

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Hotchpotch Series of Ad Hoc Solutions: Encountering Theo Crosby's Hammersmith House

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This article tells the story of the New Brutalist house that Theo Crosby designed in Hammersmith, London. This act of storytelling uses historical and architectural methods (archives, measured drawings and models, oral histories, interviews) to document and understand the house's development from its original conversion from a stable in 1956 to when Crosby's first wife, Anne, moved out in 2019.

By describing how the house responded to changes in the family's circumstances over the years, I emphasise the everyday relationship between the family and the house: the role that the house played as a proxy and mediator for the unsaid and unsayable, as well as the role that the family played in its ongoing design and production. In this way, the essay situates the house within architectural history and argues that when New Brutalism — a movement that Crosby helped launch in the 1950s — is considered 'the direct result of a way of life' (Smithson, Smithson, and Crosby 1955: 1), it continues to offer lessons to understanding architecture beyond the aesthetic, without denying the potency of the aesthetic itself.

The contribution is therefore a more nuanced understanding of New Brutalism and the enigmatic behind-the-scenes architect Theo Crosby, as well as a detailed analysis and documentation of this early example of the movement through a personal encounter.

Keywords: Brutalism; Theo Crosby; storytelling; everyday architecture

The Encounter

Anne Crosby lived at 10 Rutland Grove for over 60 years. But the night I spent there recently, under its exposed boarded concrete ceiling that had once given her daughter nightmares for fear of being crushed underneath it, the house lay spookily empty and quiet, in a state of modification and repair, while awaiting new inhabitants for its next stage of life.

I first encountered the house over a decade ago, when I met Anne there to interview her about her ex-husband, Theo Crosby, for my research into *Architectural Design (AD)*, the magazine that he edited with Monica Pidgeon in the 1950s and '60s. It was a cold, grey January day, but the octogenarian generously warmed me up with tea, chocolate biscuits, and anecdotes about her and Theo's life from half a century before.¹ After a couple of hours' fascinating and frank conversation, she showed me around the house, including her second-floor painting studio with the huge glass block north-facing window that dominates the street elevation, and the accumulated accoutrements from a life of art and collecting. 'We [are] loath to spend money on furniture that can be spent on art,' explained Theo in 1971, 'it's more nourishing'

(Kinloch 1971: 30). That might explain all the built-in furniture. Anne stopped on the landing of the cranked stairs and pointed out a pair of portraits of the Crosbys that her friend and contemporary Patrick George painted in 1964 (**Fig. 1**). She remarked how Theo's frame was gilded with gold leaf, whereas hers remained wooden, and invited me to ponder what that signified for their relationship.

The inside of the house is spatially complex — almost vertiginous — belying the quite 'secretive and inward looking' (Kinloch 1971: 28), fortress-like appearance it gives from the street (**Fig. 2**). If we take as an example of what Hammersmith grants planning permission for to be the houses that were built next door in 2014 — a pair of villas that chose to imitate their other neighbours of a more genteel neo-classical design — then the Crosbys' house would never achieve permission today. There is no dressing it up: it is pure, unadulterated New Brutalism, of the original post-war austerity Britain ilk. Its materials pander to nobody: London stock brick, oversized exposed boarded concrete, glass block, lead trim, and black timber. The house is one of the first and 'purest' examples of New Brutalism in the UK, yet is almost completely unknown and, as far as I can tell, has only been published three times: first in the 'Home Column' of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1961 (Hope 1961: 11), and then ten years later in a student publication and an interior decoration yearbook (Kinloch 1971; Moody 1971) (**Fig. 3**).



Figure 1: Portraits of Anne and Theo Crosby by Patrick George (1964). Photograph by Stephen Parnell, 2019.

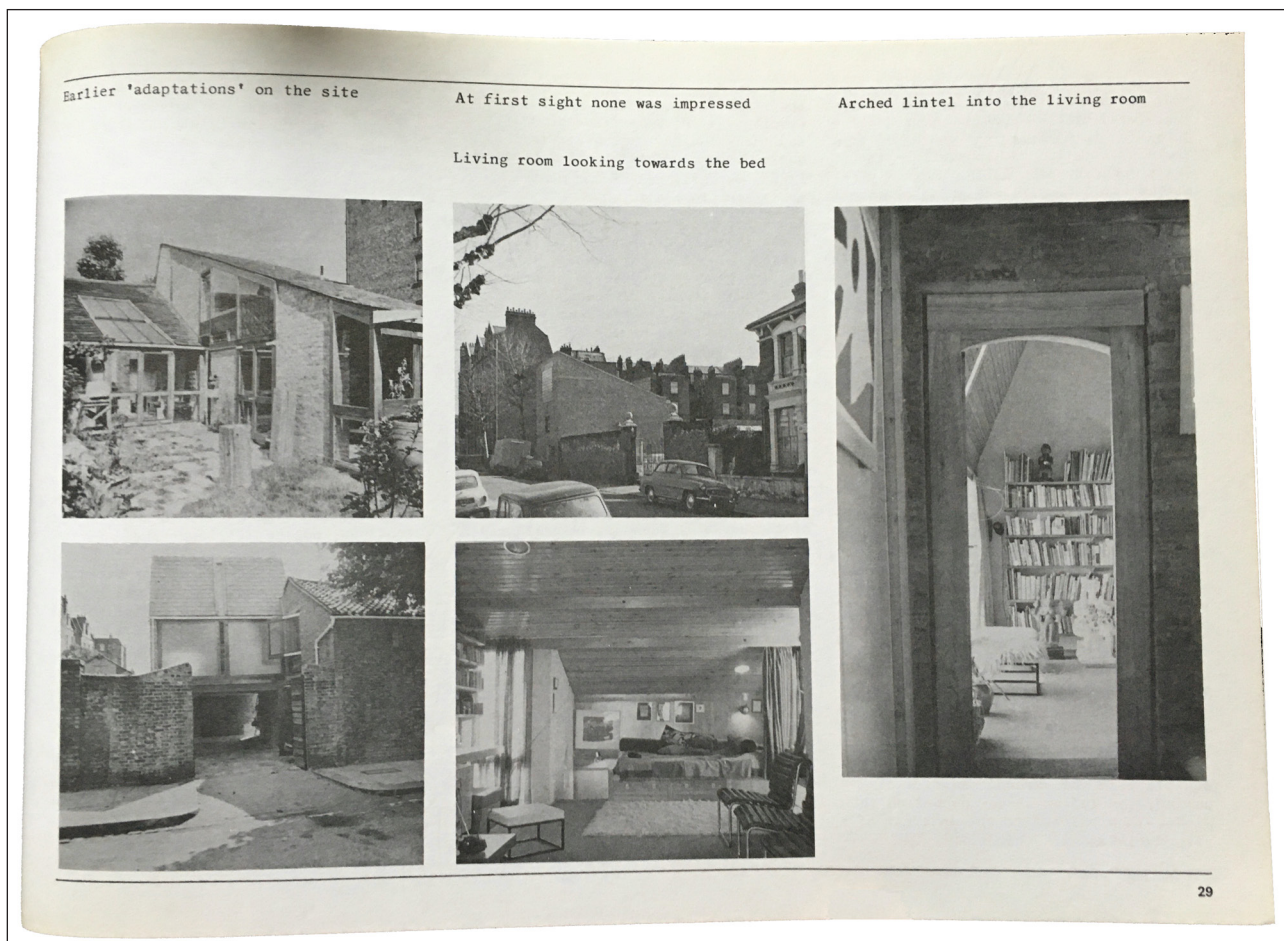


Figure 2: A page from Kinloch's entry in a publication by Portsmouth Polytechnic, showing photographs of the Crosby house from 1971 (Kinloch 1971: 29).

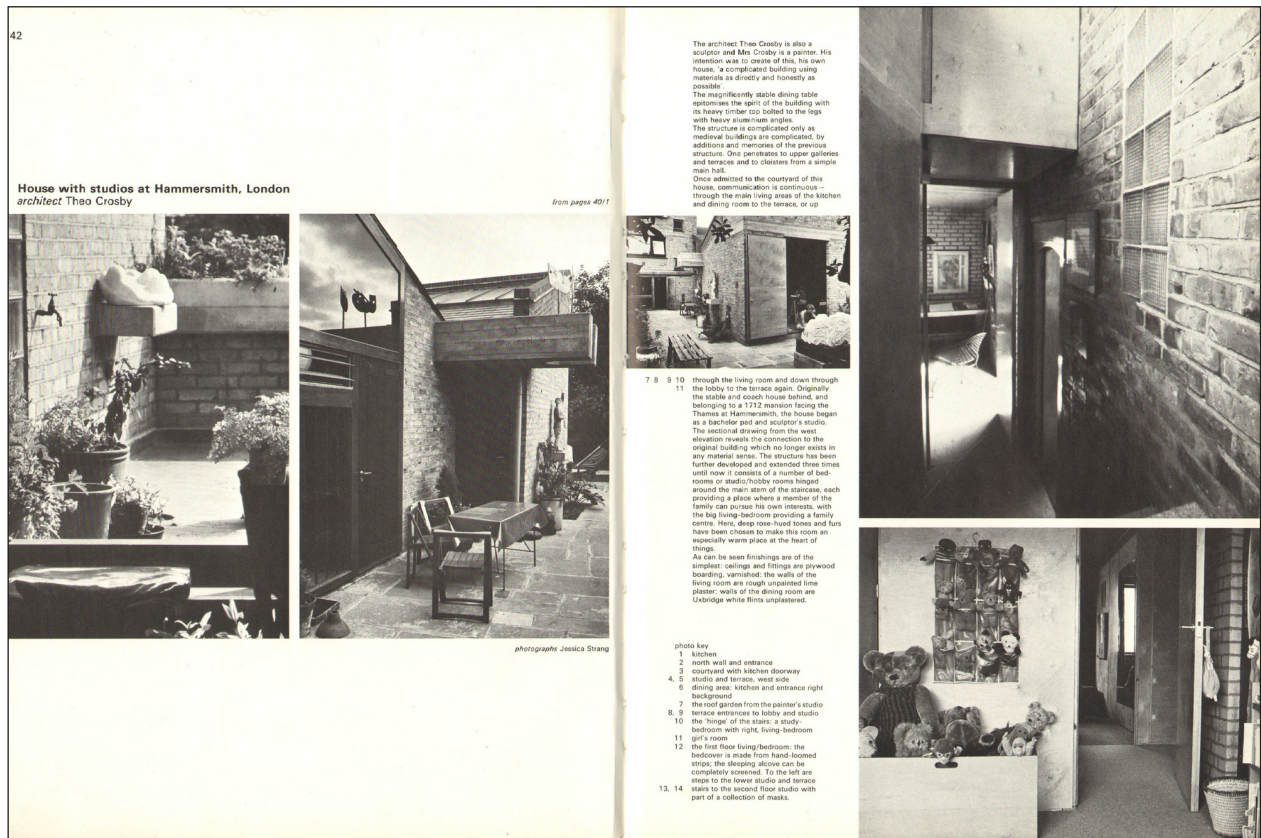


Figure 3: Pages from *Decorative Art in Modern Interiors 1971–72* featuring the Crosby house (Moody 1971: 42–43).

