



The Winkley Estate in London: An Old Typo-Morphological Model for the New Economy

Howard Davis
School of Architecture & Environment, University of Oregon.
E-mail: hdavis@uoregon.edu

Ashley Dhanani
Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London.
E-mail: ashley.dhanani@ucl.ac.uk

Il Winkley Estate di Londra: un vecchio modello tipo-morfologico per la New Economy.

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Abstract

The Winkley Estate is a four-block development in the London neighbourhood of Bethnal Green, built in about 1900 by the developer Charles Winkley. The development is unique in its integration of several building types and uses, including terraced houses, multi-story blocks of flats, terraced houses above workshops, terraced houses above retail shops, rows of connected workshops and multi-story factory buildings. The project replaced terraced houses that were in poor condition. It served the needs of craftspeople in London, particularly in the furniture trades, who lived and worked in the neighbourhood where the project was built. The project allows for different combinations of use among the buildings, and changes in the way that uses connect to each other. The development was repaired after some bomb damage in the Second World War, and is still in use with dwellings and workshops occupied by professional offices such as designers, digitally-based businesses, and architects. The built density of the project along with the variety of uses is similar to that of urban blocks in London at the end of the nineteenth century that evolved over time. Charles Winkley was apparently trying to emulate those environments with a purpose-built design.

Introduzione

"Winkley Estate" è un complesso edilizio di quattro isolati costruito intorno al 1900 nel quartiere londinese di Bethnal Green (ora parte del London Borough of Tower Hamlets). È il frutto dell'integrazione di residenze, appartamenti, unità edilizie combinate per abitazioni e laboratori, unità per laboratori a due piani, edifici industriali e edifici che uniscono abitazioni e spazi commerciali. Fu costruito da Charles Winkley, il quale mantenne un ufficio immobiliare all'interno del complesso dopo la sua costruzione, e che dopo la realizzazione divenne sindaco di Hackney; gli venne intitolata una strada centrale del complesso urbano dopo la sua morte negli anni '30. Ci sono poche notizie e documenti sul complesso, oltre a un resoconto sulla conservazione e una menzione in una delle guide di Londra di Nikolaus Pevsner. (Fig. 1) Questo articolo analizzerà tipologia edilizia e

Introduction

The 'Winkley Estate' is a four-block development built in about 1900 in the London Borough of Bethnal Green (now in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets). It is a unique mixture of dwelling houses, flats, buildings combining dwellings and workshops, two-story workshop buildings, factory buildings and buildings combining dwellings and commercial spaces. It was built by the developer Charles Winkley, who maintained a real-estate office in the development after it was built, and who for some time after the construction was the Mayor of Hackney; a central street of the development was named after him after his death in the 1930s. There is little written about the development beyond a conservation report and a mention in one of Nikolaus Pevsner's London guidebooks (Fig. 1). This article will analyze the building typology and urban morphology of the Winkley Estate within the framework of a larger investigation of the building that combines commercial and residential uses. The description of the larger investigation is intended to help define the theme of this special issue.

The larger investigation is concerned with the building that combines commercial and residential uses. This investigation, described in detail in the book by Howard Davis, *Living Over the Store: Architecture and Local Urban Life* (Davis, 2012) puts the combined commercial/residential building into several theoretical ideas, that together speak not only to this particular kind of building but also to the dynamics of traditional commercial buildings and their location within the city. These ideas are as follows:

1. *Singularity of building typology versus multiplicity of the real world.* The categories of classification that are inherent in the discipline of architectural typology tend to emphasize "pure" types and to marginalize hybrid forms. Such pure types include courtyards, linear chains of rooms and spaces, facades defined by their symmetries—in general, configurations that can be easily defined and described. While theory recognizes hybrid forms, the idea of "hybridity" is itself, within this context, indicative of the primacy of simply-defined configurations. "Hybrid" forms are marginalized (for one typical example of the idea of "pure" types, see for example Pevsner N. (1976) *A History of Building Types*, Princeton University Press, Princeton).

But the real world is often messier than that. *Living Over the Store* points up one common example of this: the kind of building that combines commercial and residential uses. In order to meet its dual functions of domestic life and commercial exchange, this kind of building often combines typologically different spatial configurations. For example, the ground floor of the building will often incorporate a line of rectangular spaces open to the street, while the upper floors will incorporate, for example, the major/minor arrangement typical of row (terraced) houses or various unitized configurations typical of urban apartments. The building façade suggests the existence of both types, and successful cases may have a high level of aesthetic resolution involving balance between two different two-dimensional configurations. But the building as a whole evinces two "pure" types, not only one.

2. *Relationships between typologies and uses.* This hybridity may be based on the conditions of daily life. Specifically, the commercial life and residential

