



GOING GREEN IN BLACKHEATH

By Chris Hodson
Photo courtesy of KME UK

British designer and property developer Michael Kemp used his previous experience with copper at his own home to create maximum impact with pre-patinated copper street elevations on a development of two new houses.

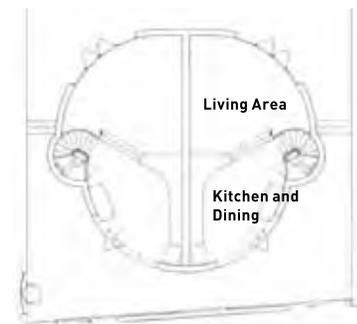
Michael Kemp considers the Blackheath area of London to be his home, continuing to live and work there after many years. Blackheath is an inner suburban area of southeast London, characterised by large 19th century villas with generous space around them. Although often challenging in terms of obtaining permission for development, the spaces between original houses present opportunities for new development, as Michael Kemp explains: "I bought the site without planning permission – after others had failed on two occasions to obtain consent for a single house – and developed a mirrored pair of semi-detached homes for sale."

Each of the two levels follows a different plan geometry, with open living areas downstairs, contained by near semi-

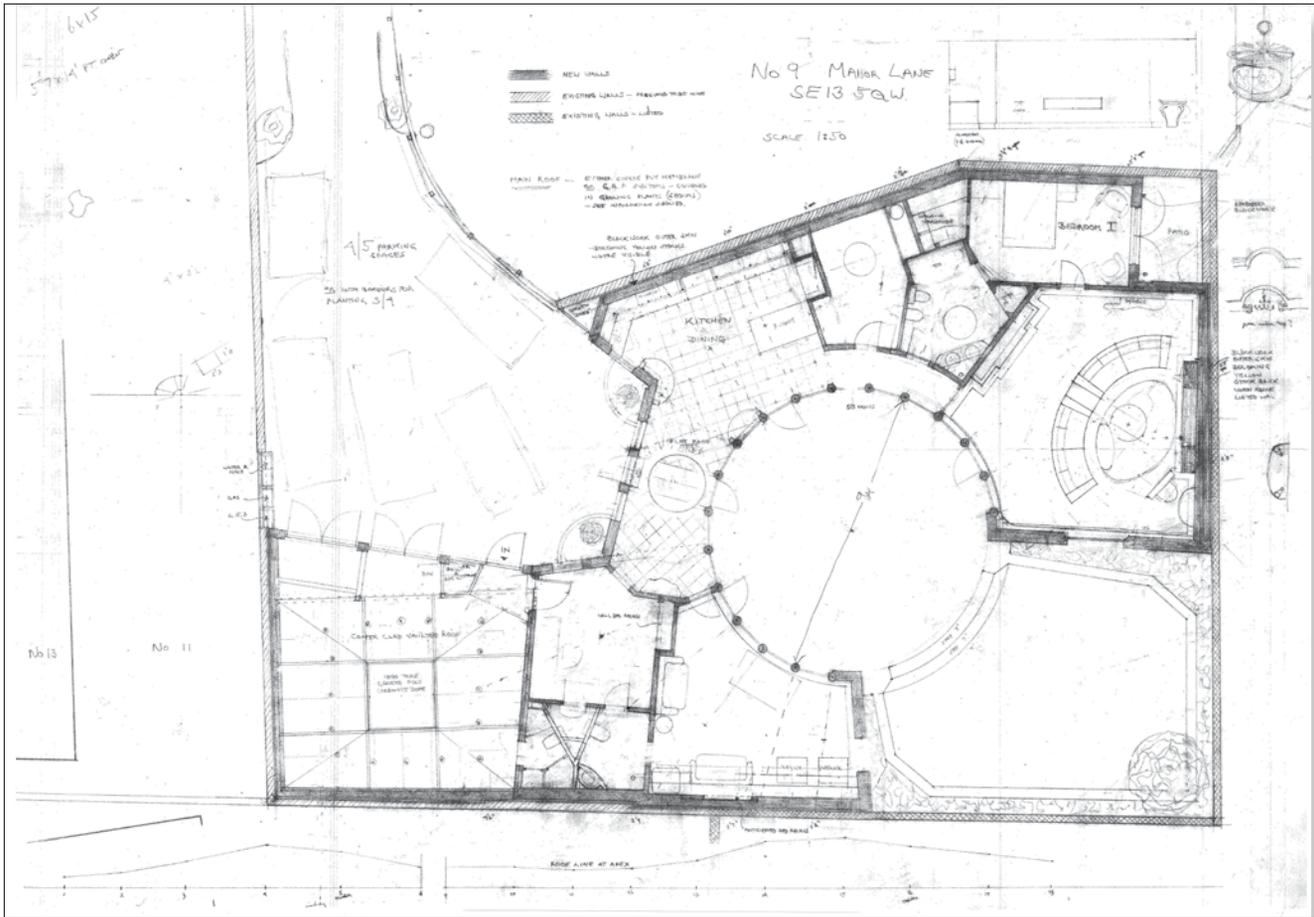
circular walls. The upper level has more rectilinear areas for sleep and work, with a bow-fronted balcony, highlighted by pre-patinated copper cladding supplied by KME UK. Michael Kemp continues: "It is probably unusual to use pre-patinated copper for a small scale residential development. I wanted to use the material mainly because of the uncompromising colour but also because of its historical associations with London buildings. This, together with the lime render, gives – I believe – a timeless quality, managing to be both traditional and contemporary at the same time. The pre-patinated copper was chosen for 'kerb appeal' and certainly was largely responsible for attracting the considerable interest from potential purchasers: in fact, one of the houses has already been sold."



Upper Floor Plan



Lower Floor Plan



Michael Kemp's own home with its unusual plan (above) incorporates a copper dome (below).



COPPER DOME

"Actually, I had used copper some years earlier on my own home, nearby in Blackheath. This building also sits in open space next to an older house but takes a different approach. It is all on one level and a planted 'green' roof was chosen to suggest the house was carved out of a hillside. This was also the justification for the rough Portland stone cladding and large pieces of ammonite fossil can be seen incorporated into the stone. Contrasting with the living roof is a shallow copper dome - the only part which is visible from the entrance gates. The copper adds a 'gravitas' to the dome and links it with the older house: with hindsight, I just wish that I had used pre-patinated copper here as well."

ABOUT THE DESIGNER

Michael Kemp attended the famous Goldsmiths College in London during the early 1960's and studied fine art. He has spent most of his life as a furniture designer and bespoke maker based at his own small workshop below the copper dome at his home. Although not an architect, he designs houses "simply as a larger piece of furniture" and also acts as both the builder and developer.