

SKYWOOD HOUSE

AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF GRAHAM PHILLIPS

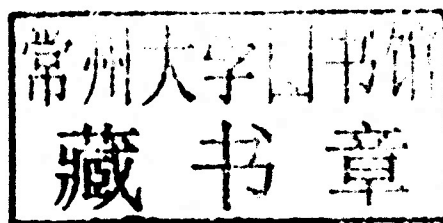
PHYLLIS RICHARDSON

WITH ADDITIONAL TEXTS BY KENNETH POWELL

Thames & Hudson

SKYWOOD HOUSE

AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF GRAHAM PHILLIPS



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WITH 690 ILLUSTRATIONS, 487 IN COLOUR

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7t Ltd: pp. 180–81; CGI; 200 (above); 220–21 (below); 233; 252–57; 265 (right); 267 (right); 276 (E1, E5)

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Astudio Architects: pp. 208; 209 (above); 213–15

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Liam Daniel: p. 167

Peter Dawson: pp. 15 (below right); 69 (left); 72 (below); 76–77; 151 (photo of Land Rover advertising materials); 156 (above, photo of Audi page advert); 159–62 (photos of magazine pages); 169–71 (photos of magazine pages)

Matthew Donaldson Photographer, Harvey Nichols
brochure: p. 160 (above)

Angel Duro Architects: pp. 248 (right); 251 (below); 258–59; 266 (top right); 270 (above)

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Brochure: p. 160 (above)

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Daniel Phillips: p. 211 (all)

Diane Phillips: pp. 232 (left); 266 (below middle)

Graham Phillips: pp. 19 (above right); 28 (all); 30–33; 35 (top right and below right); 55; 57–68; 69 (right); 72–74; 81; 82 (below); 83; 88 (right); 91; 94; 104 (left above and below); 113 (above); 121; 122 (below); 124; 128 (above and below left); 137; 178 (oil painting by Jacqui Phillips); 178; 182 (above right); 184 (above right); 189; 192 (left); 193 (all); 198; 199 (left and above); 200 (below, left and right); 201 (above); 202; 209 (below); 210; 212; 216; 218; 223 (right and lower left); 225 (above left and right); 226 (above left and right); 227 (all); 228; 229 (top); 234 (top left and lower); 235 (left); 237 (above); 241 (below right); 244–45; 246 (above); 247 (left and right); 248 (left); 250 (all); 251 (above); 260 (top); 262 (top row: middle, right); 265 (left); 266 (top left, middle, right, below left); 267 (left, above and below); 268 (all); 269 (above all); 272

Courtesy of Graham Phillips: pp. 20; 22 (top, middle left and right); 25 (above right); 53; 56; 70; 232 (right); 275–80 (grid pages, unless otherwise mentioned)

Graham Phillips with 7t Ltd: p. 16 (below right); 275 (E1, F3–4); 276 (A1–3, B1–3, C1, C3); 279 (D3)

James Phillips: 279 (C2–3)

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Gordon Watkinson: pp. 172–75

Uli Weber: pp. 6–7; 158

Western Design Architects: pp. 219; 220 (above); 221 (above); 223 (left top and middle)

Simon Whiting/Foster+Partners: pp. 71; 75; 78–80; 90; 110; 111 (below); 123; 128 (above right)

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Mel Yates: pp. 1; 3; 4; 5; 16 (top and bottom left); 21; 87; 88 (left); 96–97; 99; 102–3; 106–9; 112; 113 (below); 114; 116; 129; 190 (above); 191; 192 (above right and below); 194–97

