

5 BRITISH FIRMS:

by Rory and Barbara Ann Campbell-Lange

The British architectural scene is dominated by high-tech practices. Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, Michael Hopkins, and others of their generation have influenced design since the early 1970s and inspired many highly competent young practices. In the tradition of the great English designer-engineers, their architecture is concerned with the logic and clarity of structural expression. Its detailing and rationality is extremely photogenic.

Yet Britain is also host to other approaches, as illustrated by the five practices we have chosen to present. All five explore space and mood or inventive strategies for complex programs. And these architects are all involved in researching their ideas through teaching and building.



The Shack (above, left and right) evokes insect and aquatic forms, as well as abandoned military machinery. Apertures create a luminous interior (left), ushering in rays reflected off the pond's shimmering surface. Reflectivity also plays an important role in the architect's London house and garden for the same photographer client. Here, key garden views culminate at an electroplated totem, a free-standing object set within the lush foliage (right).

NIALL MCLAUGHLIN

The form of Niall McLaughlin's Shack, a photographer's pondside retreat in Northamptonshire, England, grew from ideas about abandoned military machines in the neighboring aerodrome, as well as the insect and aquatic subjects of the client's camera lens. Metal canopies extending from the roof flex in the wind as if readying for flight, while the Shack appears to hover at the water's edge. The sense of place created by the building, the pond, and the clustered trees and plants recalls the English notion of genteel countryside. Like a folly in a Picturesque landscape, the building draws the eye.

The builder agreed to construct the Shack for £15,000 (\$24,000) on the condition that the architects prepare no construction drawings. Instead, McLaughlin, 37, placed a large model on the site.

The building's luminous interior is lit from multiple sources that leave overlapping patterns on the walls. Square apertures open toward the reflective pond and serve as photographic sets for tiny plants and creatures.

Niall McLaughlin's other projects include a 1997 house in Knightsbridge, London, and an addition to a Carmelite monastery in Kensington, London, completed between 1991 and 1997. His extension to the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill, England, recently won a competition, and he was named Young British Architect of the Year in 1998 by *Building Design* magazine.

