

THE MODERN HOUSE



*London NW3
Sold*

Primrose Gardens

This magnificent five-bedroom Victorian townhouse represents a rare foray into residential architecture by the renowned Anglo-American architect Rick Mather. Famed for his work on university buildings, galleries and museums, Mather built an illustrious reputation during the latter decades of the 20th century as a modernist practitioner of exquisite skill and subtlety. This house on Primrose Gardens in Belsize Park was home to Mather's practice for many years, with the top floors used as his private residence. The home has an expansive, beautifully planted garden and is crowned by a superb roof terrace that enjoys sweeping views of the city skyline.

The Architect

Winner of countless RIBA awards and twice nominated for the Stirling Prize, Rick Mather is regarded as an innovator in low energy design, as well as a master of structural glass and natural light; features which can be seen for the first time in his private residence on Primrose Gardens.

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Primrose Gardens

Mather was born in Oregon in 1937. After receiving his degree in architecture in 1961, he toured Europe, taking in the major continental work of Le Corbusier before landing in the UK in 1963. Mather quickly found his way to the Architectural Association where he developed his passion for modernism, becoming a leading figure of the movement. Following a six-year stretch with the London Borough of Southwark architectural department, he struck out in private practice in 1973. It was with Rick Mather Architects that he began to establish an illustrious reputation through award-winning and critically acclaimed work at the Wallace Collection, the National Maritime Museum and the Ashmolean.

The Tour

Primrose Gardens is a peaceful residential street running between Primrose Hill and Belsize Park, which is characterised by Georgian and Victorian townhouses in red brick and white stucco and dissected by a charming communal garden and square.

Entry is gained at raised ground floor level via a shared hallway. The main residence unfolds across the upper floors, with separate accommodation on the raised ground and lower ground floors; however, the current configuration is one of many possible approaches to these inherently flexible spaces.

The first, second and third floors are home to the main residence and have direct access to the roof garden above. The first floor comprises three generous double bedrooms, a bathroom and a utility room. One of the bedrooms has been converted into a library, with built-in bookshelves on either side of the original marble fireplace and a beautiful bay window that floods the room with a soft light.

The second floor is arguably the most impressive internal space and brilliantly illustrates Mather's fluency with light, volume and flow. Characterised by double-height ceilings and a mono-pitched glazed roof, the structure gently encourages natural light to pour over the living and dining areas below. The kitchen is formed of marble and stainless steel, home to refined glass cabinets, an induction hob and integrated Siemens appliances, all of which are grounded by a rubber floor. Three full-height sash windows to the south-western aspects overlook the garden below, while two further windows look to the front of the house.

To one side, an elegant spiral staircase leads up to the main bedroom on the third floor. Arranged in an open mezzanine configuration, the room makes wonderful use of the natural light that streams in through the mono-pitched glazing. Three full-height glazed windows open to a small running balcony overlooking Primrose Gardens below. There are built-in wardrobes along one aspect and fitted blinds on the electrically controlled windows. There is also an exquisitely finished en suite shower room.



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Further accommodation lies on the raised ground floor; a beautiful, voluminous space, this perhaps retains more of its traditional features than the upper levels, but still bears the mark of Mather's modernist sensibilities. The main reception room is characterised by high ceilings and a full-height bay window overlooking the garden, which is draped in wisteria. The bright, airy room was once home to Mather's architectural practice and remains the perfect spot to inspire a dash of creative thinking. Glazed doors at the rear open to a perforated steel balcony, which leads directly to the garden via a spiral staircase. Narrow oak floorboards pave the way to the modern kitchen at the front of the plan, where sleek white units and worktops, plus a fireplace, are framed by a bay window at one end.

The lower ground floor can be accessed internally and externally, making these levels perfect for annexable accommodation. There are currently two large double bedrooms; one with a bay window and the other with an en suite shower room and glazed doors to the garden at the rear. The remainder of the plan on this floor is occupied by a smaller, single bedroom and a bathroom with simple white tiles. There are significant amounts of storage space beneath the staircase, as well as in the house's vaults.

Outdoor Space

The roof garden is a thing of rare beauty. Created and carefully curated by Mather and his partner over the course of 30 years, the garden is split across two tiers, with astonishing views of the city skyline. The mono-pitched glazing of the lower floors punctuates the lower tier of the terrace, creating a striking glass counterpoint to the verdant profusion of mature plants and shrubs that have been lovingly nurtured throughout. A barbeque has been cleverly created in the chimney flue, positioned opposite a built-in seating area that partially protrudes over the garden below. These dramatic spaces are perfect for entertaining and alfresco dining in the warmer months.

The main garden is located on the lower ground floor and faces southwest. It is home to a thoughtfully selected array of plants including fig and lilac trees, as well as a magnolia tree that sits at the foot of the space, bursting out in white-petaled plumage each spring. Mature plants and shrubs line the lawn, designed to be low-maintenance, as well as a small patio that opens out from one of the bedrooms and is a lovely spot for an early morning coffee.

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The Area

Primrose Gardens is located close to the shops and cafes of Belsize Park village, as well as Hampstead Village, including Gail's bakery, England's Lane café and numerous pubs and restaurants. Primrose Hill and the beautiful Regent's Park are a short walk to the south, while Hampstead Heath is within walking distance of the house, offering freshwater swimming year-round in the men's and ladies Bathing Ponds, as well as some of London's most beautiful woodland walks. In addition to elevated views of the city from Parliament Hill, there are tennis courts, cafes and Kenwood House, a wonderful 17th-century country house and gallery.

The house is within walking distance of several independent day schools including the Hall, St Antony's, South Hampstead High School, St Christopher's, Trevor Roberts and Sarum Hall.

Belsize Park (Northern Line) and Swiss Cottage (Jubilee Line) underground stations are within easy reach.

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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”.