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© 2013 Kenneth Powell

Introduction, Design Philosophy, Skywood House in the Media and
The Architecture of Graham Phillips
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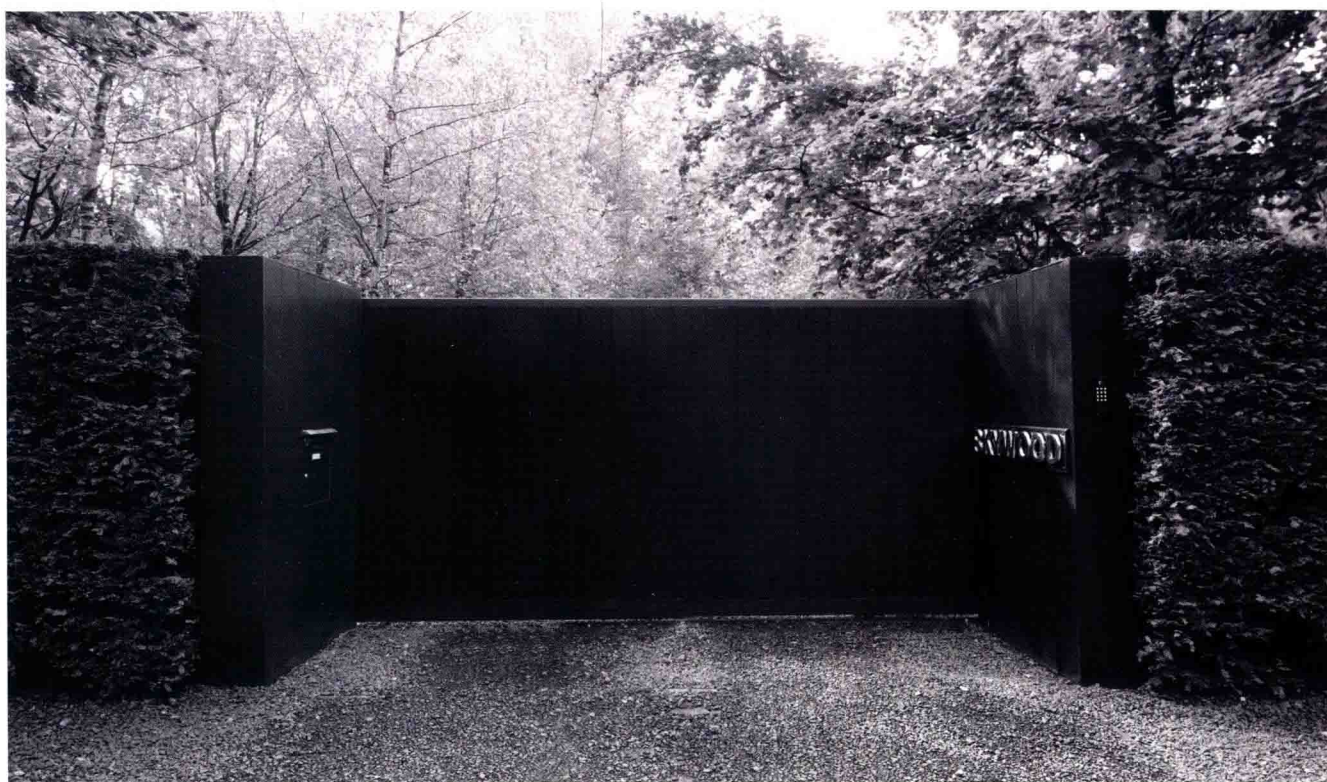
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Contents

Dedicated to my family and Malcolm

Prologue: A Search for Form	11
by Graham Phillips	
Introduction: A House for All Seasons	12
Biography: Graham Phillips	20
by Kenneth Powell	
Finding Form: Design Philosophy	30
Skywood House	38
Skywood House: The Making of a Modern Classic	52
An Appreciation of Skywood House	135
by Kenneth Powell	
Skywood and the Media	148
Other Projects	180
Albion Riverside Apartment, London	182
Skyblue, Costa del Sol	198
Hamptons, Long Island	208
Sandbanks Court, Dorset	216
Cielo, Mallorca	232
Skyhigh, Mallorca	248
Epilogue	274
by Graham Phillips	
Interviews with Graham Phillips	
by Malcolm Quantrill	282
by James Phillips	285
Project Collaborators	287
Acknowledgements	287
Sources of Illustrations	288



'A perfect garden, no matter its size, should
enclose nothing less than the entire universe.'

