



Dining room.

# SHAW THING

**Jeremy Melvin on the remodelling of London's earliest mansion block.**

TO remodel the interior of a building by Norman Shaw is a daunting prospect, even though Albert Hall Mansions has never been considered to be one of his best designs.

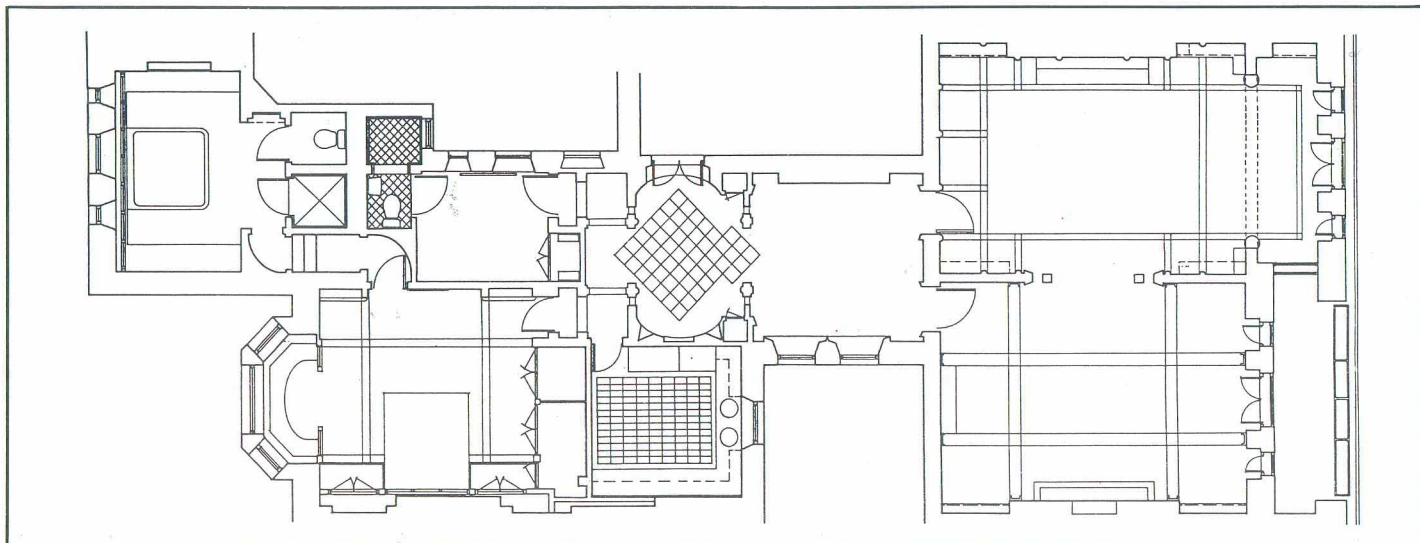
Dating from 1879, it is one of the earliest large mansion blocks of apartments in London, and rather clumsily overshadows in scale and detail the neighbouring building in Kensington Gore, Lowther Lodge, designed by Shaw some six years earlier. Yet Albert Hall Mansions' convoluted planning around lightwells, and its stylistic eclecticism established a formula followed, in some cases with greater success, by many subsequent examples over the next thirty years.

The interior of the apartment had been refitted in the 1960s, so there were few of the details or spatial devices associated with Shaw's best work; the cornice was a notable exception. So far from finding a building of almost untouchable quality, David Quigley was faced with one typical of

