

ADMIN

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PROJECT NAME

SEARCH:

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

GLOSSARY

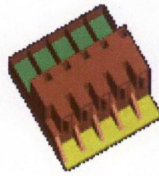
ABOUT THIS SITE

ARCHITECT

BUILDING TYPE

CITY

COUNTRY



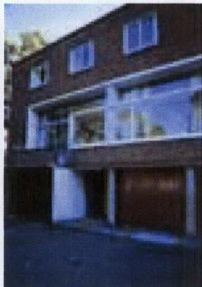
Willow Road

Goldfinger, Ernő | London, Great Britain | 1940

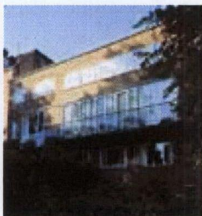
PROJECT IMAGES



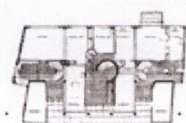
Street facade



Street facade, detail



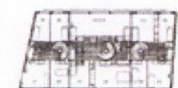
Garden facade



Ground floor plan



Second floor plan



Third floor plan



Basement plan

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project	Willow Road
Architect	Goldfinger, Ernő
City	London
Country	Great Britain
Address	1-3 Willow Road, NW3
Building Type	Row house
Number of Dwellings	3
Date Built	1940
Dwelling Types	Rowhouses
No. Floors	4
Section Type	rowhouse
Exterior Finish Materials	brick, concrete, plaster, wood
Construction Type	RC frame, flat slab
Ancillary Services	garages



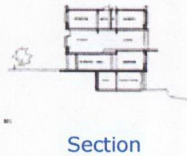
Street facade

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Ernő Goldfinger was a member of an important group of émigré architects that settled in London in the late 1920's and the years leading up to World War II. Including such well-known figures as Walter Gropius, Serge Chermayeff, Marcel Breuer, Eric Mendelsohn, Bertold Lubetkin, László Moholy-Nagy, and [Ezra Rosenberg](#), the group was instrumental in bringing Modern Architecture to England. Goldfinger was born in Budapest in 1902, moved westward with his family in the years following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, finally settling in Paris in the early 1920's. He attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1923 where he studied for three years in the studio of August Perret. During this period the young architect was influenced by the work of such modern masters as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Adolf Loos, at time when he was also introduced to the community of Surrealist painters in Paris. In 1933, Goldfinger moved to London where he and his English wife lived in the [Highpoint I](#), the Modernist apartments designed by Bertold Lubetkin and Tecton that has just been finished. Shortly afterwards, the couple bought a beautiful site in a neighborhood of Georgian residences that overlooked Hampstead Heath. Goldfinger designed a three-story block of terraced apartments that contained three dwellings. The Goldfingers lived here in the middle apartment, No. 2 Willow Road, until he died in 1987. Hampstead at this time had a reputation as a leftist community of artists and intellectuals, a role that suited Goldfinger who was a leading figure in the English Modern Movement.

Like many émigré architects, Goldfinger did not have many commissions when he first arrived in London, before WW II, and the work during this time consisted of two small houses in addition to the Hampstead apartments. While Willow Road established Goldfinger as an important figure in the Modern movement in London, and his office building on Albemarle St, built in 1953-58, continued that early tradition, he is better known for several very large



Section

Modernist/Brutalist high-rise buildings built in the 1970's, most notably, the Trellick Apartments of 1972.

The Willow Road apartments are modeled after 18th & 19th century London terrace houses, but using modern materials and details. The building forms a narrow rectangular block that presents a flush planar façade to the street but opens out to the rolling landscape of Hampstead Heath on the opposite side. A partial basement floor that opens to a narrow terrace, narrow balconies at the living areas, large windows and the stepped section of the main floor all reinforce the spatial extension towards the landscape. The street façade sets back from the line of adjacent buildings street forming a parking court that is defined by low walls along the street. While Goldfinger was applying an existing typology of terraced housing forms and the use of brick and white trim can be seen as a reference to the period buildings of the neighborhood, the expression of the concrete frame, the use of large horizontal bands of steel windows and flat roof clearly express the modernist leanings of the architect. The pedigree of the terraced typology is obvious in the section and the stepped condition between living and studio spaces, an idea derived perhaps from Adolf Loos who Goldfinger knew well. Garages, entrances, and stairs occupy the street side of the ground floor and a zone of staff spaces face the Heath. The spiral stairs, designed by The Danish engineer Ove Arup, connects to the 2nd floor that contains the main living areas, and to the bedrooms on the top floor.

A zone of circular stairs and service elements divides the overall plan so that living spaces open to both sides of the building. The ends of the building are not parallel with the facades and the division of the plan into three dwellings leaves two smaller, trapezoidal dwellings at the ends and a larger middle apartment where the Goldfingers lived. This apartment forms a symmetrical set of elements that is organized around the central axis of the building. The narrow 11' bays of the concrete structural frame form a partial *pilotis* along the entrance façade, the lower level, and as a pair of partially freestanding round columns in the living area and upper nursery level of the Goldfinger apartment. Goldfinger applied simple proportional systems in his early buildings, a classical reference perhaps to his experience at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and his plans and elevations are typically organized using a combination of repeating squares and $\sqrt{2}$ rectangles. On the street façade, for example, the Goldfinger apartment is defined as a square, with smaller square subdivision that reflect the use of a 2'-9" module. The ranges of windows in the 3rd floor are also squares. The expression of the structural frame and extensive use of proportioning systems appear to be references as well, to Le Corbusier's application of *les traces régulateurs* as described in *Vers une Architecture*, and applied to various early building in Paris that must have been familiar to Goldfinger, Vaucresson, the Ozenfant studio, and especially the Roche/Jeanneret houses.

