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**Bert Rozeman in Brockley: Birkin Haward on
Rozeman Architects' studio for Paul de Monchaux**

Rozeman Architects 020 7250 0526 www.rozeman.co.uk



BUILDING ■ Delight in an earthly garden

Birkin Haward visits Rozeman Architects' new studio for sculptor Paul de Monchaux.

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke described his visit in 1902 to Auguste Rodin's studio: 'I caught the train for Meudon this morning at nine o'clock... first there is a long avenue of chestnut trees strewn with coarse gravel... then you come to a small wooden lattice door. Then another one. You turn the corner of the house and stand – as if by a miracle – in front of a garden full of stone and plaster figures with his studio beyond.'

The sculptor's studio is a prototype of the live-work typology. Writing about the construction of Gothic buildings, John Harvey describes stonemasons living over the shop and, at Meudon, Rodin had accommodation built for his assistants, the praticiens, as well as casters and a secretary. Although Paul de Monchaux always had a studio in the basement of his Victorian terrace house in south London, the back garden had become a storage yard and a place for

stone selection and cutting. Somehow he managed to operate in the open air with only a tarpaulin thrown over an A-frame.

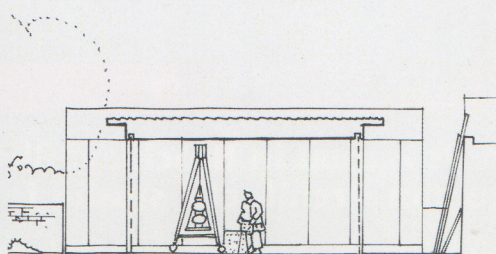
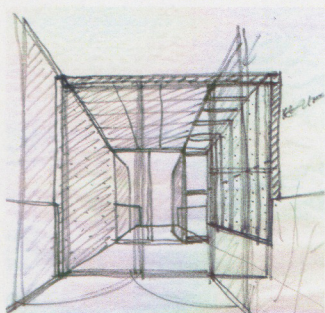
His new studio, designed by Rozeman Architects, provides a much less spartan working environment. But with its tall front and back doors to accommodate the A-frame, the light-flooded studio still retains a sense of the outdoors. Placed at the end of the plot but leaving space next to the boundary for storage, the studio becomes a backdrop to the rest of the garden, catching the sun at the end of the day.

With the next door neighbour, a potter, also planning a studio, a key move was to build a 4.25 metre high stock brick wall as a mediator between the two properties. This allowed the two projects to develop in quite different ways without compromising each other either structurally or formally. Bert Rozeman's next move introduced a steel ring beam bearing on a new wall and supported on a stud wall below. This beam acts as a datum for all the remaining elements – the jaunty roof pitches are supported by it and the infill studwork walls and the large steel doors hang below it. The infill construction is lined in ply sheathing and covered externally with a rainscreen cladding of Cembonit – a structurally bonded fibre cement board in a dark blue-grey slate colour.

An asymmetrically placed steel beam runs across the studio above the ring beam carrying the steel hoops of the rooflight. A degree of built-in redundancy allows for loads to be carried from it internally. A generous northlight is complemented by individually switched fluorescent lights. The highly insulated envelope incorporates a cold roof with insulation on the ceiling and plenty of ventilation in the

Above Full-height sliding doors open the studio to the garden.

Left/below Preliminary sketch; lateral view from neighbouring garden; the new studio is set at the back of the garden where Paul de Monchaux previously worked under a tarpaulin.