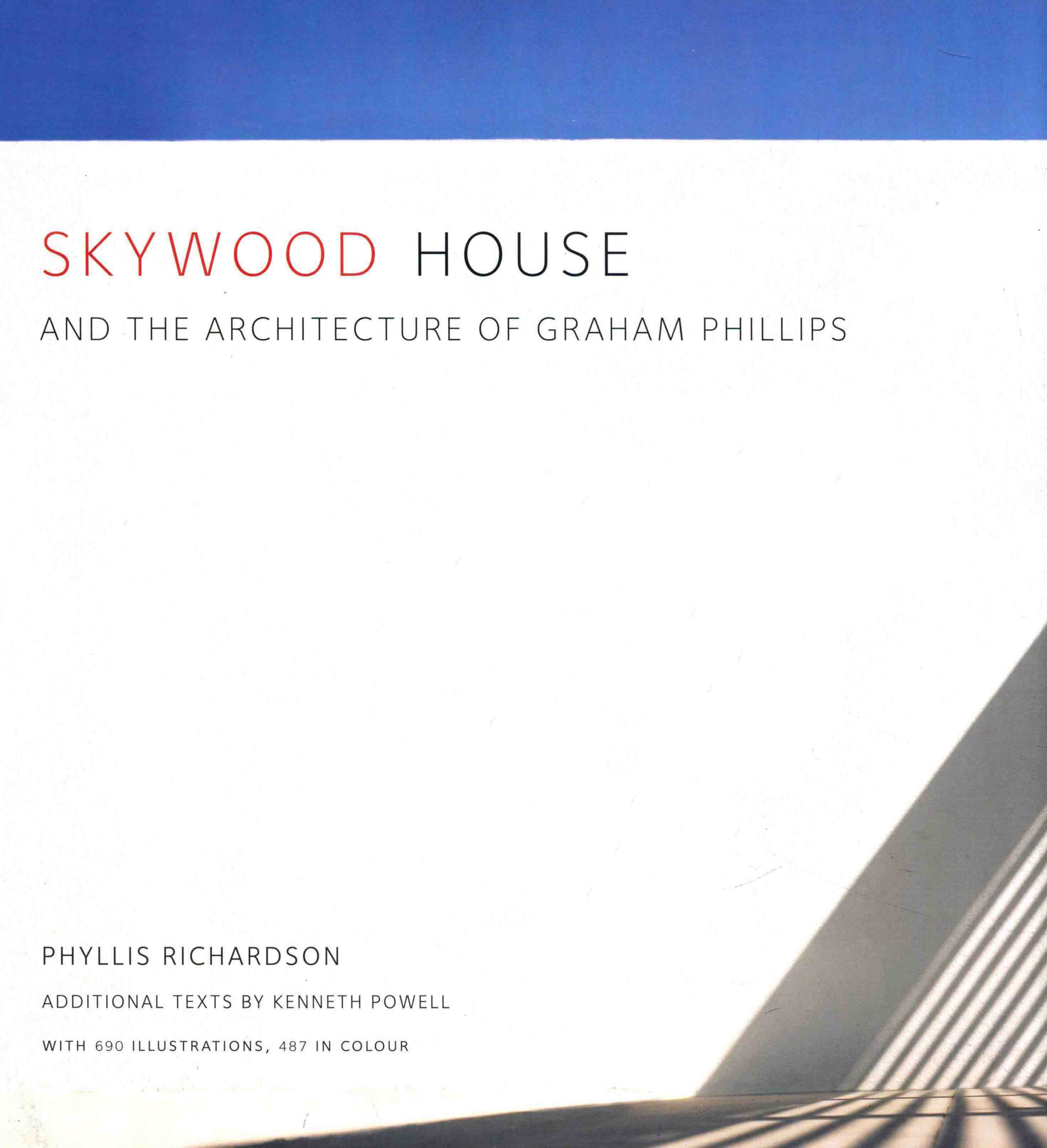
LUIS BARRAGÁN









The background of the book cover is a photograph of a bright, overexposed sky. In the bottom right corner, there is a dark, geometric architectural element, possibly a roof or a wall, with strong diagonal shadows cast across it.