The Approach

The intention of this essay is to narrate and document the history of this unique house through partial biographies of its inhabitants. If houses can be said to have lives themselves, then this particular architectural history should be considered a kind of life writing that considers the house both an archive through which the Crosbys' stories can be told, and a protagonist in the story itself. As will be seen, the house plays a significant role in these stories – a mediating role, occasionally a proxy for other things, whether emotional, psychological, or financial – to the extent that it can almost be considered a member of the Crosby family itself. Beyond other things, it is variously used as a bargaining tool, an analogy, an excuse, a relationship mediator, a placeholder, an attractor, a calm, constant, ordering agent, a repository for memories and an empty vessel for meaning, a way to express repressed emotions otherwise inaccessible, a backdrop for life. In this mode of writing, I take courage from Shelley Klein's recent autobiographical account of the house her father commissioned from Peter Womersley in High Sunderland, which was coincidentally started the same year as the Crosby house, but with a very different approach and context (Klein 2020). Equally, I am indebted to the narrative modes of historical geography, such as Fraser MacDonald's 'The Ruins of Erskine Beveridge', which are as much stylistic as analytic (MacDonald 2014). As much as this essay calls for a re-emphasis on the ethic of the original New Brutalism, it is, perhaps ironically, attempting to appeal to a more

aesthetic mode of writing in itself, flipping between narrative, reflective and historical modes.

The house will be explored through a variety of methods, both historical and architectural. Much of the biographical details of the Crosbys has come from a series of interviews with Anne, including the British Library's Artists' and Architects' Lives oral histories, as well as my own interviews and a series of interviews done by Stephen Escritt in 1995 for the purposes of an unpublished 'Theo Crosby research project'. I have also used archives to piece together the archaeology of the house, from the original planning applications held by Hammersmith Council to architects' archives held at the RIBA and Crosby's own archive, now held at Brighton University, as well as personal documents held by Theo and Anne's daughter, Dido Crosby, and a historic photographic record of Crosby's architecture made by Jessica Strang in the early 1970s, which has helped illustrate forgotten moments. Finally, the house was the focus of a 'Linked Research' project that I led at Newcastle University's School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape,² in which students conducted a measured survey of the house and made a series of drawings and a 1:50 reconfigurable model that could be composed in any of the stages of the house's life as it evolved over time, depicting its interior and exterior spaces and textures that are unavailable through the photographic record (Fig. 4).

Crosby's Hammersmith house has not previously enjoyed such scrutiny – a quite deliberate act on Theo's part, as he preferred to act in the background ('As you



Figure 4: Views of the 1:50 model by Jamie Morton and Laura Davis-Lamarre. Top row, left to right: The original coach house conversion (1956 iteration); the first iteration from the south east (1960 iteration); the interior of Anne's painting studio featuring the large glass block wall (1967 iteration). Middle row, left to right: the interior of the large living room (1960 iteration); the street elevation as it appears today; a section of the house as it was used when I first met Anne in 2011 (1985 iteration); a view of the overall house as it appears today. Bottom row, left to right: the open-plan kitchen/dining room (1967 iteration); Theo's studio (1967 iteration); the whole model with all its parts for all iterations on baseboards. Photographs courtesy of Jamie Morton and Laura Davis-Lamarre.

more than once remarked,' he once told his wife, 'I enjoy being an *éminence grise*' (A. Crosby 2009: 87)) and did not want the house to ever be listed, as its whole purpose was to change in response to family circumstances. This essay, therefore, introduces the house to architectural history for the first time and situates it as one of the earliest examples of domestic New Brutalism in the UK. It also throws light on its enigmatic and self-effacing author in an attempt to bring him out from the long shadows of Alison and Peter Smithson and Reyner Banham. Like concrete, historical narratives have a period of time in which they are quite fluid and subject to being formed, but once they set, they are cast hard into the mould that historians make, difficult to reshape once that formwork is struck. It is my hope that it is not too late for discerning readers to be able to retrieve a more nuanced understanding of the essence of what the New Brutalist movement stood for, as originally divined by Crosby and the Smithsons.

Underpinning this narrative is the argument that the New Brutalism was a movement that was primarily a straightforward response to life and its complications, and its aesthetic merely a result of 'a hotch potch series of ad hoc solutions' (Kinloch 1971: 30), as Crosby himself modestly described the house, or as the Smithsons more famously put it, 'the direct result of a way of life' (Smithson, Smithson, and Crosby 1955: 1).

'A Minor Architecture Is about Dwelling'

Crosby is not particularly well known as an architect, nor, by most accounts, was he a particularly good one (A. Crosby 1995; Lasdun 1995; Drew 1995). He is usually only mentioned in passing or as a footnote in accounts of the Independent Group or the Smithsons that have recently engulfed architectural history. He might even be considered a 'minor architect', which Jill Stoner has described as 'a minor destructive character, a tinkerer and hacker,

journalist and editor, alter ego and subaltern' (Stoner 2012: 91): I think this describes Crosby quite nicely. 'Minor architectures', wrote Stoner, 'perpetuate conditions of lack [whose] spaces (like those of minor literature) are knowingly impoverished' (Stoner 2012: 4, cited in Volz 2020) which I think accurately depicts the original austere and frugal approach to the house's design. 'Minor' here is not used in terms of being from a minority group – Crosby was a white male, albeit from South Africa – but in the way that it can 'distinguish itself from the "major architecture" or the canon' (Burns 2013: 23). 'Ultimately', concluded T. Hugh Crawford, after much theorising between Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault, 'a minor architecture is about dwelling' (Crawford 2010), which is entirely my reading of the Hammersmith house. My aim, then, is to explore architectural history through a non-heroic, everyday architecture: an approach derived from the postwar austerity of New Brutalism in which it was conceived. Crosby is interesting precisely because he was a behind-the-scenes enabler who represents the ordinary architect in the extraordinary context of the postwar years of reconstruction, normatively written about in heroic terms. He is also interesting because his architectural ideology switched from hard core Brutalism when he first arrived in the UK from his native South Africa in 1948, when he was heavily involved and invested in London's neo-avant-garde scene, to being an architectural advisor to Prince Charles in the 1980s and the architect behind the reconstruction of the Shakespeare Globe on the south bank of the Thames.

Crosby was always as interested in art as he was in architecture – he told Dido that 'he had wanted to be a sculptor but there was obviously no money in it and so he thought he had better be an architect' (D. Crosby 2021). It is worth looking up the only video we have of him which shows him making sculpture in his studio at the house in 1960, described by a narrator in very clipped received pronunciation (*Mosaic Sculpture* 1960). As soon as he arrived in London, Crosby signed up for evening classes in sculpture at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, where he met like-minded young artists and designers, such as Edward Wright and Richard Hamilton, as well as his future Pentagram partners Alan Fletcher and Colin Forbes. Crosby positioned himself on the edge of this scene, exhibiting and publishing the work of others rather than pushing his own work forward.³ He also joined the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London, which he described as 'a kind of club for my kind' (T. Crosby 1992: 197).

While Crosby was not one of the 'nucleus' of the Independent Group that met at the ICA, he was 'amongst those who would very occasionally attend one of the monthly meetings' (Massey 1995: 80). The first and second sessions of this group coincided almost exactly with the period when he lived in the first New Brutalist house that he designed and built in 1952 – a studio bachelor pad in Strand-on-the-Green, London, where he lived after moving out from sharing digs with the Smithsons.⁴ I have written more critically and analytically elsewhere about that house and how Crosby and

his closest friends, the Smithsons, developed their ideas about the New Brutalism together, including an emphasis on proportion adopted from Rudolf Wittkower (Parnell 2019). There, I argue that the ideas the young architects shared contrasted with those of Banham, whose version of the story has subsequently become the one unquestioningly cast into architectural history. That first 'prequel' article also compares Crosby's first house, which was constructed in Strand-on-the-Green but had never been published, with the Smithsons' Soho House which was never built, but which Crosby published in *AD* in December 1953 and has since become a touchstone for New Brutalist discourse. As a development of Crosby's first house, the Hammersmith house therefore represents further built evidence of the conversations of the original protagonists.

Dirk van den Heuvel has identified 1955 as the end of the New Brutalist movement's 'first series of moments' (van den Heuvel 2015: 299), and it certainly also marked a maturation for Crosby. The year began with his and the Smithsons' New Brutalist manifesto in January's *AD* (Smithson, Smithson, and Crosby 1955), and ended with Banham's famous apology of the New Brutalism in the *Architectural Review* (Banham 1955). That same year, Derek Sugden commissioned the Smithsons to design his house in Watford, into which he moved in January 1957 (Sugden 2015); at the ICA, the Independent Group was coming to an end. Its swansong was the *This Is Tomorrow* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in August 1956 that Crosby organised and found funding for.⁵ Over the ensuing two years, CIAM (Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne) and MARS (Modern Architecture Research group) would also be dissolved and replaced by Team X, with the Smithsons at the centre.⁶ It was at *This Is Tomorrow* that Crosby met Anne (A. Crosby 1995), and he moved to Rutland Grove shortly after.

Anne was born Finella Buchanan into a wealthy but 'absolutely chaotic family' (A. Crosby 2002). She described her parents as 'raffish' people who 'could afford the time and money to go a bit communist, living in Russia for a while and this and that', dumping their many children in various boarding schools (A. Crosby 2011). 'By the age of four I was in boarding school', recalled Anne matter-of-factly within the first minute of her Artists' Lives interview with Linda Sandino (A. Crosby 2002). After a clearly traumatic childhood, she attended Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts between 1949 and 1953 and became a painter, spending a couple of years in Paris (A. Crosby 2003a). Back in London, she worked at Better Books, the independent counter-cultural bookshop set up by her half-brother, Tony Godwin. It was here she first spotted Theo. She remembered that first encounter as follows:

I thought, 'there is an extraordinary man, because he's timeless, he doesn't look young,' though I realised he wasn't very old, 'he's not dressed as people dress,' ... he didn't think the way other people thought ... I could see that he was quite extraordinary, probably very intelligent and there was something very vulnerable about him with those glasses

... All that proved to be true ... And he was simply nice ... straightforwardly nice. (A. Crosby 2003c)

'I Could Do Better for You Than the Scouts'

Theo loved a party, which is where he met and made many friends and contacts. The writer Anne Piper, one of his 'strong women' with whom he was particularly friendly, remembered that 'he was famous for giving very good parties when he was on his own' and that she first met him at one hosted by her brother-in-law, the artist Michael Piper (Piper 1995). She remembered, later, how

he came and looked at the stables at the bottom of our garden at 7 Lower Mall, Hammersmith, and decided that it would be fun to turn it into a studio house for himself. We were just going to let it to the Boy Scouts who wanted a room to operate in, and he came round and said, 'I think I could do better for you than the scouts'. (Piper 1995)

And so he submitted a planning application in October 1955 for 'the conversion of a coach house at the rear of No. 7, Lower Mall, Hammersmith, into a sculptor's studio on the ground floor, with residential accommodation on the ground and first floors' (**Fig. 5**).⁷

The original coach house that Crosby found at the end of the Pipers' garden was a very small single-storey, not-quite-square, pitch-roofed building with a footprint of approximately 10 m × 5 m. It was divided into two halves – the taller half to the north facing Rutland Grove that included the hayloft, and a single storey on the garden side to the rear (south). The east elevation contained a double barn door in the rear half and a regular door toward the street, but no windows. The building was constructed of a single leaf of London stock brick and the roof was Welsh slate. Clearly, it was designed for animal rather than human habitation.

