

Case study: in the forest



The 'house' that £15k built

Building virgins, design-as-you-go and very locally-sourced timber explain why Invisible Studio's new woodland base was built for so little. Photography by *Andy Matthews*

Friends and neighbours of Invisible Studio have helped to build a new studio for the practice that, while not invisible, blends in well with its woodland surroundings. Invisible Studio was founded by Piers Taylor, who also co-presents BBC Two's *The House that £100k Built*, and the new studio has been built adjacent to his own 2009 AJ Small Projects Award-winning house near Bath.

The building was constructed with unskilled but paid labour using untreated and unseasoned timber. None of the workers had constructed a building before, and Taylor describes the approach as 'minimal cost and minimal design'.

He says: 'The project was an exercise in establishing a system of building that could be constructed using unskilled labour, with minimal drawings, allowing ad-hoc discoveries



and improvisation to be embraced, and the tyranny of predetermined design to be escaped. The “mistakes” of the team remain evident in the building, and no attempt was made to conceal them.’

All the wood was milled over the two days that a mobile saw was hired for, and the kit of parts was the trees standing on the site, with no other timber used. The wood that was milled at the end of this period was just enough to partially clad the studio.

The footings were mixed by hand and designed to be as minimal as possible, and the project was scaffolded with timber that was ultimately used for the bridge and the floor, negating the need for



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expensive scaffold hire.

Elsewhere, the windows were scavenged from a skip, and the floor paint was from a batch left over from another project Invisible Studio had worked on. All of the boarding was the cheapest possible grade, and the insulation was carefully pieced together from off-cuts. Heating is provided by waste wood from the woodland, and water from the roof feeds into an attenuation pond that forms a natural habitat.

The result is a 55m² enclosed space accessed via a bridge from a slope, sitting above an open workshop for the practice to make full-scale models. The total cost, taking into account labour and materials, was just £15,000. ■

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