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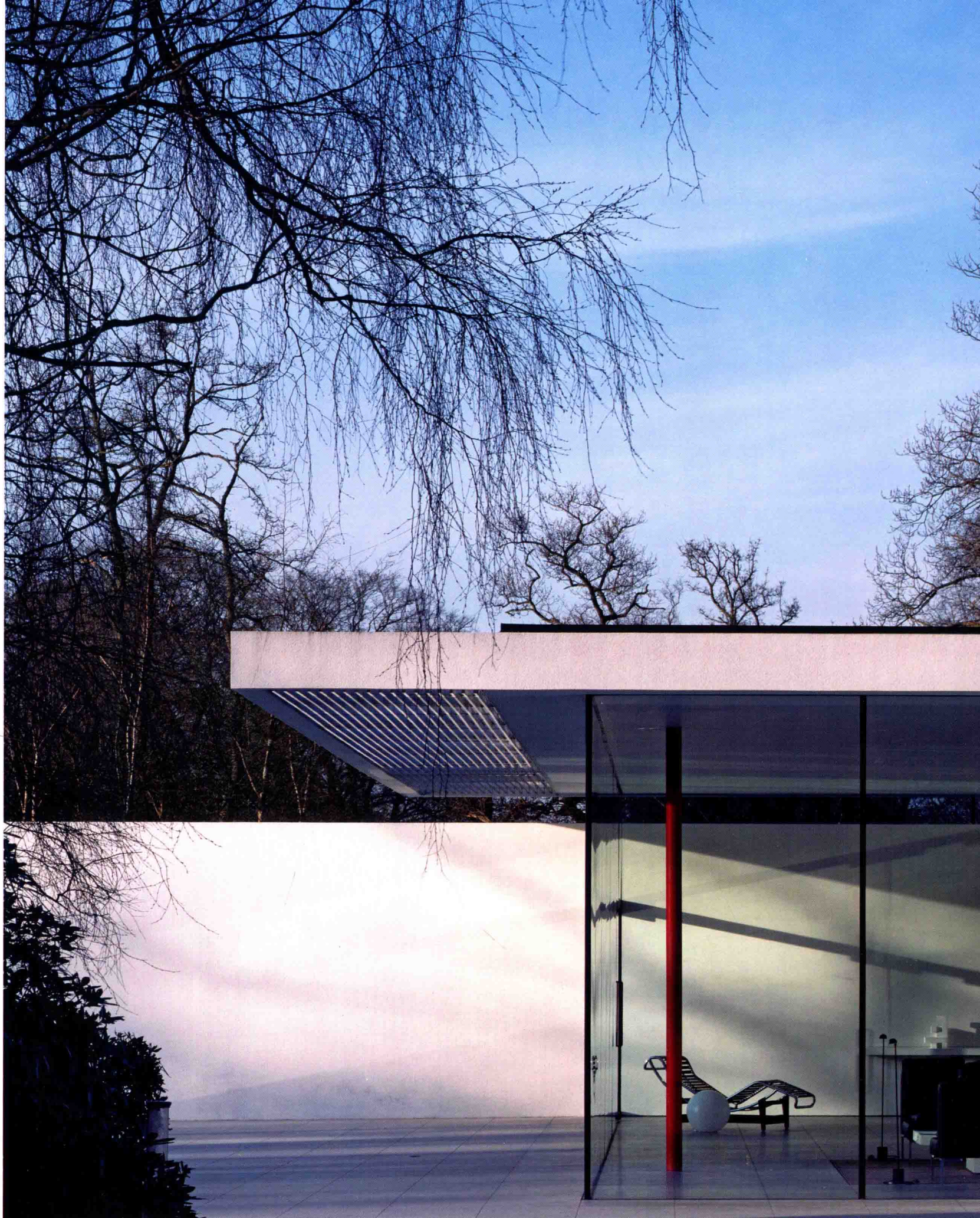
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by Graham Phillips	
Interviews with Graham Phillips	
by Malcolm Quantrill	282
by James Phillips	285
Project Collaborators	287
Acknowledgements	287
Sources of Illustrations	288





Prologue

A Search for Form

by Graham Phillips

'The sun never knew how great it was until it hit the side of a building.'

