

What I like about you



Photography: Robin Hill

The Glass House • 1949

Connecticut, USA

Architect: Philip Johnson

The Glass House, considered one of the great works of modern architecture, has been a favourite of mine since architecture school. The house is set in a rolling green landscape and gradually comes into view as one approaches by foot. It has an undeniably strong connection to its place, and is a truly sublime house that is modest in scale for its intended purpose.

Its potency is underscored by the clarity of its proportions, rigorous form and its unwavering relationship with the topography of its landscape. Glass panels on all sides enable many reflections within the house, and from surrounding trees, for an ever-changing layering of images as one moves around and within it. Its low red brick plinth is subtle, lifting its floor level from the site, yet it immensely contributes to the strong horizontality of the house, aided by the strength of its singular steel roof edge and a low-level horizontal steel band at desk height, which wraps around the house on all sides. This low band and ribbon of smaller low-level windows offer its steel columns a human scale on the inside. The interior is entirely open-plan and exposed to the outside, except for a cylindrical brick structure that accommodates the bathroom. Together with its exquisite red brick herringbone floor, the cylinder brickwork is beautiful, and cleverly crafts a fireplace on the reverse side of the only internal door within the house.

Its uncompromised form, its employment of a few select materials and colours, its response to its place, and its tonal composition inside are values that have inspired and resonated for decades, and these are values that I strive to bring to the work of my practice, in the most unassuming of ways, for my clients.

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