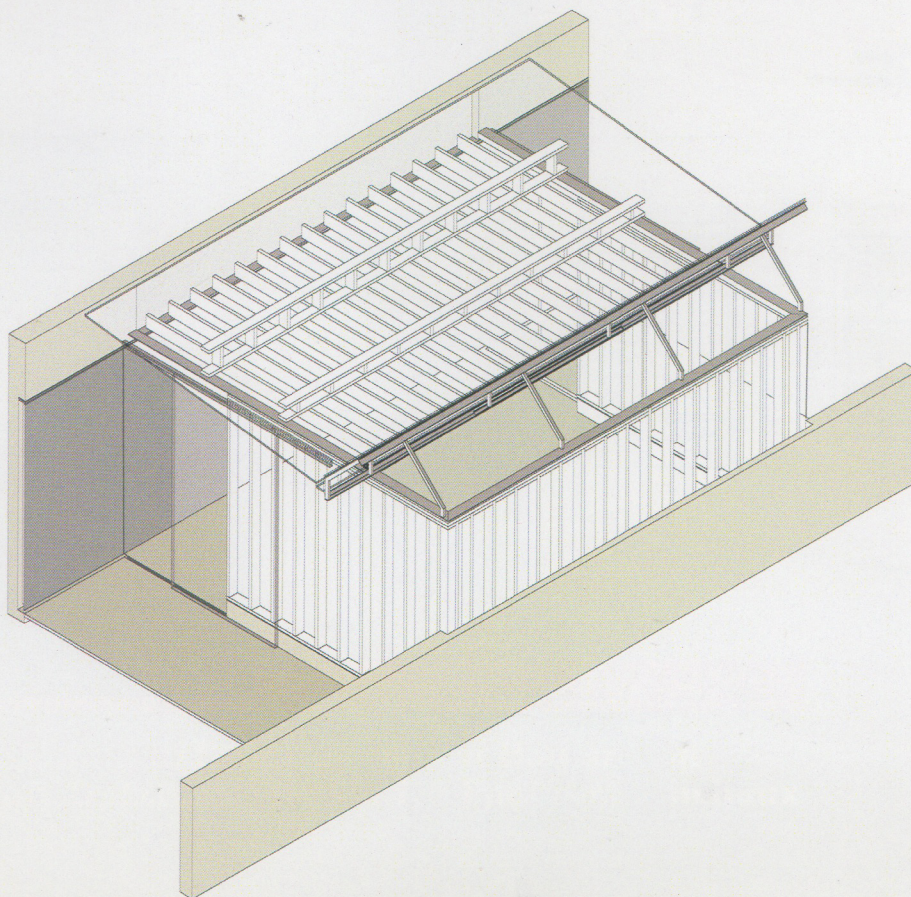


interstitial space. In summer it acts as a heat shield and in winter the 109 cubic metre volume is warmed by portable equipment which responds rapidly.

The whole ensemble is finely judged, delicate but tough, and a triumph considering the limited budget. The colour and crispness of the Cembonit panels is most satisfactory and the decision to return the

cladding along the face of the separating wall particularly successful.

One forgets that, in addition to being a workplace, the studio is also a display and meeting place. Rilke, again reporting on Rodin's studio, noted that it had become 'an inevitable port of call for a succession of visitors... friends, models, patrons, French and foreign personalities... even



Paul de Monchaux writes:

Bert Rozeman and I had previously worked together on architectural briefs that required a sculptor's input, and we had also been involved in quite separate projects at the Brindleyplace development in Birmingham. I had long admired the thoughtful precision of his work and in 2005 I invited him to design a garden studio for our mid-terrace house in Brockley.

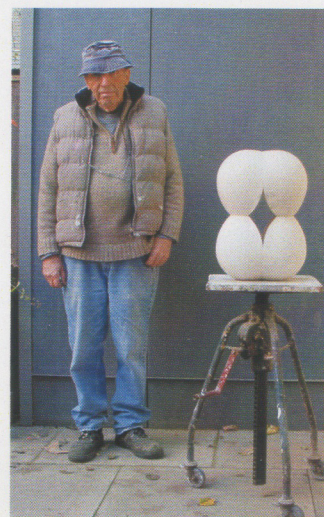
Most of the rooms in the house were being used as studios, with sculpture in the basement and drawing and printmaking upstairs. There was also an improvised carving shelter for the heavier and dirtier work at the back of the garden, which was to be the site of the new studio.

Our brief included the need for level access front and back to allow for a three metre high gantry. We also wanted uninterrupted full-height interior walls made of plywood for easy hanging, a north skylight and switched fluorescent lights to replicate day-time conditions. Conservation Area consent was needed and it all had to be done on a shoestring. The resulting building met the brief in every way and we think it is also very beautiful, a place where we like to be and our visitors like to linger.

Above The tilted roof brings north light into the studio.

Below left Structural axonometric. The party-wall was built to facilitate the construction of de Monchaux's studio and a pottery studio planned by the next door neighbour. Working with its designer, Joan Scotson of Stephen Gardiner Architects, Rozeman designed a wall longer and higher than both of the proposed studios, which allowed each building to have a different roof pitch. The wall also improved the definition of the adjacent outdoor spaces.

