

Living Architecture is a social enterprise set up to revolutionise both architecture and UK holiday rentals, with founding member **Alain de Botton**.

It offers the chance to rent houses for a holiday designed by talented architects and set in some of the most stunning locations in Britain.

The first house to be opened was The Balancing Barn which stands on the edge of a nature reserve a few miles inland from the Suffolk coast, near the historic towns of Walberswick and Aldeburgh. Clad in elegant silver tiles, the house dramatically cantilevers over the landscape, providing views from its huge panoramic windows over woods, ponds and meadows. The house was designed by the Dutch firm **MVRDV**, who have won a world-wide reputation for the ingenuity, playfulness and comfort of their designs.

The Shingle House is sited on the shingle beach of Dungeness, near **Romney Marsh**. The vast beach contains a random collection of fisherman's huts (many of them owned by artists, including - most famously - the late film-maker **Derek Jarman**), two lighthouses and the terminus of a miniature coastal steam train. The entire beach is classified as a nature reserve and is filled with unusual flora and is a haven for a plethora of birdlife.

The Shingle House was designed by a young Scottish practice, **NORD Architecture**, who responded to the natural drama of the site with a simple monumental black house, finished in tarred black shingles on the outside and in a beautiful palette of concrete and timber within.

The Dune House lies just to the south of the picturesque village of Thorpeness in Suffolk on the beach nestled among rolling dunes. You can walk out from the living room directly onto the beach and enjoy panoramic views over the sea from the terraces, bedrooms and bathrooms on the upper floor.

Living Architecture invited one of Norway's most renowned practices, Jarmund/Vignsnæs Architects, to create a house for us on this archetypally English seaside site. **JVA**, as they are known, made their name building a series of accomplished houses in Oslo and its outskirts and intimately understood the need to balance the advantages of modernity with the traditional virtues of warmth and comfort.

Projects in construction :

The Long House

The North Norfolk coast is famous for its sandy beaches, its fine flint churches and its huge skies. On the edge of the quiet village of Cockthorpe, between Wells-Next-the-Sea and Blakeney, Living Architecture has turned to two of the great modernists of British architecture, **Sir Michael and Lady Patty Hopkins**.

The house is distinctive for its massive and traditionally crafted flint wall, which references the ancient churches and barns of the area.

Yet, as in so many of the Hopkins' later works, a respect for old-fashioned craft is allied to a fascination with high technology, both for its utility and its sheer beauty. The Long House has a great medieval-style hall in its centre and is capped with a vast timber roof, reinforced with steel cabling and trusses assembled into an intricate sculptural construction.

The Secular Retreat

South Devon, between the resorts of Salcombe and Hallsands lies a landscape of rolling hills, wooded river valleys, patchwork fields and small stone villages. It is here that Living Architecture has asked **Peter Zumthor**, to create The Secular Retreat.

On top of a hill, with endless views onto the rolling south Devon landscape, Zumthor has designed a veritable haven from the pressures of modern life, a space dedicated to calm, reflection and perspective - and in which one will be liable to feel some of the same sense of serenity and well-being as in an ancient monastery or abbey.

The design makes use of an original rammed concrete that gives the building a mass and scale characteristic of a timeless example of ecclesiastical architecture.

A Room for London

Living Architecture's newest project is a 'boat' perched, as if by retreating floodwaters, on the roof of the **Queen Elizabeth Hall**.

This one-bedroom temporary installation is commissioned by Living Architecture and **Artangel**. It will sit on top of the Queen Elizabeth Hall at **Southbank Centre** and be part of the **London 2012 Festival**.

The building, designed by **David Kohn Architects** and artist **Fiona Banner**, is intended to offer guests a place of refuge and reflection amidst the flow of traffic at this iconic location in the capital. The lower and upper decks offer extraordinary views, by day and night, of a London panorama that stretches from Big Ben to St Paul's cathedral.