

Nu Pragmatism takes a personal approach. It respects the site, the environment, personal tastes, and the practical issues of budgets and planning laws.

Key materials of brick, wood and concrete are exposed where possible.

It celebrates the physicality of building materials, and of primary surfaces not masked under additional cladding.

This is not bite-size, off-the-shelf architecture, akin to aspirational loft-living – it's individual and finds its own way.

But Nu Pragmatism isn't rebellious: it's a celebration of the physicality of materials, and remains inspired by the honesty of industrial architecture.

There's no single style to adhere to; no template or mantra to follow. It's architecture without ego.

Each project is flexible in its approach. The architecture works with its landscape, rather than being shoe-horned into place.

The domestic space is celebrated – intimacy and comfort are important.

Personality is allowed. Ornaments, colours and patterns have a place.

Nu Pragmatism is a nascent architectural style with a strong domestic focus, writes *Jonathan Bell*. Equally at home on tough inner-city sites and amongst bucolic splendour, it favours austerity and modest ambition. It's a style that represents a reappraisal of the way in which the contemporary architect deals with the realm of the home.

TEMPLE-LIKE SPACES

For the roots of this movement, we must look back at modernism. In its most high-profile form, modernism fetishised two main components: minimal detailing and open-plan living. These have cast a long shadow over the aspirations of several generations of architects and consumers. For a house to be modern, it needed an almost temple-like area of space and light, with free movement through an unfettered interior. It needed broad expanses of glass and wall planes.

In pursuit of this, simple practical considerations were swept aside. Modern steel-framed construction methods could, at a pinch, provide these visual elements, most notably in the series of Case Study Houses designed and built in California in the 1950s and 60s. But it didn't necessarily translate to different cultures and methods of construction.

BLOCKBUSTER POLITICS

Today, 'modernism' means different things. While blockbuster exhibitions dig into the social, political and aesthetic battles that provided the foundations of the movement, commercial imperatives have diluted our idea of modernity.

Yet the broad acceptance of this new 'modern' has come at a price, both visually and theoretically. Does it mean big windows and hardwood floors? Bright sofas and Venetian blinds? Is there still a link between technological innovation and progressive social policies?

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Lynch Architects
Greenwood Road, Hackney, London

With a small terraced house in East London, Lynch Architects inverted the traditional floor plan to place bedrooms on the first floor, a kitchen and dining room in the sunken ground floor and a large living space on the second floor. A ground floor constructed from white bricks provides a podium for a two-storey oak-framed box. The external façade expresses the materials and construction perfectly: a ribbed wooden box, plain and unadorned, deriving its surface treatment from the means of construction.

Chaewon Kim and Beat Schenk
Cambridge MA, USA

This modest extension and refurbishment was achieved on an ultra-low budget. The starting material was a century-old cottage, stripped out and subtly extended. Then the entire walls and roof were re-clad in CORTEN steel, which rusts red with a protective, zero-maintenance layer. Materials were either simple or ingeniously adapted, like the industrial butcher's block turned into a kitchen counter, or the polycarbonate and glass layer wall that forms the translucent garden façade.