In the northern end, Crosby used the ground floor as a kitchen and bathroom, adding two new small windows, and a concrete floor. As Alice Hope later reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, 'He lined the damp walls with cavity breeze blocks, put in a window wall with a glass front door, laid stout linoleum on the floor, made cupboards and shelves and arrangements for cooking, and then went to bed in the hayloft above. This, too, he transformed in due course, with a wall of cupboards and shelves for his books.' A 'circular iron staircase picked up ... in a junk yard' led to a first-floor bedsitting room with a new skylight and a vaulted 'boarded' ceiling under the rafters (Hope 1961: 18) (**Fig. 6**). The stable doors to the first floor were glazed for more light. There is no mention of either heating or insulation. It must have been unforgivingly brutal in the winter. The studio to the rear was left unfinished, with Crosby inserting just a sink, a skylight and glazed doors leading to the patio (**Fig. 7**). This was a simple house for sculpting, for meeting friends and partying, for eating, drinking and sleeping. It could not have been very comfortable but as such, it was an 'architecture as the direct result of

a way of life', to use the Smithsons' phrase (Smithson, Smithson, and Crosby 1955: 1). It complemented Crosby's approach to life expressed equally through his 'exceptionally odd ... short overcoat made of a very hairy, rough material' and his straightforward vulnerability (A. Crosby 2003c).

Anne's brother, the engineer Alan Buchanan, was very good friends with the architect Peter Goldfinger (Ernö Goldfinger's son) at Trinity College, Cambridge, and Peter's sister, Liz, became Crosby's and Pidgeon's secretary at *AD* at the end of 1957.⁸ Pidgeon remembered how Theo and Anne became a permanent item:

Liz Goldfinger was having her 21st birthday party and we were all there ... and as was his wont, Theo went off, taking a nice young lady for the night, and this happened to be Anne, and she decided she rather liked him. She stayed several days and then she came back and stayed longer, and then stayed longer still and he'd say in the office, 'it's alright having her there, but she can't cook, and she doesn't know how to wash things or anything, but it's nice having her there.' And it went on like this and gradually they moved in, but he didn't want to marry her. (Pidgeon 1995)

Liz Goldfinger confirmed that this party was at their house at Willow Road that her father designed (L. Goldfinger 2021). Anne was clearly attracted to the nice, intelligent Crosby, but was also 'emotionally interested in architecture' (A. Crosby 2003b). In her interview with Sandino, she recalled her attraction to modern architecture:

it seemed ... as if your life could be cleaned up by your surroundings, made un-chaotic because a lot of our houses were cold and rambling and un-repaired and this seemed such a wonderful contrast to that. ... [Theo] said he was going to extend it and what room did *WE* need. When I first got to this house, he only gave me a cupboard to keep my things in – a very big cupboard under the eaves. It had to look incredibly spick and span and sparse – I liked that. ... I'd had a cottage before then, I'd inherited money and bought a cottage, but it just seemed a cottage. But *THIS* [the house] seemed an amazing answer to a maiden's prayer. (A. Crosby 2003b)

The cupboard mentioned here must be the one in the north-west corner on the first floor (**Fig. 5**). Life was sparse – impoverished almost – but at least it was ordered and calm. Theo and Anne enjoyed a regular routine during those early years in Rutland Grove. During the week, Theo sculpted at St Martins in the mornings and worked at *AD* in the afternoons. Then at weekends, he did all his shopping on Saturday mornings and the Smithsons came round on Sunday for lunch. Then they met the Pipers in the evening and went drinking at the Blue Anchor pub on the Thames with other friends, such as Monica Pidgeon (Piper 1995; A. Crosby 2011).

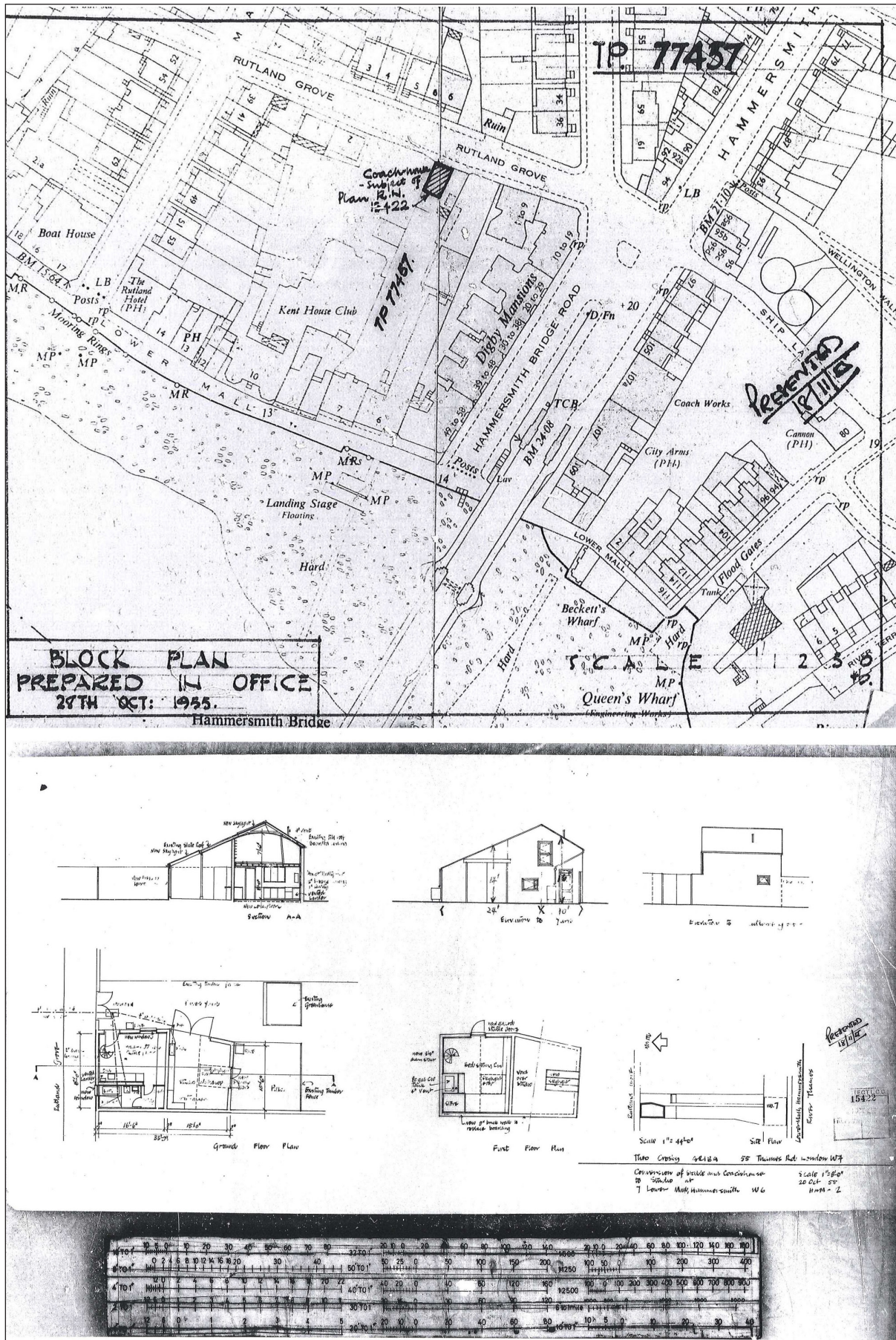


Figure 5: The original planning application to Hammersmith Council submitted in October 1955, showing the location plan (top) and conversion plans, section and elevation (bottom). Drawings courtesy of the Hammersmith & Fulham Council Planning Register.



Figure 6: The kitchen in the original 1956 conversion with iron spiral stair picked up from a junk yard, and a bird cage (containing 'canary George and his wife') on the exposed breeze block wall. Photograph courtesy Dido Crosby.

Anne thought that he liked her for being 'very low maintenance' (A. Crosby 2003d) but also for her 'wonderful connections in the architectural world' (A. Crosby 2011): her father was an engineer who knew Jack Pritchard and worked with Wells Coates, and her mother was great friends with Serge Chermayeff. They considered themselves Bloomsburyites with a flat in Bloomsbury and friends with the Bloomsbury set. Anne had also become friends with Barbara Hepworth's son, Paul Skaeping at Summerhill, one of A.S. Neill's schools (Neill was a friend of Anne's mother, Jean, who also had relationships with

Gerald Barry and Bertrand Russell). Theo was attracted to this English elite, avant-garde circle, and, whether or not he was conscious of it, becoming part of it was a way to get on in art and architecture.

Theo and Anne were daringly unconventional in cohabiting while not married at the end of the 1950s. Their friend, the painter Joanna Drew, recalled that they were the first amongst her artist milieu to do so (Drew 2002) and Anne recalled that the milkman dropped his bottles in embarrassment when he discovered they were going to get married after three years of 'living in sin' (A. Crosby



Figure 7: Photograph of Theo standing in front of his studio in 1958. Photograph courtesy of Dido Crosby.

2003d). Theo enjoyed his bachelor life and, according to Anne Piper, 'had several girlfriends but they were never living-in girlfriends ... until Anne came along, she was the first person to live there' (Piper 1995). However, neither wanted to marry. Anne had vowed never to get married, having been scarred by her parents' various relationships and affairs and her father's four marriages (A. Crosby 2011), and Theo 'was a true bachelor' (Piper 1995).

