

Buildings that can send our souls soaring



VIEW FROM SOLE BAY

By Ian Collins

OF all art forms in recent times, architecture has been the best and the worst. It's also the most important, since it is all about where and how we live and work and meet. Buildings should inspire and uplift us. My favourites in East Anglia range from medieval round-towered churches to post-war council housing in and around Loddon by Tayler and Green – all sharing a gentle but sturdy nobility.

There is a world of difference between building on the past and rehashing history in shoddy pastiche. Even more than the look, the mark of success is that indefinable feeling on entering a building of being instantly at home. I wanted to buy my tiny 1830s coastguard cottage in Southwold as soon as I walked through the door – prompting the kind vendor to refuse to sell to me, since here was evidence I was mad. Happily, she later relented (concluding I was old and ugly enough to be allowed to make my own mistakes).

It was the same with my London bolthole in the Barbican. Viewing several flats left me very flat, but on entering an airship-like space, with a 1960s galley kitchen by Lowestoft's Brooke Marine, I felt I was flying. That was the one for me.

One beautiful building of late is the four-bedroom Bavent House near Southwold, created for Richard and Lucy Turvill by Norwich-based Hudson Architects. On the edge of marshes, and part of a former farmstead, this singular construction of wood, zinc and glass is a modern design but one based on both a traditional Suffolk barn and the tarred fishermen's huts on Southwold's Blackshore.

Anthony Hudson studied at Cambridge, and honed his love of vernacular architecture and the environment in Wales and India. His blissful buildings range from a landmark house on the Devon coast to Chelmsford's Salvation Army Citadel and a fabulous fusion of a 16th Century timber-framed barn and found materials in Feering Bury Barn in Essex.

The Devon house was named the Royal Fine Art Commission and Sunday Times 1994 Building of the Year. Since then, as Jay Merrick writes in a beautiful new book, *An Open Mind: The Work of Hudson Architects* (Artifice, £24.95): "Few practices, of any size, can have produced architecture of such striking material and compositional variety." The principle is to start afresh with every commission and to meet the particular needs of people and place. Few architects have been so open-minded.

• The book is available from The Book Hive, NUCA Gallery and Jarrolds (all Norwich) and is published by Artifice at £24.95



GLORIOUS: Bavent House, near Southwold. Photographed by James Brittain