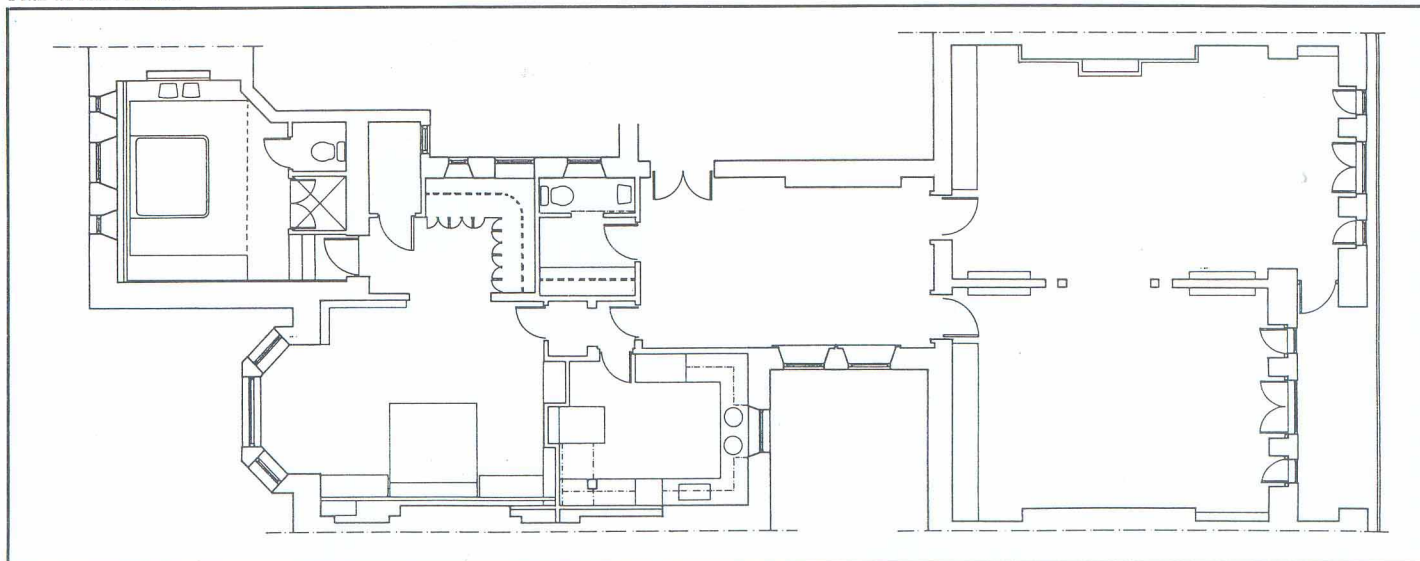
many mansion apartments, offering considerable scope for improvement.

Taking a lead from the fashion entrepreneur client's requirements for a restful environment as a contrast to the stresses of work, Quigley's interventions complement and give visual order to the existing spaces. New elements in the principal rooms give each a distinct character and begin to suggest a sequence. Four columns define an aedicular entrance vestibule; a curved wall and chequered pattern of marble set in the maple floor imply a cross axis. The two reception rooms, reached via a hall, were similar high-ceilinged spaces; the new fittings emphasise these characteristics differently. In the sitting room, tall, "pencil" pilasters incorporating light fittings underline the height of the room.

Using materials such as mdf and half drainpipes for pilasters, the design recalls the inventive utilitarianism of eclectic Edwardian classicism.



Plan as remodelled.



Plan before.



An original opening connects the two reception rooms.



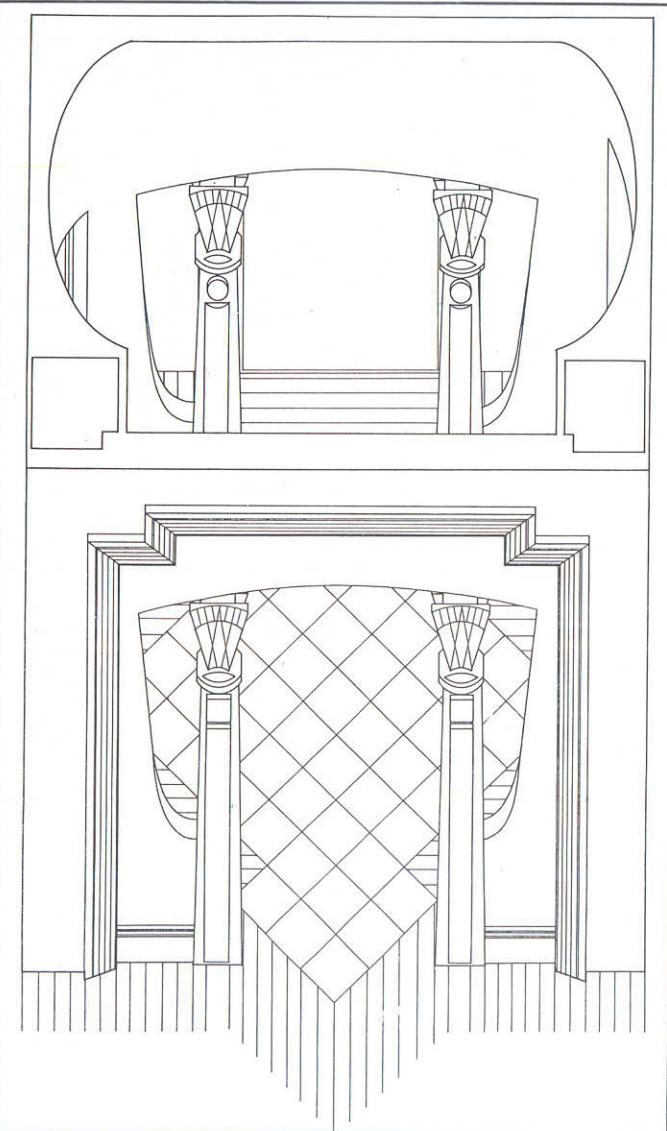
Entrance vestibule.