'Each Room Was a Cell in Which to Think'

The barn was a relatively small and inexpensive conversion⁹ but after a couple of years of living together, it was time for the house to grow to accommodate a studio for Anne. On 20 February 1959, Theo submitted a planning application for the 'replacement of an existing garage and greenhouse by a new garage and single-storey studio' (Fig. 8), which was granted on 2 April. This application shows a new studio building in the place of the existing greenhouse and joined to the existing building only by the flat roof of a car port. The plan and elevations contort painfully to follow the site boundary, but the materials are straightforward London stock brick and varnished timber cladding under a slate roof. Importantly, the plans also show a dotted line indicating 'line of possible future studio' and the notes state, 'Garage roof will become floor of a future 1st floor painting studio linked to living room in

existing studio'. Life and architectural plans were clearly being considered and developed in tandem, although at this stage, most of the space was given to studio.

Anne told Sandino that the house developed as she 'inherited money, or we grew a bit more wealthy' (A. Crosby 2002). However, she told me that instead of an inheritance, she received a kind of dowry from her father, which added 'bits to this [the house]' (A. Crosby 2011), which she calls her 'marriage dowry' in *Matthew*, the touching memoir she wrote about their son (A. Crosby 2009: 48). So, to extend the house, which cost '£1500 to add a studio; then £4,000 for the big living room over the garage,' (Kinloch 1971: 27), they needed to get married.¹⁰ The 1959 planning application was quickly superseded by a new application for 'the replacement of an existing garage and greenhouse by a new garage and two-storey living accommodation', which was granted on 11 April 1960.¹¹

The drawing, dated 14 February 1960 (Fig. 9), shows the original parallelogram of a studio replaced by a bedroom with an en-suite bathroom and stairs leading to a large living room over the car port. The materials are still stock brick, slate and varnished or creosoted timber, and the inside of the living room was to be lined with plywood. The living room also contained a built-in couch (Fig. 10). Theo was a tall man and probably preferred

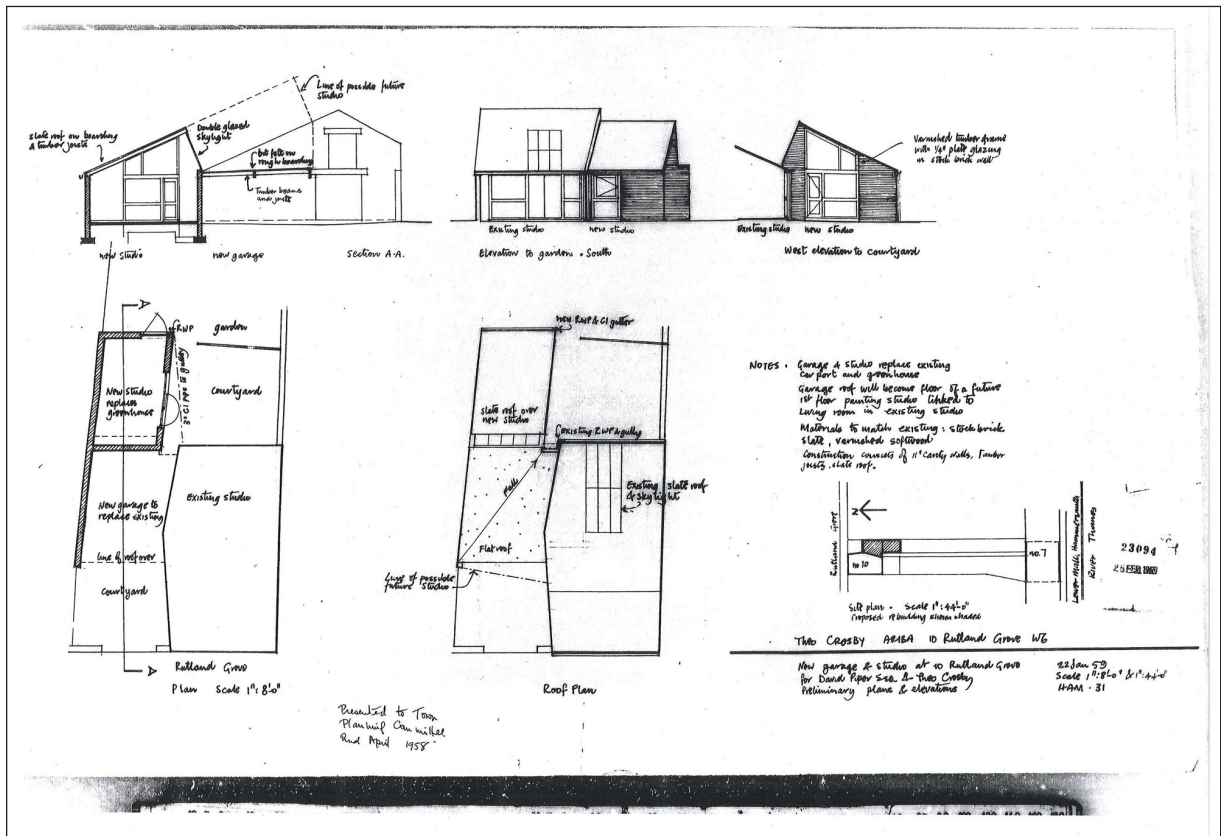


Figure 8: Plans submitted to Hammersmith Council in 1959 for the second iteration of the house. Drawings courtesy of the Hammersmith & Fulham Council Planning Register.

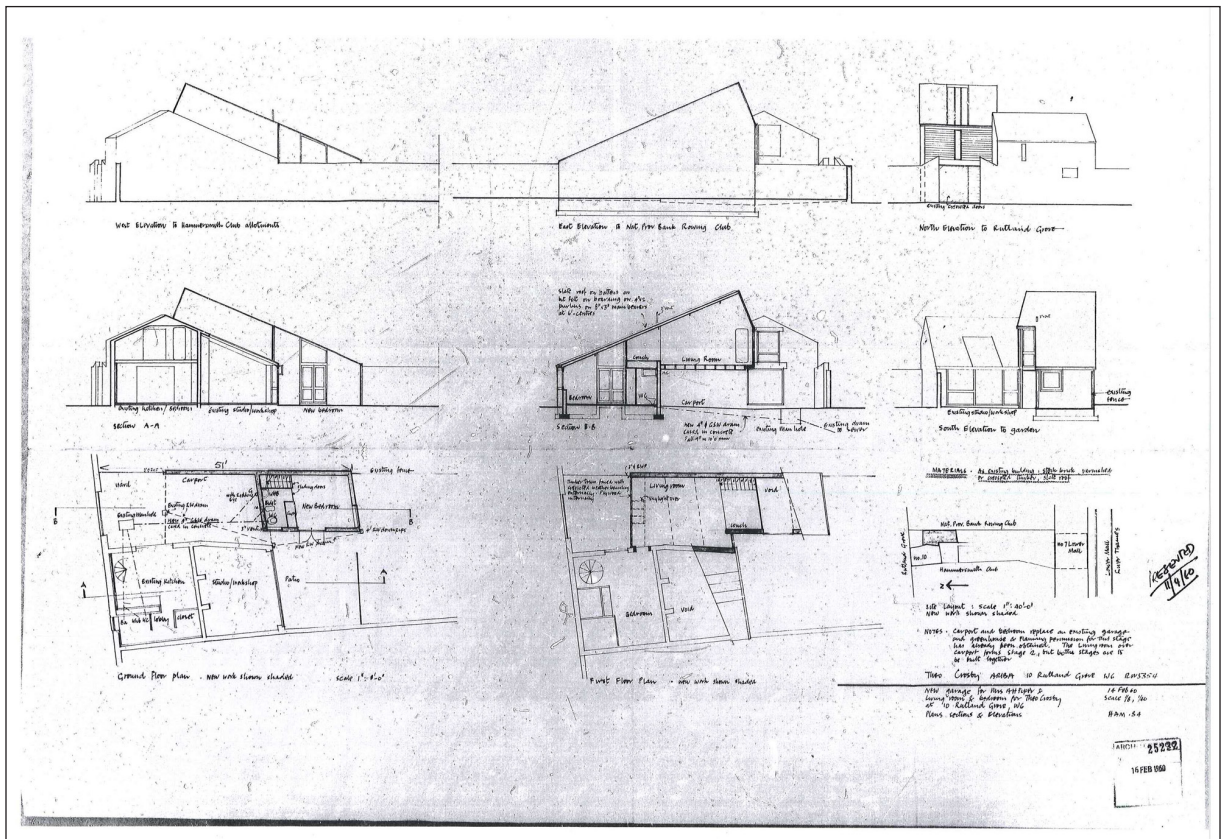


Figure 9: Plans submitted to Hammersmith Council in 1960 for an updated version of the second iteration of the house. Drawings courtesy of Hammersmith & Fulham Borough Council.



Figure 10: The living room featuring the built-in couch. © Jessica Strang, 1971.

his furniture bespoke, like his architecture. At his previous Strand-on-the-Green house, he had also constructed a built-in bed as a sort of mini mezzanine over a cupboard and this large built-in couch in the living room was where he and Anne were to sleep. Anne recalled this approach to furniture with her accustomed resignation:

Theo always made this kind of built-in furniture. You were never allowed any furniture – I inherited beautiful pieces which we had to be rid of. The whole house is absolutely as he built it. It's New Brutalism and we've never had to decorate it since we built it. The whole house cost £14,000, except for this extension. So we have this blonde wooden serviceable built-in furniture, added to which are my Aalto tables and stools which my mother and father are said to have bought actually at the Bauhaus. (A. Crosby 2002)

The replacement of 'studio' on the plan with 'bedroom' suggests a more domestic than artistic future arrangement. By this time, for whatever reason – possibly to assuage his guilty conscience (derived from his God-fearing Afrikaner mother) for living in sin (A. Crosby 2009: 14), or perhaps cynically, to access Anne's money – Theo had convinced Anne to marry him.

On 4 April 1960, a day after Theo's 35th birthday and a month after he had backed out of one wedding attempt (Anne had already backed out of another) (Pidgeon 1995), they were finally married, with Peter Smithson as Theo's best man.¹² Anne claims they did not speak for two weeks

after the wedding – it 'wasn't a very marriage-like marriage', she acknowledged (A. Crosby 2003a). In *Matthew*, she describes many times the emotional distance between her and Theo, and how she could 'never know nor be able to guess Theo's thoughts or feelings' (A. Crosby 2009: 21). He considered marriage a weakness (Parnell 2019: 296), but after his death, Pidgeon recalled that 'she [Anne] said she wanted to have a kid and he [Theo], sort of, didn't know how to say "no"' (Pidgeon 1995). And so the house transformed from a bachelor sculptor's studio bedsit to that of a married couple, and then, very quickly, into a family house. Anne became pregnant almost immediately after the wedding and, after the tragedy of the death of their first son at only four days old in early 1961 (A. Crosby 2009: 16), Dido was born that December.

