

THE MODERN HOUSE



London NW3
Sold

South Hill Park II

Designed by influential architect, author and teacher Michael Brawne, this extraordinary Grade II-listed, four-bedroom house was completed in 1960. Set into the gentle slope of one of Hampstead's finest residential streets, the house is configured across three beautiful storeys, with lush treetop views through extensive sections of glazing. A bridge leads from the open-plan living spaces to a private garden at the rear. Many internal fittings and fixtures are original, dating to the house's conception and construction in 1959.

The Architect

Michael Brawne was born in Vienna before moving to London and studying at the Architectural Association (1948-1953). Upon graduation, he joined the office of Sir Denys Lasdun, a noted proponent of Brutalism and famed architect of the National Theatre and the Royal College of Physicians. He swiftly struck out on his own, founding his own practice in 1963, shortly after the completion of this house on South Hill Park, which he built for himself and his family.

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Brawne's practice principally designed municipal buildings, including 14 libraries and 16 museums around the world. He was also famed for his exhibition designs for the Tate and Hayward galleries and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The philosophy of Karl Popper was an abiding influence, and his presence hovers over Brawne's numerous publications, particularly his best-known monograph, 'From Idea to Building: Issues in Architecture' (1992).

Brawne taught at Cambridge University and at Bath, where he was made Professor of Architecture in the late 70s. His influence on younger generations was deeply felt. Architect Charles Correa has remarked that this house "[is] among the half-dozen most important pieces of architecture constructed in the UK over the last 50 years." For more information, please see the History section.

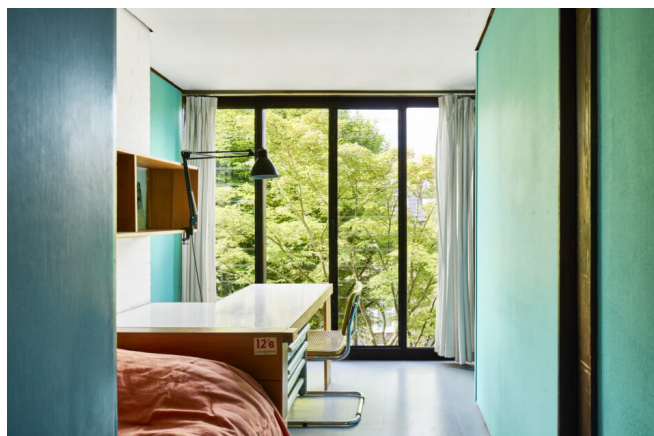
The Tour

The house presents a monumental façade to the street, formed of floor-to-ceiling glazing across three storeys, framed in softwood vertical mullions. The house sits behind a Lime tree on the street and has its own mature Japanese Acer in the front garden, which casts an emerald canopy across the first-floor windows.

Open concrete stairs lead up from South Hill Park, via a well-kept front garden, with small borders of shrubs and plants. The front door opens to a hallway at ground floor level, with access to the main house via an open-tread staircase up to the first floor. There is a white-painted brick wall to one side and a further open-tread staircase overhead. The entire rear wall of the open-plan living-room and study has full-height glazing to the garden, washing the space with natural light. Pale grey Marmoleum tiles run underfoot while the ceiling is clad with tongue-and-groove pine strips. A fitted sofa occupies one aspect, with a period light fitting, creating a perfect space for reading. Bookshelves line the opposite wall and sit above a desk designed by the architect, creating a perfect study space. Glazed doors open from this part of the plan directly to the garden.

A step leads up from this space to the dining area and kitchen. These spaces receive light from the front of the house and are characterised by a handmade kitchen of the architect's design. Modular units with sliding doors and ingenious storage spaces sit at differing heights above and below an original Formica counter with sections of tiling around the cooker. All of this joinery is original and may require some gentle modernisation. Japanese paper lanterns are positioned over the kitchen and dining areas, and Marmoleum tiles continue in this area of the plan.

An open-tread staircase with white brick walls leads from the dining area to the second floor. This level comprises three bedrooms and a bathroom, each leading off a central hallway with walls panelled in tongue-and-groove pine. At the far end of the hall is a sizeable built-in airing cupboard and above, a skylight sunken into the ceiling.



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The first bedroom is configured towards the front of the plan and is shaded by the Acer. It currently has a single bed, fitted bookshelves and a handmade desk of Brawne's design. The second bedroom mirrors aspects of the first and has a slightly different desk space, with sliding doors to a fitted wardrobe. Turquoise walls resound with emerald light from the Acer and Lime tree canopies, creating a truly unique and tranquil light in both of these bedrooms.

The main bedroom is positioned opposite and is configured to the rear of the plan. It has white walls, a gentle pitch to the ceiling and wood panelling along one aspect. It looks out over the garden below. The white and bright yellow painted bathroom is located to the right at the end of the hall on this floor. It has a full-size bath with a shower fitted above. An electrically operated opening skylight provides natural light and ventilation.

To one side at ground-floor level, there is access to a separate flat which Brawne originally designed for his mother. Later this was assimilated into the rest of the house becoming the main bedroom, with ensuite bathroom and dressing room. Latterly it became guest accommodation, then a discrete flat. The current configuration is as a simple studio space with a kitchen and bathroom at the rear. However, as previously, it could easily be adapted back into the plan of the house. Facing the front door in the entrance lobby is a storage cupboard and cloakroom which occupies a compact space between the ground floor flat and the stairs up to the main house."

The house is in largely original condition, having remained in the Brawne family since construction and as such may require some updating. There is underfloor heating throughout, ensuring the building's clean lines are unobscured by radiators.

Outdoor Space

A bridge leads directly from the living room of the main house out towards the garden. The walkway traverses the incline of South Hill Park and acts as a beautiful visual link between the internal and exterior spaces. The garden is laid mostly to lawn and is bordered by mature trees and shrubs. A brick walkway leads from the bridge to the foot of the garden, where there is a secluded seating space and a small shed for storage.

The Area

South Hill Park is one of Hampstead finest residential streets bordering the south-eastern end of Hampstead Heath, overlooking the first pond. The Heath is one of London's finest green spaces, renowned for its sprawling woodland walks, elevated views of London and its freshwater swimming ponds. Towards the top of the street, there is a direct walkway for easy access to Parliament Hill and the ponds. Kenwood House, a 17th-century country residence, occupies the Heath's northern border. It is now home to a gallery, landscaped gardens and café.

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The house is a short walk from the centre of Hampstead Village with its excellent variety of shops and restaurants and access to the London Overground at Hampstead Heath station. Nearby Belsize Park and Hampstead underground stations are on the Northern Line.

Council Tax Band: F

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About

The Modern House is an estate agency that helps people live in more thoughtful and beautiful ways. We believe in design as a powerful force for good. Inspired by the principles of modernism, we represent design-led homes across the UK which celebrate light, space and a truth to materials. Esquire credits The Modern House with “rewriting the rulebook on estate agency” and GQ voted us “one of the best things in the world”.