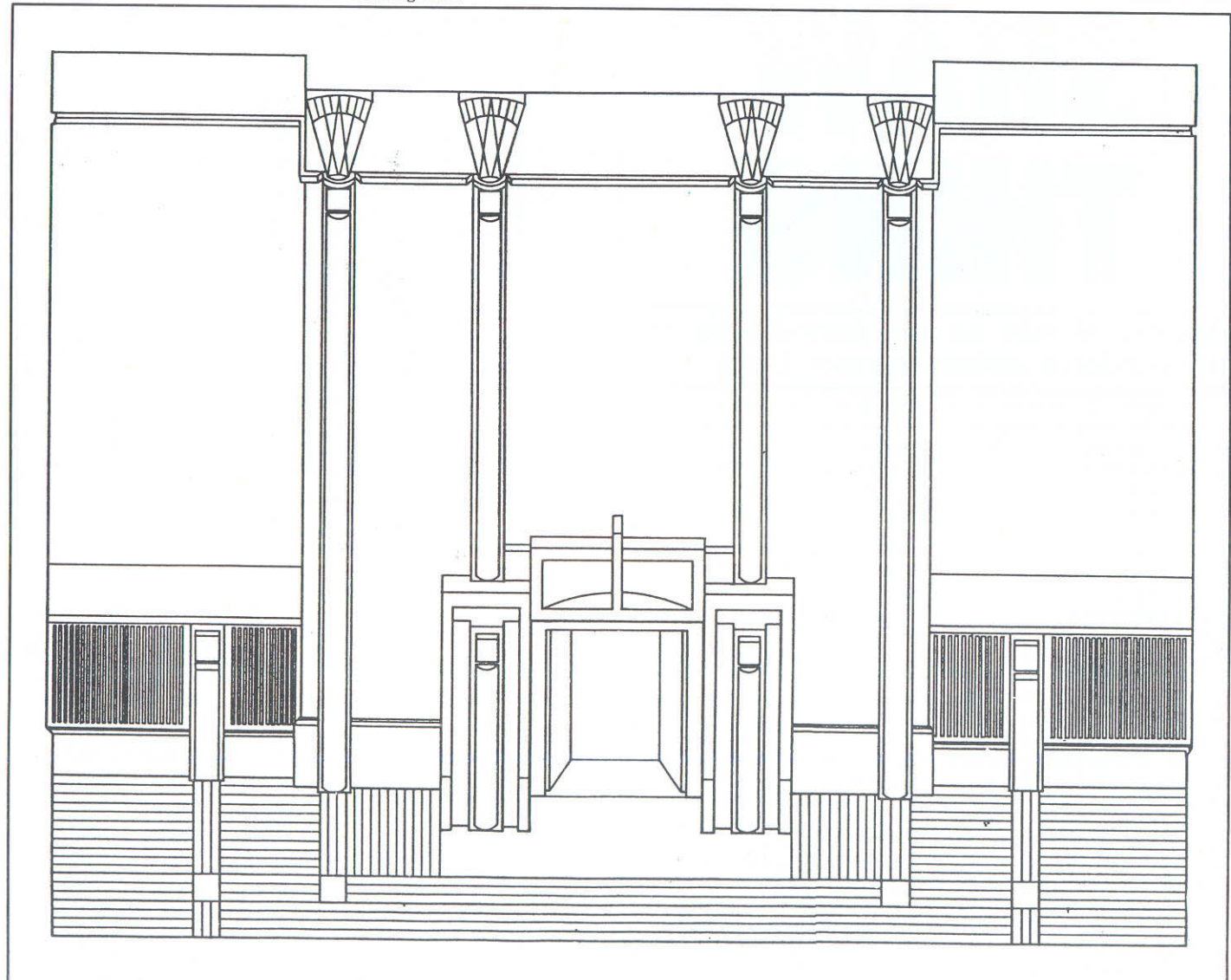
Fittings in the drawing room have a cool stripped classical aura.



Drawing room.



The mdf fireplaces use a language of almost unadulterated plane and volume.



Sitting-room fireplace.