A growing family required an enlarged house. A contract drawn up between Anne Piper and Theo, dated 11 January 1961, defined a 40-year lease for the land upon which the house was built, with the exception of a right of passage and the garage (shown in green in **Fig. 11**), which remained the property of the Pipers to maintain a connection to the road from their house on Lower Mall (located on the bank of the Thames). Theo never learned to drive and 'dislike[d] motor cars' (T. Crosby 1962: 119), so conceding the parking was not a big deal for him, though it continued to represent a fissure between the otherwise close families. In the original plans, the right of way ran straight through the middle of the site, splitting the existing converted stable from the new building, a constraint that Theo considered immutable. It also split Theo and Anne, who was never involved

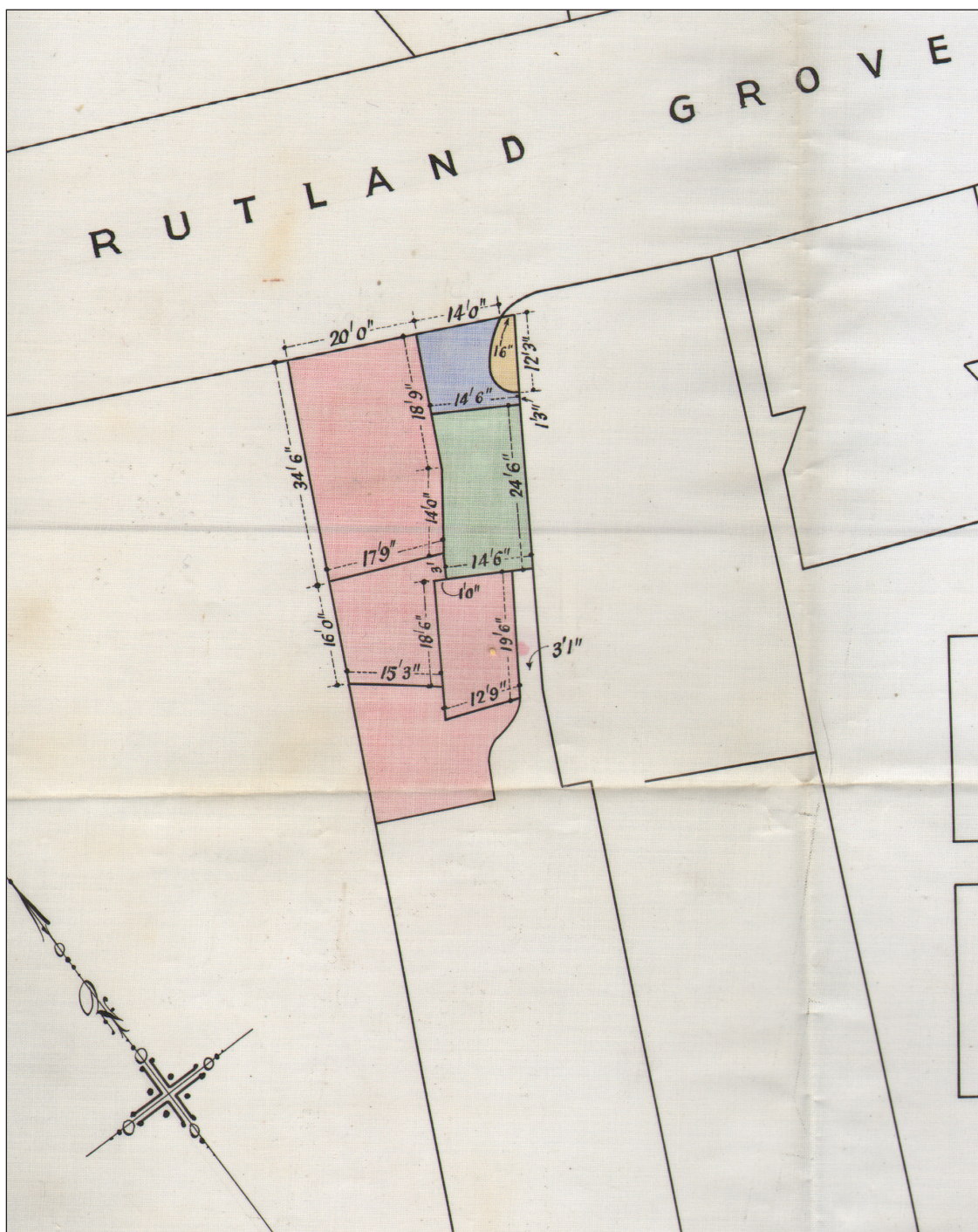


Figure 11: Plan of the house showing the division of ownership from the 1961 lease. Red is the Crosbys', green is the Pipers', blue and yellow are a right of way. Courtesy of Dido Crosby.

in the design of the house but was critical of his proposal, complaining that she could not be expected to go outside to the other wing with her asthma (A. Crosby 2003d). She brought in the Smithsons to adjudicate and later recalled, 'They said, "Ask the Pipers to take the path round the building." And he was sort of shamefaced and angry, but he did. And that was the only time we discussed it, because I was going to live in it' (A. Crosby 2003d). So in July, Theo redrew the plans so that the ground floor parallelogram bedroom was rationalised into a rectangle and pulled away from the eastern

boundary with the rowing club¹³ in order to maintain the Pipers' right of way (see ground floor plan drawing at the bottom left of **Fig. 24**).

The first-floor living room, on the other hand, was constructed as originally planned, sailing over the passageway to touch the eastern boundary, and it survives to this day almost untouched (**Fig. 12**). Reminiscent of the long mono-pitch of Theo's house at Strand-on-the-Green, it is an extraordinary space dominated by the ceiling rising from the rear to the front and clad in 'natural pine, tongue and grooved' (Hope 1961: 11) (**Fig. 13**). Upon



Figure 12: The street elevation from the 1960 iteration published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 4 July 1961. Photographer unknown.

the extension's completion, which coincided with the opening of the International Union of Architects exhibition on the South Bank (the buildings for which Crosby had also designed), Hope picked out this room for particular praise in the *Daily Telegraph*:

The new room is ingeniously planned to make the most of every bit of sun and light. It is built over the yard and has a wide, north wall of double-glazed plate metal glass – which is plate glass before it is polished.

Vertical slits in this wall are both a feature of the room and ventilation.

On the west and the east side of this living room, the windows have louvred glass shutters and there is a raised platform at one end to take a divan. The other end of this room also has a raised dais, necessitated by problems of construction, and the effect here is of a Japanese tokonoma.

In fact, as the room is almost empty because it is just finished, the effect is wholly Japanese. The plate glass gives the same luminous effect as paper shutters. (Hope 1961: 11)

The mention of a Japanese aesthetic resonates with the manifesto that Crosby and the Smithsons published in *AD* in January 1955, where they repeatedly stressed the influence of 'Japanese architecture – its underlying ideas, principles, and spirit' (Smithson, Smithson, and Crosby 1955: 1; Kei 2019). Each of the living room's side walls is rough-rendered and whitewashed and the door to the existing building sits under a slight arch and has rounded reveals (**Fig. 14**). The specification document described it thus:

The intention is to produce a soft lime plaster finish, white in colour and even in texture, which will not be painted ... the finishing coat to be 1 part lime putty: ¼ part gypsum plaster, worked up with a sand float to avoid a dead smooth finish. (Piper and Crosby 1961: 23)

It feels materially sensuous and is reminiscent of Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp, which Crosby visited as it was being completed in the mid-1950s.

A photograph taken for Hope's article of the rear of the second iteration of the house shows how the new wing was



Figure 13: The large living room featuring the 'Japanese tokonoma'. © Jessica Strang, 1971.

constructed, with more glazing and a corner window that also supports a mild steel cantilevered waterspout with a chain to a rainwater butt (Fig. 15). Also visible on the gable wall is a vertical strip of glass blocks, the edges of which define a niche on the inside of the wall, again with rounded reveals to match the adjacent door (Fig. 14).

The ground floor remains disconnected from the original house to accommodate the Pipers' garage. Providing such a detached bedroom, which required the house to have two staircases, also suggests a material manifestation of Theo's 'strange emotional state' (A. Crosby 2011) and detachment that Anne had already become used to. Anne



Figure 14: The living room's connection with the original conversion, with the whitewashed rendered wall and rounded reveals. Photograph by Stephen Parnell, 2019.



Figure 15: An overview of the house's 1960 iteration as published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 4 July 1961. Photographer unknown.

was fond of working things through psychologically, and had obviously thought a lot about her husband's psychological state, equating it with architecture:

[H]is whole life was self-conscious. There was nothing unself-conscious about Theo. He constructed himself. As he went along, he changed the model, but he did construct himself. I used to think that was so sad. He used to see himself as a hollow man. ... His life was in his mind ... he saw rooms rather like his brain. They were places to think. ... Each room was a cell in which to think. (A. Crosby 1995)

Theo enjoyed the process of constant change and planning the next stage. Dido recalled how 'everywhere has plans for later', how 'he was very good at finding a near spatial solution for what you might begin to need' and how her father would 'always be working out the next stage in case he needed it'. 'He was never satisfied when his house was finished', she remarked (D. Crosby 1995). However, others such as Denys Lasdun (1995), Monica Pidgeon (1995), Jane Drew (1995) and even Anne recalled that Theo was not a particularly imaginative architect. Perhaps the architecture had to be a direct result of a way of life where he was constantly living it and reacting to it? The whole ensemble at this stage really does resemble a 'hotch potch series of ad hoc solutions.'

A Complete Rebuild on an Existing Edifice

An architectural reading of Anne's memoir reveals the domestic living arrangements during the early 1960s: on hearing that Anne was pregnant (for the second time, the first pregnancy had apparently been kept quiet), Theo's mother arrived to live with them in the autumn of 1961. With Dido's birth in December, the house was asked to accommodate three generations, which may explain the detached bedroom in the recent extension – it was evidently an uncomfortable living arrangement that Theo was clearly trying to postpone for as long as possible. Anne later explained that 'when my father heard that my mother-in-law was living with us, he wrote me a letter suggesting that I use "some but not all" of my marriage dowry to buy a flat or small house for my mother-in-law' (A. Crosby 2009: 48).