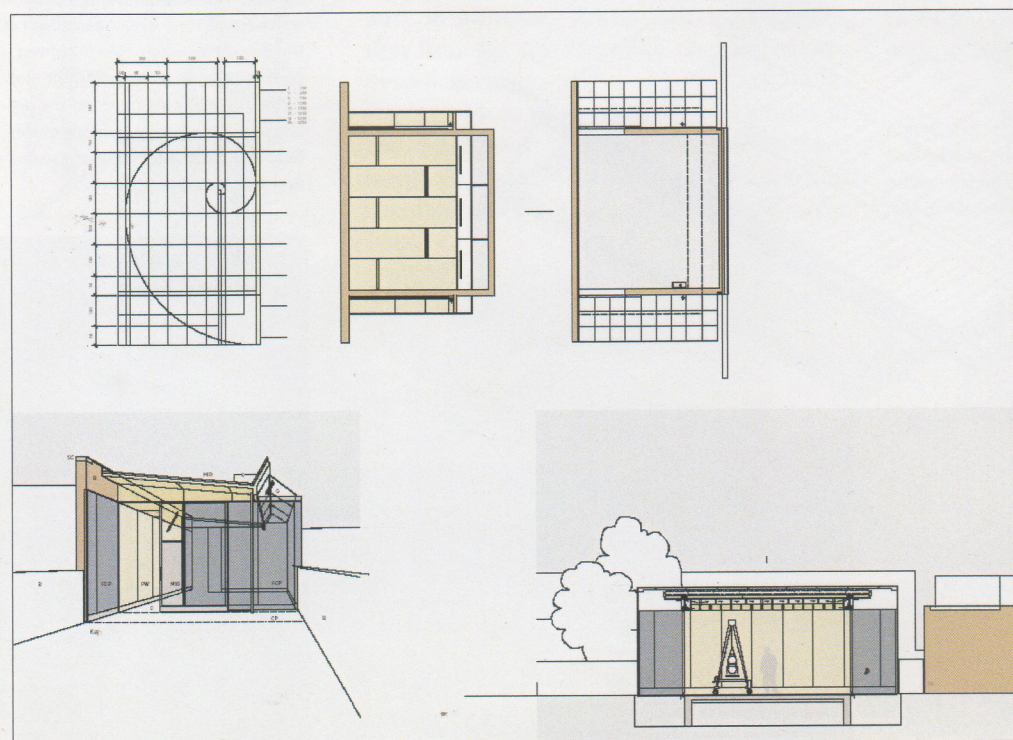
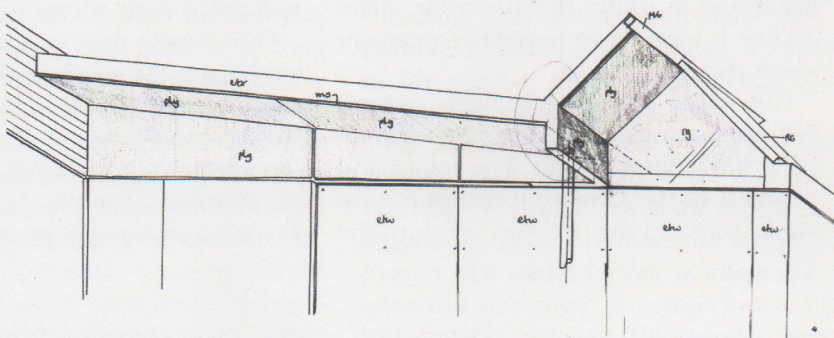
Below Paul de Monchaux and sculpture in the studio.





the King of England.' Paul de Monchaux still uses his old workshop, partly because the new studio has proved indispensable not only for looking at work in progress but also for displaying large-scale projects to clients. 'It's a bit like having a new car and being very 'careful not to get any dents', says Rozeman, so it will be interesting to see how the use of the new space evolves when it has been 'run in'.

Birkin Haward is a principal of van Heyningen & Haward, whose Performing Arts Centre at Latymer Upper School was recently voted overall winner of the 2008 Brick Awards.



Project team

Architect: Rozeman Architects; structural engineer: Greig Ling (Andy Gréig); contractor: HA Marks; steelwork: Parkside Fabrications; cladding: Cembit Cembonit; roofing: Eternit 6R; self-finish epoxy resin studio floor: Watco.