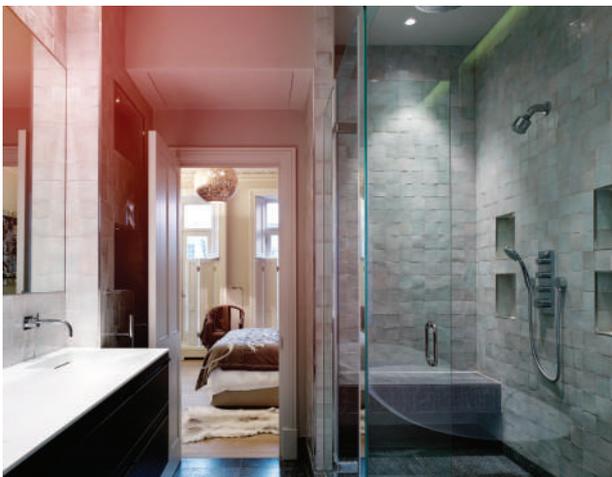


# Inside STORY

*Notting Hill-based architects Stiff + Trevillion are the subjects of Great Western Studios' Inside Design exhibition this month. Absolutely catches up with practice founder **Mike Stiff** ahead of the show*





**Absolutely:** Tell us about the exhibition. What will you be showing?

**Mike Stiff:** Great Western Studios theme is 'Inside Design', so we will be trying to describe the process of how buildings are conceived and built. The projects we will explore come from across our portfolio, so as well as projects like Portobello Dock and Queens apartments we will look at restaurant and private residential work.

**ABS:** What were your reasons for taking part in the Great Western Studios Inside Design series? How this benefits from an educational point of view as well as understanding a creative journey to success?

**MS:** In the creative industries it is always good to stop and look at what you do and this exhibition gave us the chance to do just that. I hope it will be informative and interesting, we will try to be as honest as possible, design is a complex process and it involves all sorts of people and collaborations.

**ABS:** The practice is behind a lot of familiar local buildings. Tell us about a few of them - say Cafe Anglais, Portobello Dock, Innocent...

**MS:** We do a lot of stuff locally. As well as houses we built Designers Guild's HQ on Latimer Road, Damon Albarn's studio, Cafe Anglais in Whiteleys and we have two residential blocks on site on Westbourne Grove. Portobello Dock is a local landmark now and was developed when Richard Branson sold Virgin Music to EMI, EMI sold his old HQ to our client, Derwent London. Our brief was to explore the opportunities that the two sites held. We got planning permission to build a new office building and convert some of the older stock to residential. Derwent wanted a mixed use scheme, added to this Tom Dixon came along and took the Wharf building which was

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earmarked as a restaurant and put the Dock Kitchen in. Innocent (above) leased the new building and we really enjoyed fitting it out for them. This project has really helped to regenerate this neglected corner of North Kensington.

**ABS: What is it that makes Stiff + Trevillion one of the UK's most interesting contemporary practices?**

I would like to think we were! We have always tried to design spaces and buildings that are appropriate and sympathetic to the context and history of their locations, we try not to be faddish, and we don't have a house style. Each project is unique.

**ABS: Your work spans commercial and residential properties. Which do you prefer to work on and why?**

**MS:** I think when you start out and you are a younger architect doing houses is a really exciting challenge, we have people in the studio who really enjoy this work. I must say that I enjoy the bigger stuff, dealing with clients,

## INNOCENT LEASED THE NEW BUILDING IN PORTOBELLO WHARF AND WE REALLY ENJOYED FITTING IT OUT FOR THEM

planners and local communities to design buildings that give something back to the neighbourhood as well as turning a profit.

**ABS: You're currently involved in the former Queens cinema building in Bayswater. Can you tell us about that?**

**MS:** It is another project for Derwent London, it will be their first stand alone residential scheme. It is due to complete in October. The cinema was derelict all that remained of any quality was the front facade, although it is not listed we decided from the beginning that we should retain that element as it would give a unique character to the

new building. There will be 16 flats and some retail, the new elevations will be unusual, influenced by the Art Deco cinema they will be clad in bands of white and dark blue glazed terra cotta. It will be quite memorable I hope.

**ABS: How did the practice start?**

**MS:** We set up as soon as we qualified in the early 80's. We were young and inexperienced but that is a good way to learn the craft. We had an early break when one of our clients asked us to restore and extend a Queen Anne house in Kent. That helped establish us as a serious practice.

Great Western Studios present 'Inside Design' with West London Architects, Stiff + Trevillion 12 - 26 June, sponsored by Bective Leslie Marsh Great Western Studios, 65 Alfred Road W2 [Stiffandtrevillion.com](http://Stiffandtrevillion.com)