Once he had children, however, Theo felt the need to become respectable and get a 'proper job' (A. Crosby 2011) so in May 1962, after almost nine years of editing *AD* with Pidgeon, Crosby left to work for Taylor Woodrow on the Euston Station project. Crosby loathed this job, though Anne noted that 'out of respect for his hitherto undiscovered effectiveness at earning a very nearly adequate income from his architectural practice, Theo was accorded a certain amount of detachment from day-to-day family life' (A. Crosby 2009: 25). It was at Taylor Woodrow, however, that Theo brought together the six members of Archigram, alongside the future *AD* technical editor, Robin Middleton (Sadler 2002; Middleton

2010). He lasted only two years at Taylor Woodrow, but during that time, he edited three issues of the little magazine *Living Arts* (Massey 2018), as well as helped organise Archigram's Living City exhibition at the ICA in 1963 (Sadler 2001: 53). Demolition of the famous Euston arch was already underway, but he was seen to be complicit in the project that was responsible for its destruction, and this was one of the reasons that he fell out with his long-term friends the Smithsons (A. Crosby 1995).¹⁴ In *Matthew*, Anne explained the other, more personal, reason for this falling out: their (the Crosbys') son, Matthew, who was born in May 1964 with Down syndrome. Alison Smithson declared that they could no longer visit because of such a flawed child, which completely devastated Theo (A. Crosby 2009: 50–52). The Euston project did not work out (Middleton 1966: 267), and a month after Matthew's birth, Crosby left Taylor Woodrow to join Forbes and Fletcher to form a multi-disciplinary design practice that later became Pentagram (Kei 2018).

Anne wrote at length, with disappointment but no bitterness, about how Theo was never able to accept Matthew (A. Crosby 2009: 54). In a letter to Roger Reith, Theo wrote that 'the only recent triumph was the British section of the Milan Triennale, where I got a gran Premio'. However, 'at home things have been grim. We had another child, a boy about 5 months ago, who turned out to be a mongol' (T. Crosby 1964b). Jane Drew remembered that he felt he was being punished by God: 'I value intelligence so much that I've been given a mongol child', he wept (Jane Drew 1995). In her book, Anne dismissed the usage of this now offensive term, explaining how 'present-day carriers of this chromosomal mishap are known as Down syndrome people. However, during the time I am describing, it was not thought pejorative (in England) to use the term mongol' (A. Crosby 2009: 18). Combined with his misery at Taylor Woodrow and his split with the Smithsons, this time could be considered a pivotal point in his life and career. In 1963 he met Jane Jacobs in the United States. He had not previously read her recently published book, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, but he did so on the plane on the way home, and it proved transformative (Jacobs 1961; T. Crosby 1973: 64–68). At the end of his book *Architecture: City Sense*, Crosby wrote, of books that deal with architecture, planning, and sociology, that 'The truest and most moving is Jane Jacob's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, to which I owe a great deal' (T. Crosby 1965: 95). Shortly after, he scribbled several pages of quite disillusioned notes in his notebook under the heading 'Environment':

Today after 2 centuries of disparate effort our environment is a ruin, our society untrained & suddenly unfit for the new life which eager technology has produced. ... The new environment is seldom designed for the humane purposes we like to think of. Building is an industry which rolls on like a juggernaut, and it is one dominated almost entirely by

the quick profit motive. While this motive is relatively innocuous on the stock exchange, immortalised in concrete it takes a lot of getting used to. (T. Crosby 1964a: unpaginated)

At the age of almost 40, and as a father of two, Crosby was completely re-evaluating his life. These were clearly the seeds for his *City Sense* book and his 1973 exhibition *How to Play the Environment Game* at the Hayward Gallery. This turn towards environmentalism was not reflected in the house's development, however, which always maintained a faithfulness to its original design ethos of the 1950s.

By the time of Matthew's third birthday in 1967, no decision had yet been made as to whether he would stay at home or be cared for elsewhere. Theo was then happily embedded at Crosby Fletcher Forbes, 'earning a real living' (A. Crosby 2009: 109), and so it made sense to extend the house once more. In June 1967, Crosby bought the freehold of the land from the Pipers and drew up plans for the most ambitious extension yet, giving the house three bedrooms and two studios (Fig. 16).¹⁵ Anne's painting studio was planned as an extra storey on top of the original coach house, with a huge north-facing window (Fig. 17) and a south-facing terrace (Fig. 18), and Theo's sculpture studio was planned in a new ground floor extension to the rear

of the house (Fig. 19). The ground floor of the original coach house was also 'knocked through' and given over to an open kitchen-dining room (Fig. 20) and three bedrooms were created above, on the first floor. Like his self-constructed life, it was essentially a complete rebuild on an existing edifice.

This phase, 'a complete rebuild of everything except the big living room', was executed in 1969 at a cost of £13,500 (Kinloch 1971: 27).¹⁶ Dido remembers that while her father taught in the United States for a year, 'we went and stayed in New York and we stayed in St. Louis and then we came back and lived in the Pipers' house for a while because it was still being rebuilt' (D. Crosby 1995). The result is most of what exists today and while the existing building was largely untouched, the new additions unified the whole composition using the New Brutalist principles that Crosby and the Smithsons had originally worked out in the early 1950s and that Crosby employed at Strand-on-the-Green. The most obvious change to the as-built house compared with the plans is the street elevation at the second floor, which was drawn as a sloping roof to echo that of the adjacent living room, with a large patent glazing skylight, but was built as a continuation of the front wall, including the large (2.67 m x 2.67 m) glass block window instead, all of which contributes to the house's 'secretive' introverted appearance from the

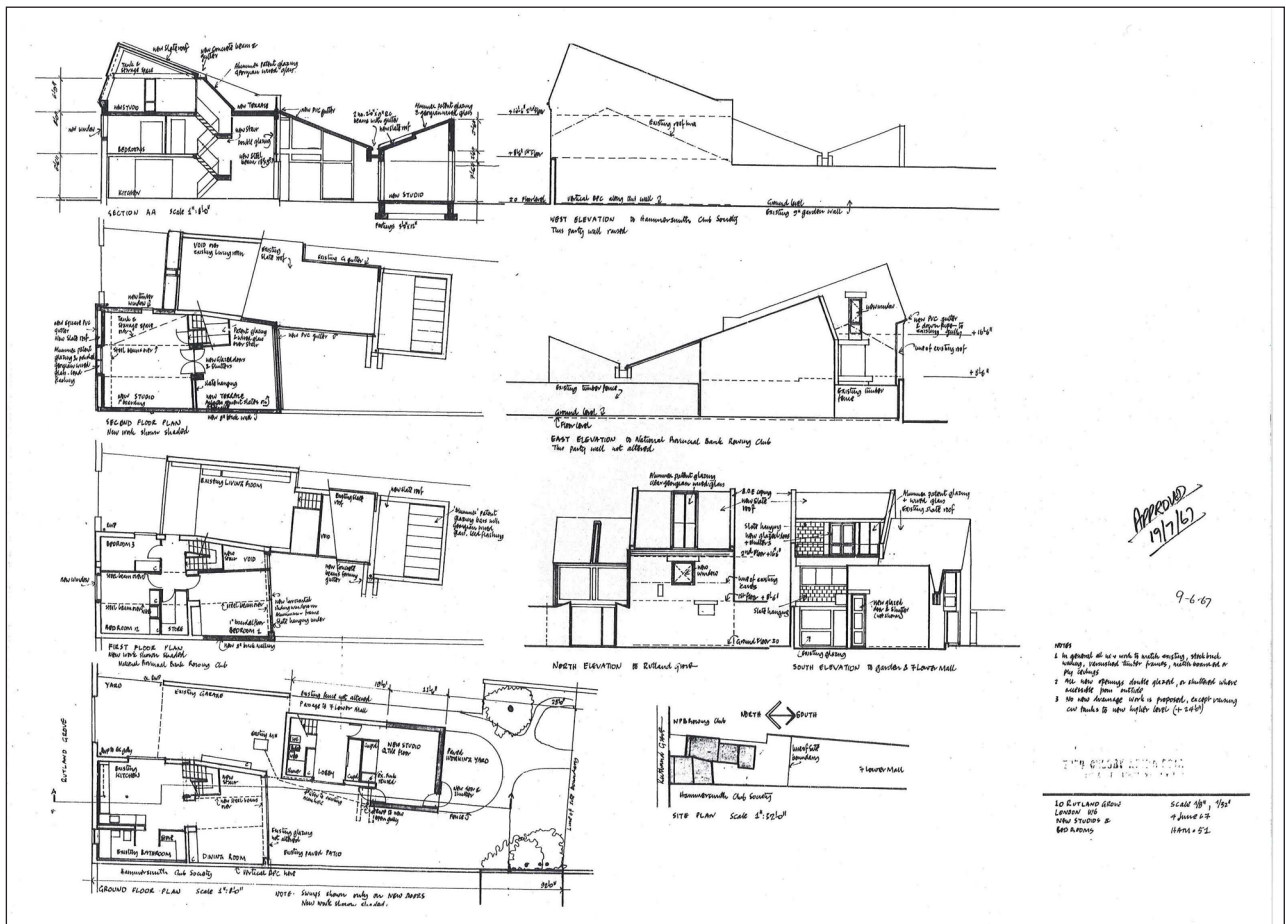


Figure 16: Plans submitted to Hammersmith Council in 1967 for the third iteration of the house. Drawings courtesy of the Hammersmith & Fulham Council Planning Register.



Figure 17: Interior view of Anne's painting studio and the large north-facing glass block window. © Jessica Strang, 1971.



Figure 18: View of the south-facing terrace from Anne's studio. © Jessica Strang, 1971.



Figure 19: Theo's studio circa 1967. Photograph courtesy of Dido Crosby.



Figure 20: The 'magnificently stable dining table' in the open-plan kitchen-diner, with Lily the dog circa 1970. Photograph courtesy of Dido Crosby.

street (**Fig. 21**). The other remarkable Brutalist interventions are the exaggerated concrete lintels on the street and rear elevations, which might well be considered a response to remarks that his previous house looked 'like June Park' (Parnell 2019: 14), and the oversized 'concrete beams framing gutter' that defines the threshold between the existing ground-floor extension and the new studio to the rear (**Fig. 22**). Its presence in the back yard is hard to ignore, especially when used as a platform for art in the form of a metal weathervane (**Fig. 23**). And

besides the rich use of materials, the proportional system that Theo and the Smithsons used in their 1952 designs for their respective studio houses can be rediscovered in the plans and elevations (Parnell 2019). The large studio door at the rear, for example, is an almost perfect golden rectangle.

It is at this point in the house's life – the height of Brutalism in the UK – that it receives a little attention. Andrew Kinloch, a fifth-year architecture student at Portsmouth Polytechnic, described it well in his critique:



Figure 21: The house on Rutland Grove. © Jessica Strang, 1971.

Each member of the family is treated as an individual with his or her own sphere of influence – you [Theo] with your sculpting studio on the ground floor south; your wife with her painting studio on the top floor north. And, in the middle, Dido. ...

Everyone has their own 'bathroom' – there is only one actual bath in the house. You and your wife sleep in the living room. Dido shares her bedroom with her collages. Your clothes and your wife's are kept in your respective studios.

In addition, there is a guest bedroom and a small study on the stair route up from the kitchen, referred to as bedroom number three on the plans. (Kinloch 1971: 27)

The seven-year-old Matthew, then living with a foster family, is notable in his absence (A. Crosby 2009: 119). The 'Studio Year Book of International Furnishing and Decoration', *Decorative Art in Modern Interiors*, also picked up the house for its 1971–72 edition. The house was briefly described thus:



Figure 22: The rear of the house after the 1967 iteration with Theo's studio in the foreground and the oversized exposed concrete lintels. © Jessica Strang, 1971.

