

The Guardian & Observer guides to

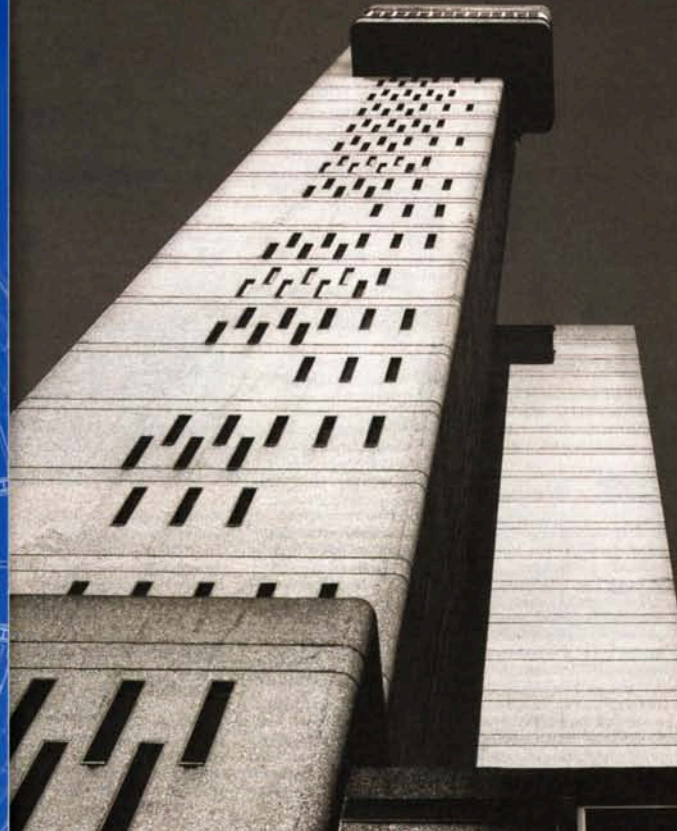
# British Architecture

Part two: 1720 - present



## The modern age

1910s-1970s



## Our modernist flat



**Alan Lam and Yanki Lee, Golden Lane estate, London**

“ We've lived here for 10 years - first in Great Arthur House and now in a smaller studio flat. The estate was built on a bomb site in phases between 1953 and 1962 to provide accommodation for key workers. Stanley Cohen House was the first building to be completed, in 1957.

The architects, Chamberlin, Bon and Powell, were all tutors at Kingston School of Art and had no prior experience with this kind of project, but then, nor did the council, so they were given a lot of freedom. In the 1950s, people were a lot more optimistic - everyone was starting from scratch.

The flat we moved into first was not in good condition. But we felt positive about making it work. That was where the

**You feel protected yet private. And it's bright - you feel alive here**

romantic and the pragmatic met for us. The entire front wall consists of two sliding windows, with a tiled floor, like an internal balcony. That kind of detail makes you realise how well designed it is. You feel protected and also private. It is open, but you're not on show. And it's bright - you feel alive here.

In 2005 we decided to open a gallery called Exhibit in one of the original retail spaces on Goswell Road, because we wanted to explore what makes this estate such a great place. We have restored it back to how it was originally - bare brick and concrete walls, with the

front and back walls made of glass. This doesn't suit most contemporary retail needs - the light is too strong and you can't see what's inside from the street. But for our project it works well. We work with artists, designers and the local community. Our recent show, The Golden Oldies, featured portraits of some of the original residents from the 50s who still live here. They remember the estate when it was new and still talk about how amazing it was to have a toilet and a bathroom, central heating ...

Not all high-rise social housing is seen positively, but people here care about the estate. The architects' initial intention was to make an urban village and foster communal life. And they succeeded. We feel so positive in this environment. ”