

Witcher Crawford Architects Shortlisted for National Design Award

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One of Winchester's premier residential architects has been shortlisted for the Wood Awards, the UK's premier competition for excellence in architecture and product design in the world's only naturally sustainable material.

Witcher Crawford Architects are hoping their design for the rear staircase in Portledge House, a Grade II* listed Manor House in north Devon, will triumph in the awards' Interiors category.

The staircase was created as a distinct contemporary insertion into a medieval service wing of the historic house, which Witcher Crawford has comprehensively remodelled for its new owner. The staircase blends with wall panelling to create a homogeneous design using English oak chevrons between darker walnut fins. On the staircase, the walnut fins form spindles supporting a leather handrail. The quality of design of the bespoke sculptural piece was the key factor in achieving approval from Historic England and Torridge District Council's Conservation Officer to replace an earlier and much altered staircase.

Geoff Crawford, partner at Witcher Crawford, has been working on the project for the past three years. "The house has suffered a series of unsympathetic changes in recent decades and we have been careful to uncover and restore original details where they survive. However, where the historic integrity of a room has been badly compromised, we have approached these spaces with a view to creating contemporary designs that reflect the quality and status of the house and which add a new phase to its historical development. We are pleased that the judges have appreciated the concept, the design and the craftsmanship of this piece."

Witcher Crawford worked with Tiverton-based joiners, Warren Hughes Furniture who made the staircase in a combination of European walnut and local storm-felled English oak. It was engineered off-site using CNC machining and assembled by hand using traditional joinery techniques.

The shortlisted projects will be displayed at 100% Design exhibition, held at London Olympia during the London Design Festival in September before the awards are made in November. All Wood Award winners receive trophies and certificates and are featured in the December issue of the RIBA Journal, the official magazine of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

High resolution photography available

Picture Captions: The Witcher Crawford design brings a delicacy to the staircase in walnut and oak.

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