His [Crosby's] intention was to create of this, his own house, 'a complicated building using materials as directly and honestly as possible'.

The magnificently stable dining table epitomises the spirit of the building with its heavy timber top bolted to the legs with heavy aluminium angles.

The structure is complicated only as medieval buildings are complicated, by additions and memories of the previous structure. One penetrates to upper galleries and terraces and to cloisters from a simple main hall. ...

The structure has been further developed and extended three times until now it consists of a



Figure 23: The rear courtyard showing the oversized gutter with weathervane. © Jessica Strang, 1971.

number of bedrooms or studio/hobby rooms hinged around the main stem of the staircase, each providing a place where a member of the family can pursue his own interests, with the big living-bedroom providing a family centre. (Moody 1971: 43)

The photos are supplied by Jessica Strang and many of those unpublished from her visit are used to illustrate the current article. They cannot capture the variety and complexity of spaces that wrap around each other in three dimensions with scant regard for right angles – this is far from a simple ground-floor plan extrusion. One learns the house's fluid spaces proprioceptively rather than through holding a spatial model in one's head. And the modest built-in furniture, fittings and sanitary-ware contrast with a rich palette of materials – the cork, ceramic and quarry tiles or wooden boards on the floor, the black radiators and RSJs, the exposed concrete and brick walls occasionally clad in cork or render, the plywood shadow-gapped ceilings – all finished in a 'high standard of basic construction as in a small warehouse' (Smithson and Smithson 1953: 342), to adopt the Smithsons' early description of the New Brutalist handling of materials.

Perhaps surprisingly, according to the contract specification, 'all vertical runs [were] to be in conduit, chased into wall and covered with plaster. No pipework to occur on fair face walls' (Piper and Crosby 1961: 21–22). While the structure is exposed, the services are hidden. With uncovered walls, this clearly made the house difficult to construct and maintain, but it seems that Crosby did not care for pipes and conduits as decoration; the fittings would simply exist to do their job. There is no particular aesthetic ambition in the kitchen cabinets, for example. In contrast, free-standing furniture becomes sculptural, such as the above-mentioned 'magnificently stable dining table' (Fig. 20). It is no wonder that Anne claimed they never decorated, as the only decoration appears in the form of the art – sculpture, paintings, masks, rugs and textiles, the so-called 'art of inhabitation' (Smithson and Smithson 1994), or 'the simple life, well done' as Alison Smithson once wrote (A. Smithson 1967: 573). This creation, collection and curation of 'objets' in the house is reminiscent of what the Smithsons called 'conglomerate ordering' (van den Heuvel 2004: 12–28), which I have argued elsewhere is apparent in the Independent Group exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* of 1953 (Parnell 2015). Van den Heuvel might as well have been writing about Crosby's approach as the Smithsons' when he wrote,

[D]omestic order is not just about architecture as the built structure and its principles of ordering, it also concerns the order of things, in and around the house, and how this corresponds to a way of life. The house is a dynamic constellation made up by the very collection of things in and around the house and the house itself. As such it provides a framework for the routines and events of everyday life. (van den Heuvel 2013: 319)

While this idea of the house being the direct result of a way of life is one of the tenets of New Brutalism, it is important to note that it is not exclusively so. It was inspired by Charles and Ray Eames – a couple whom the Smithsons admired and imagined themselves the English version of – and derives from the Eames house in Santa Monica, completed in 1949 (Parnell 2015).

The Split

Anne described how 'the years from 1970 to 1974 were relatively tranquil' (A. Crosby 2009: 109) but their 'separateness intensified until it became [their] separation.' (A. Crosby 2009: 206) Once more, the house was party, or a proxy, in the considerations:

Theo announced he had found a better place to live where the rooms conformed more perfectly to his notion of 'spacious simplicity.' Thus in his mocking way he felt able to explain to Dido that it was on account of our less than perfect house, rather than our less than perfect marriage, that he was moving to a penthouse in Whitehall. (A. Crosby 2009: 207)

At this point in the story, the house remains patiently dormant as the lives of the family members disentangle: Theo moved out, Dido attended boarding school and then university, and Matthew was ensconced in the MacIntyre School, a residential school for children with learning disabilities that the Crosbys were instrumental in setting up and that continues to this day. Only Anne remained in the house, yet she spent time with her new love in the United States and in the Crosbys' country cottage in Wiltshire (not far from the Smithsons' Solar pavilion) which Theo had refurbished and remodelled. In December 1977, Crosby drew up plans to split the house into two flats through two very slight changes. One flat was created by introducing a new front door to the extension in the passageway next to the rowing club and a kitchen in its lobby. Then on the first-floor landing of the original stable building, Crosby introduced a partition wall that cleverly split the stairs, allowing its ground floor and bedrooms one and two to become an independent flat which Anne could let out.

The fact that the garage was never part of the house continued to irritate Anne. It comes up time and again in interviews with her and seems to represent a way of resenting Anne Piper's prior friendship and control over Theo and the fact that Piper was there first. Anne Crosby told Escritt that

she [Anne Piper] also was a strong woman ... and older than he and liked to somehow feel that she owned him. She was upset by me. She didn't mind the itinerant women who came and went, but when I really properly moved in, she was angry. She was so angry; that was when Theo rather weakly gave her the garage. (A. Crosby 1995)

The garage remains a void around which the house has been shaped: it has always had to accommodate this incon-

venience in its development over the years. It garage clearly adds financial value to whichever property it belongs, but it also represents an ongoing entanglement with the original house at 7 Lower Mall and an inability to ever quite be whole. In July 1985, Crosby attempted one final architectural resolution to this familial problem, through splitting the garage along its length, giving the flat at the rear its own entrance from Rutland Grove and leaving a much-reduced parking space for the Pipers who understandably refused to sell. So to this day, the garage remains its original size, now with an electric charging point.

In November 1985, Theo anticipated another life stage for the house, which involved splitting it into three self-contained flats (Figs. 24 and 25). The flat that had already been created in the coach house remained the same with the open-plan kitchen/diner on the ground floor and two bedrooms on the first floor accessed by the existing cranked stair. The remainder of the house was then split into two further flats. The first comprised the original rear extension and the large living room in which a new dormer window was to accommodate a kitchenette in place of the built-in couch, and Theo's sculpting studio was to become a bedroom. The final flat consisted of Anne's painting studio on the second floor, which was to include a new kitchenette to replace the rear terrace. This flat was accessed via a new steep external stair in the front yard that led to a new door that replaced a window at the first floor, reminiscent of the stair at the Strand-on-the-Green

house. The final configuration, in which I originally met Anne in 2011, was actually slightly different again. This flexibility was accommodated through a clever and contingent combination of two staircases and a multitude of doors which are essentially responsible for both the complexity and flexibility of the house's configuration and reconfigurations. Though Theo and Anne did not divorce until 1990, the year after Matthew died, on their separation, Theo agreed to leave the house to Anne in place of any alimony (A. Crosby 2002) and Anne continued to live in the first and second floor flat, painting in her studio and collecting rent from the other two flats.

Theo died in 1994, by which time his attitude to modern architecture had changed so much that he became an adviser to the Prince of Wales and wrote his 'Ten Principles' that formed the basis of the Ten Commandments in the Prince's *Vision of Britain* (Kei 2018: 116–17). Both Annes in Theo's life remembered how he 'couldn't not do whatever the current thinking was' (A. Crosby 1995): Anne Piper recalled how

he would get enormously enthusiastic about summer and then throw away all the winter clothes, and then get all enthusiastic about winter and throw away all his summer clothes. If it was happening, it seemed to be happening *now*. ... He was always terrifically excited about something. (Piper 1995)

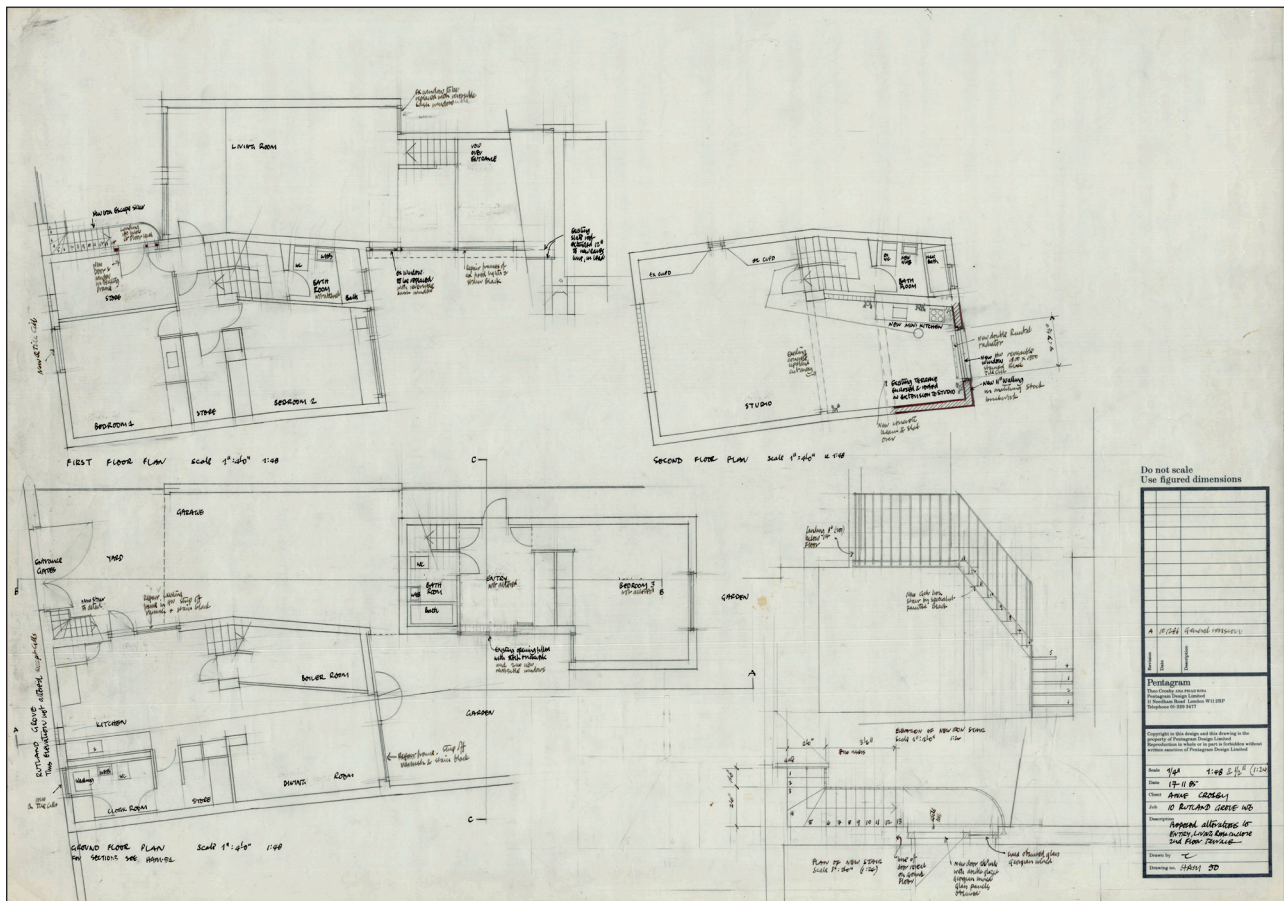


Figure 24: Plans for the 1985 iteration drawn by Theo Crosby. Courtesy of Dido Crosby.