Willow Road was influential as a prototype of a modern version of the London terraced type and was an important source for certain later projects, especially the housing designed in the 1960's and 70's by Camden Borough Architect's office, projects like Fleet Road, [Alexandra Road](#), and Mansfield Road. Another group of nearby row houses that also face Hampstead Heath, designed Howell and Amis along South Hill Park in 1956, may also have benefited from the example of No. 2 Willow Road. The front-rear infill situation on the sloping site facing the Heath, the 4-story section opening to the site, and the continuous windows are all references to Willow Road, however, in this example, the expression of the free plan and the development of a continuous planar façade has given way to party-wall, parallel row houses with infill glass panels.

In an unusual action in 1995, the National Trust of England, an organization dedicated to preserving England's national historical treasures purchased No. 2 Willow Road and it was opened to the public the following year. This was the first time that a Modernist building had been placed in the National Trust. The Goldfinger family continued to occupy the house until it was purchased by the Trust and thus it remains intact with all its furnishings as an example of the life-style and architecture of this period.

PROJECT REFERENCE

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List all by: [Project Name](#) | [Architect](#) | [Building Type](#) | [City](#) | [Country](#)

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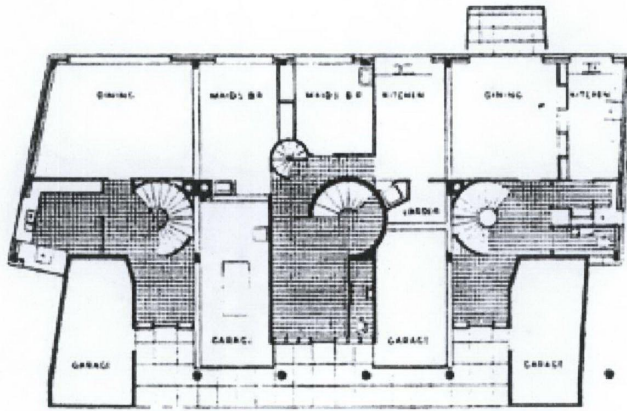
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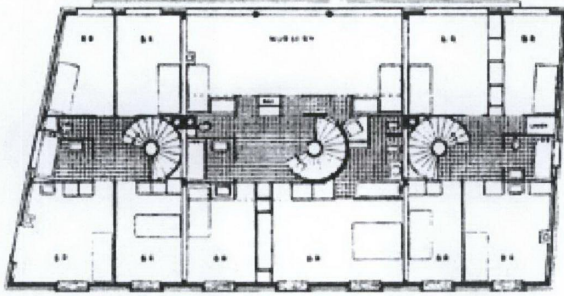
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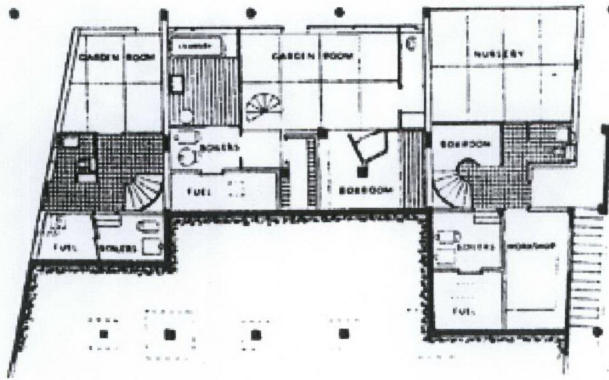
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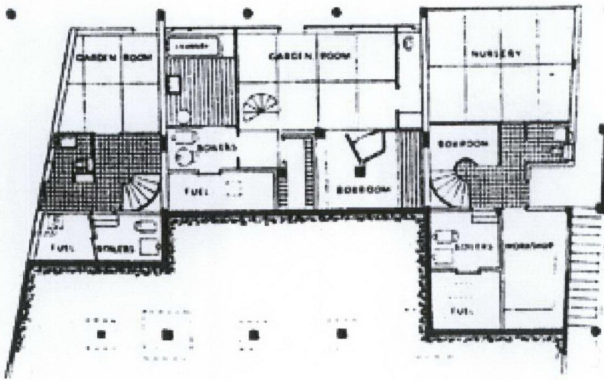
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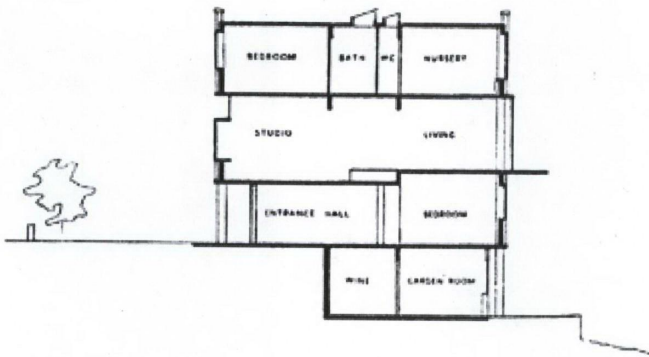
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