our buildings. We believe in buildings that act as a 'framer' for human experience: a backdrop to the theatre of everyday life, a catalyst for untold and yet unknown uses and activities that might go on over the lifetime of the building.

What does good craftsmanship mean to you in your work?

We design materially rich projects, often using natural materials which take on an organic patina and weather over time, increasing their beauty. We believe it is important to understand relevant vernacular precedents; why their form and materials have endured over history and how they come together. We strive to create buildings which will last for centuries.

What measures do you take to be environmentally conscious?

Our commitment to sustainability is three-fold: approach, delivery and behaviour. Where possible our approach prioritises passive environmental design. For us, sustainability goes hand-in-hand

with a light touch approach on site, and we've been successful in gaining planning approval in highly sensitive contexts such as national parks, Grade I listed builds and within the greenbelt.

What inspires you architecturally?

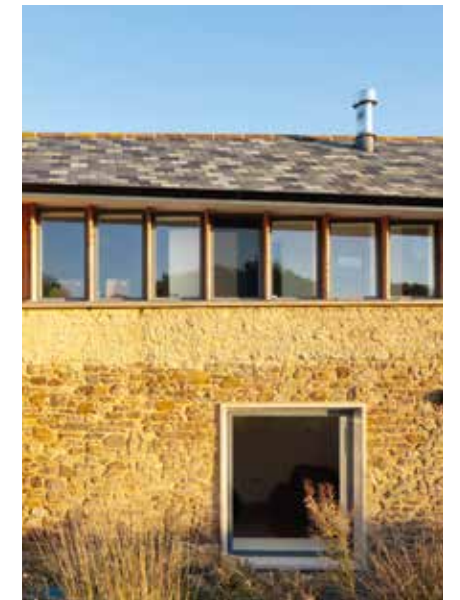
The UK continues to be a great source of richness and inspiration for the practice. Much of our work is located in rural locations and often within areas of outstanding natural beauty. Internationally, I would say we have taken inspiration from European modernism broadly (it's hard not to). For example, the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto from Scandinavia, timber-framed buildings of Japan such as the primitive Minka house ('house for the people') which was a reference point for our own studio and also, more recently, Flemish architecture ranging from the monastic works of Dom Hans van Der Laan to works by Marie-José van Hee.

What is your dream commission?

A new houses of parliament for the UK.

How do you think environmental changes in the next 50 years will impact architecture?

Only for the better. There is too much excess in the way that we build, frivolously to serve markets for 30 years before tearing down buildings and starting again. This can't go on. We believe in a slower, more timeless architecture that is built to last, but allows a looseness in its ability to be reconfigured and reimagined in future generations for future uses. Surely the most sustainable buildings are those that endure. We like the motto 'long life, loose fit.' Paired with this, we believe



that passive low-tech solutions to environmental performance, such as being well insulated, naturally lit and naturally ventilated will survive well by comparison to hi-tech mechanical methods which use more energy, need maintaining and replacing. We have recently used the first passive humidity buffer, comprising of 10,000 unfired clay bricks, in a newly opened gallery for Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and this moderates the sensitive requirements for humidity within the new gallery space.

feildenfowles.co.uk



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Portrait: Kendal Noctor. Photos: Peter Cook, Jonny Wilde, Henrietta Williams