LOUIS KHAN

It is a very great honour to have my work published by Thames & Hudson. Whilst as a student architect I always presumed someday I would build my own house, I never imagined there might be a book on it as well. Professor Malcolm Quantrill first had the idea to do a book about Skywood House, and we collaborated on putting one together. He titled it 'A House for All Seasons'. Very sadly, he passed away and the project came to a halt. Later I decided to carry on with the task of making a book on Skywood, and to dedicate it to him.

When travelling to Mexico to teach with Malcolm we met the young architect Eduardo Gonzalez, who presented me with a little book on Luis Barragán by the photographer Rene Burri. This wonderful book became such a great inspiration, showing me the importance of carefully choosing and placing both images and text. Unusually for me, I read every word many times, and I hoped to create a book that might have a similarly satisfying effect.

The projects in this book represent a relatively small part of my working career, as I have been so fortunate as to spend thirty-five years with Norman Foster and to work on numerous world-class projects in that time. These experiences, and other important influences on my work since my time as a student, are explained in the chapter on my Design Philosophy, which describes how I began my architectural journey at the University of Liverpool in earnest with my dissertation, 'A Search for Form'.

While Skywood remains the tour de force, each of the other smaller projects has its own interesting aspects. The Albion Riverside apartment was principally an exercise in the flexible use of space, and built to function something like a Swiss watch. Skyblue, by contrast, is an example of a great effect achieved using minimal resources. The Sandbanks rooftop pavilion's winning planning appeal after several years, on the grounds of 'architectural merit', was greatly rewarding for all concerned. Cielo in Mallorca, with its spectacular cliffside location, came with a plot that seemed so limited both physically and by the highly restrictive coastal regulations that the outcome is quite remarkable.

Architecture is a synthesis of art and technology, and is endlessly iterative when striving for simplicity. The most wonderful creative leaps appear 'miraculously' only after long hours of seemingly fruitless toil. As process in architecture is important, this book shows the various steps involved: the sketches, drawings, models and images that accompany planning, right up to and including the completed buildings.

Winston Churchill wrote, 'We shape our dwellings and afterwards our dwellings shape us.' This has been so true of Skywood, which has influenced our lives in so many unexpected ways (especially with its 'life in the media') and provided the motivation to continue with the further projects you see here. Whether you look only at the pictures or whether you read through the text as well, I hope you enjoy having this book as much as we enjoyed creating it.

Introduction

A House for All Seasons

'Graham Phillips is one of the most talented architects practising in Britain today. ... Skywood, the house he designed for himself and his family, has brought his true merit as a designer to public attention.'

MALCOLM QUANTRILL

Skywood and the architecture of Graham Phillips

What motivates an architect to publish a book on his or her work? It is usually when someone comes to a point of having gathered a number of successful projects under their belt that the decision is made to create a record of those achievements or output. In the case of a practice it also becomes a brochure of completed design solutions. But when Graham Phillips first explored the idea of making a book, it wasn't in order to present a retrospective of three decades of his work with one of the world's most celebrated architecture practices (of which there have been several volumes already published). Rather, the book was to document the achievement of a single, rather small building taken on towards the end of his career at Foster & Partners; a personal project that he designed himself, for himself and his family.

It was Malcolm Quantrill, one of Phillips's former architecture professors from Liverpool University, who suggested the idea. In the 1990s, while Phillips was still immersed in work at Foster's practice, Quantrill was hired to write a book on the studio. The two met several times in Hong Kong, where Phillips was working on the Chek Lap Kok airport project, and stayed in touch thereafter. As Phillips's plans for his new house progressed he saw more and more of the man who had once taught him Design Theory, until the two were not only good friends but also well-matched collaborators.

After the house was finished, Quantrill – based in Texas – visited London every summer and often included dinner with Graham and his wife, Diane, in his itinerary. 'We always discussed the books he was working on,' Phillips says, noting that Quantrill was then writing mainly on Finnish architecture. But Quantrill saw an inspiring development in the creation of Skywood, stemming from Phillips's dedication to form. 'He thought Skywood really deserved to be documented properly', Phillips remembers, 'and he said he would be delighted to write a book about it.' Quantrill's preferred title was 'A House for All Seasons'.