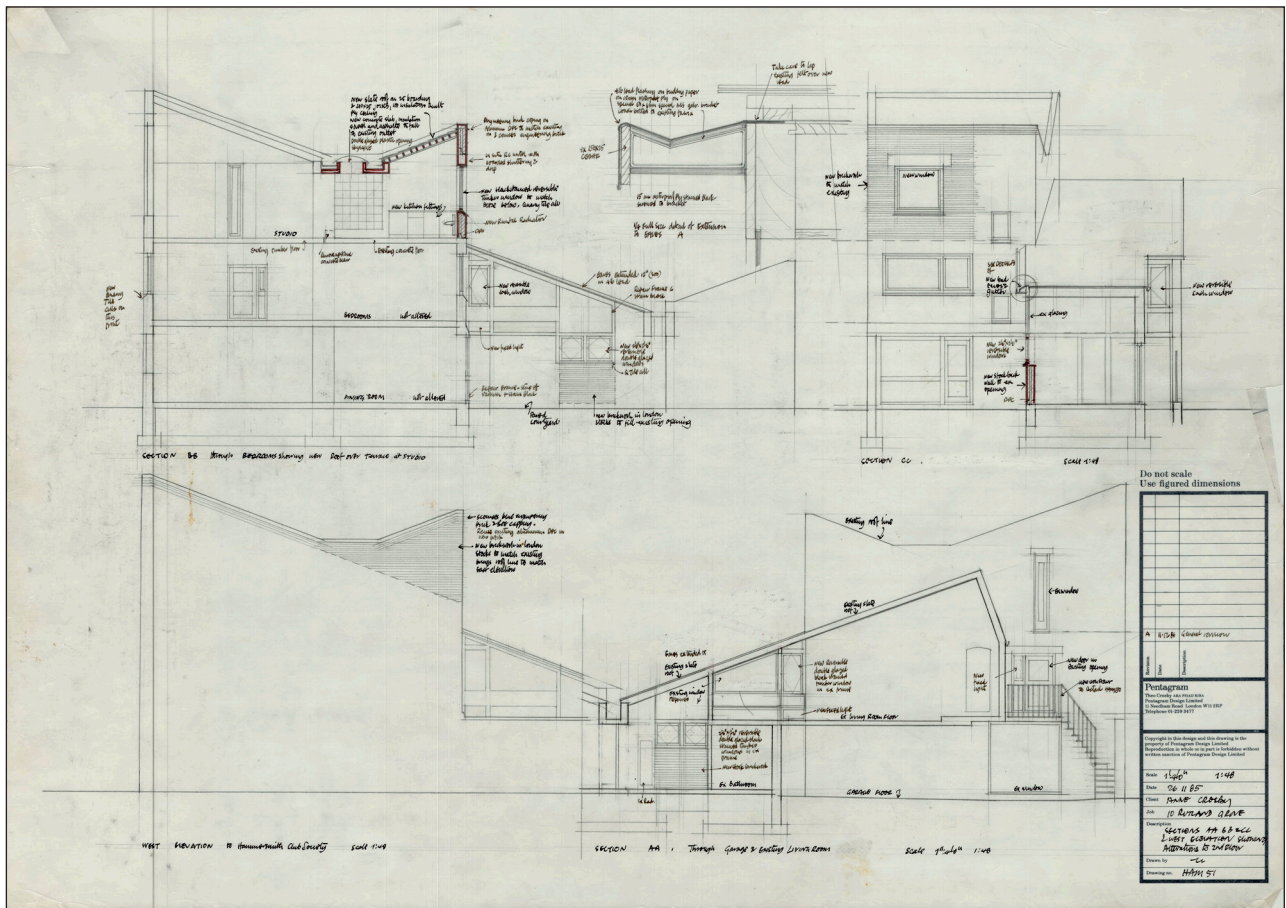


Figure 25: Sections and elevation for the 1985 iteration drawn by Theo Crosby. Courtesy of Dido Crosby.

Yet he continued to develop the house according to its original New Brutalist principles, and unlike Crosby's first house, it remains openly, unashamedly Brutalist in its aesthetic and one of the best-preserved essays in domestic New Brutalism in the UK. Yet one of the purposes of this essay was to demonstrate that it is not simply the aesthetic qualities that make it Brutalist. A forensic survey of the house and its past lives reveals an understanding of its Brutalism as more than just *béton brut* and breeze blocks; it is a necessary and direct response to the vicissitudes of its inhabitants' lives and their complications – what the Smithsons argued for, and Banham rejected, as the 'ethic' of the movement.

Anne continued to live at Rutland Grove until she moved into a nursing home in the autumn of 2019. Shortly after, I encountered it empty and undergoing yet another upgrade, being prepared for its next stage of life. It continues to be 'a difficult house' (A. Crosby 2003d) in terms of its maintenance but has adapted to its post-Crosby condition as three flats, the uppermost of which still contains Anne's paintings and other residue of her life, where I found several of the photographs contained in this article. Dido says that estate agents do not know how to value it. Meanwhile, 7 Lower Mall (with garage) sold for an eye-watering £6.75m in July 2020.

Coda

At the outset, I intended this essay to be an 'act of storytelling': to tell a slightly different story of the origins of New Brutalism in a slightly different way, consciously

avoiding rehearsing the narratives that have been cast and set around the Smithsons and Banham. The present essay is a deliberate attempt to write a life story of a house in a manner that might appeal to an ordinary reader as much as a trained architect or academic; an everyday, ordinary story that has produced quite an extraordinary building. Clearly, my fondness for the essay's subject has influenced my selection of fragments from the archives, interviews, oral histories, photographs and drawings from which I have collaged together and coloured a narrative that is as aesthetic as it is analytic. Like the house itself, it is something of a 'hotchpotch series of ad-hoc solutions' with a Brutalist aesthetic that chooses to expose rather than conceal its constituent components – parts of the personal life story that usually remain hidden to architectural history are here occasionally revealed in what might be considered quite a raw manner. As such, like the house and Brutalism itself, it will not be to everyone's taste.

Perhaps the larger point is that life stories, whether of people or of buildings, can only ever be partial in both sense of the word, and are inevitably an *ex post facto* reconstruction. Even in life, Theo was constantly constructing and reconstructing himself, as he was his house. Cassidy has noted that 'every biography ... brings together three lives: the subject's, the author's and the reader's' (Cassidy 1991: x), and so it is in the intersection of all these life stories where we might discover meaning, rather than within any particular house or individual on their own.

Notes

- ¹ A brief note on names: This essay refers to Theo Crosby, Anne Crosby, and Anne Piper so consistently using only surnames or only first names may lead to ambiguity. At the risk of over-familiarity, I will refer to Theo Crosby as simply 'Theo' when discussing his personal life and 'Crosby' when discussing the more professional (although the two are deeply entangled), as he is the main protagonist, and for the sake of clarity I will refer to Anne Crosby as 'Anne' or 'Anne Crosby', and Anne Piper as 'Piper' or 'Anne Piper'.
- ² The project, which was part of an M.Arch degree, ran from January 2018 to January 2019 and comprised the two students mentioned in the Author's Note.
- ³ Besides curating 'This is Tomorrow', he published his friends Alison and Peter Smithson extensively while he was technical editor at *Architectural Design* magazine, and in his little magazine *Uppercase*. He then helped Archigram stage the exhibition *Living Cities* and published them in his *Living Arts* 'zine'.
- ⁴ In a letter to his erstwhile boss and friend, Jane Drew, in Chandigarh, Crosby wrote, 'at the moment too full of projects – for a studio on somebody's garages at Strand-on-the-Green – courtesy of Edward [Armitage, Crosby's colleague at Fry & Drew]' (T. Crosby 1952). For more detail on this house, see Parnell (2019).
- ⁵ *This is Tomorrow* was held at the Whitechapel Gallery in London between 9 August and 9 September 1956. Crosby encouraged his employer, the Standard Catalogue Company, to donate £400 towards its cost. (For more on *This is Tomorrow*, see Highmore 2006; Robbins 1990; Massey 1995).
- ⁶ Crosby, Pidgeon, and the Smithsons were all at the final meeting of MARS on 28 January 1957 (Pedret 2001: 357).
- ⁷ Planning application 684/10 (or TP77467/A) held at Hammersmith Council. The application is actually dated 10 October 1950, but this must be a typing error, as a site plan dated 28 October 1955 was passed on 18 November 1955. Crosby's drawings are dated 20 October 1955 and this year also fits with Anne Piper's account.
- ⁸ Credited on the masthead from December 1957. Liz Goldfinger was born 6 September 1936 so her twenty-first birthday fell on a Friday and would have been just before she joined *AD*. She went on to be a successful furniture designer and live with Cedric Price for a while (Goldfinger 1999).
- ⁹ Kinloch mentions that it originally cost £600 (about £12,700 in 2020 according to <https://www.inflationtool.com/british-pound?amount=600&year1=1956&year2=2020>) to 'make it habitable' (Kinloch 1971: 27).
- ¹⁰ According to <https://www.inflationtool.com/british-pound?amount=5500&year1=1960&year2=2020>, £5,500 in 1960 is equivalent to around £106,000 in 2020.
- ¹¹ Planning application 684/10 (or TP77457/NW) held at Hammersmith Council.
- ¹² Peter Smithson is recorded as a witness on the marriage certificate.

- ¹³ Interestingly, this is the boathouse used for the Oxford/Cambridge boat race every year.
- ¹⁴ The Smithsons published a book on the arch (Smithson and Smithson 1968).
- ¹⁵ Planning application TP/684/10 held at Hammersmith Council: 'Erection at 10 Rutland Grove, W.4., of a new floor at second floor level and rear extension at ground floor level to form new studios.' Agreed 19 July 1967.
- ¹⁶ Equivalent to over £190,000 in 2020, according to <https://www.inflationtool.com/british-pound?amount=13500&year1=1969&year2=2020>.

Author's Note

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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