

Speight, Sadie 1906 - 1992



Sadie Speight [also known as Sadie Martin; and as Lady Martin] was born in Wigan, Lancashire, England, on 26 May 1906. Between 1924-30 he studied in the School of Architecture at Manchester University under A.C. Dickie. She obtained a B.A. (1st Class Hons) in 1929 and an M.A. in 1930 [Note: in her entry in 'Who's Who in Art' 5th edition, 1950, Speight gives the date as 1930, however, other sources give the date as 1933]. On leaving Manchester she took advantage of a Zimmern Travelling scholarship and a Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Neale Bursary to spend some time travelling and studying in Europe. From 1930-34 she worked as an architectural assistant to the Manchester firm Halliday & Associates.

In 1935 Speight married the architect [John Leslie Martin](#) (1908-2000) [Note: some sources give the year of their marriage as 1934], with whom she had studied at Manchester University. The pair were subsequently to collaborate on a number of architectural projects including the design of private houses and a kindergarten in Northwich, Cheshire (1937-38). One of their clients during this period was the artist and textile designer Alastair Morton for whom they designed a studio/house. Martin and Speight also collaborated in the writing and compiling of 'The Flat Book' (London: Heinemann, 1939), a seminal guide to furnishings and equipment for the 'Modern' home.

Between 1935-39 Speight was part-time lecturer and studio instructor in interior design at Hull College of Arts and Crafts, where L.M. Martin was Head of the School of Architecture. During early 1940s Speight joined the London-based multidisciplinary design studio Design Research Unit (DRU). In 1946, with fellow

DRU associate Frederick Gibberd, Speight designed the Glass Section in the Shop Window Street display at the 'Britain Can Make It' exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum. During this period she also worked on the design of domestic appliances such as an electric kettle for Beethoven Electrical Equipment Ltd. which is illustrated in 'Art and Industry' May/June 1951 (p.217), and contributed an essay on the 'Inside of the House' to 'The Practice of Design' (London: Lund Humphries, 1946), a collection of essays by members of the DRU. In 1951, together with Leonard Manesseh, Speight designed the Rosie Lee cafeteria for the Festival of Britain Live Architecture exhibition at Lansbury in London.

Speight was elected an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects (ARIBA) in 1932. She was awarded the RIBA's silver medal for drawing in 1930 and the Neale Bursary in 1933. She became a Fellow of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers (FSIAD) and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

Her address was given as 8 The Park, Hull in 1939; and Volta House, Windmill Hill, London in 1950. She died in Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire on 23 October 1992.

Worked in

UK

Works

See : UK Modern House - buildings by John Leslie Martin & Sadie Speight [*link below*]

Bibliography

Campbell, Louise. 'Constructivism and Contextualism in a Modern Country House: The Design of Brackenfell'. *Architectural History* vol. 50, 2007 pp. 247-266 [Discusses the design of Brackenfell in Cumberland by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight for Alastair Morton in 1937-38]

'Country house, extension of existing building, at Dockray, Cumberland'. *Architects' Journal* 3 July 1941 p. 9 [Architects: Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight]

Harwood, Elaine. *Mid-Century Britain: Modern Architecture 1938-1963*. London: Batsford, 2021

Martin, John Leslie and Speight, Sadie. *The Flat Book*. London: William Heinemann, 1939

'Obituary: Sadie Speight.' *Building Design* no. 1100, 30 October 1992 p. 2

Powers, Alan. *Modern. The Modern Movement in Britain*. London: Merrell, 2005

Seddon, Jill. 'The Architect and the 'Arch-Pedant': Sadie Speight, Nikolaus Pevsner and 'Design Review''. *Journal of Design History*, vol. 20, issue 1, Spring 2007, pp. 29-41

Seddon, Jill. "'Part-Time Practice as Before': The Career of Sadie Speight, Architect' in *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*. Edited By Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth. London: Routledge, 2007, chapter 6

Seddon, Jill. 'Sadie Speight and the Flat Book' in *Women Designing. Redefining Design in Britain between the Wars*. Edited by Jill Seddon and Suzette Worden. Brighton: University of Brighton, 1994 pp.131-135

'Shop at New Bond Street, London'. *Architects' Journal* 3 January 1952 pp.12-13 [Shop designed by Sadie Speight with L. Manasseh, Lois Hutchings, for Messrs. Kaye]

'Shop in Liverpool Street for Richard & Partners Ltd., for the sale of watches & pens'. *Architects' Journal* 13 November 1952 p. 581 [Shop designed by Sadie Speight and Leonard Manasseh]

Speight, Sadie. 'Inside the house' in *The Practice of Design*, edited by Herbert Read. London: Lund Humphries, 1946 pp. 110-122

Worden, Suzette and Seddon, Jill. 'Women Designers in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s: Defining the Professional and Redefining Design'. *Journal of Design History* Vol. 8, No. 3, 1995 pp. 177-193

Links

- Parkin, Michael. 'Obituary: Sadie Martin' *Independent* 27 October 1992 [you may have to register to view this site]

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-sadie-martin-1559854.html>

- Jill Seddon, 'Speight, Sadie [married name Sadie Martin, Lady Martin] (1906-1992)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [Subscription service] <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/51223>

- Lynne Walker. *Golden Age or False Dawn? Women Architects in the Early 20th Century* <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/women-architects-early-20th-century-pdf>

- Architects of Greater Manchester 1800-1940

<https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/architects/sadie-speight>

- Historic England - Brackenfell, Brampton, Cumbria. Designed by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight for Alastair Morton <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1388267>
- Official website of Sir Leslie Martin <http://www.sirlesliemartin.co.uk/sadie-martin/>
- UK Modern House - buildings by John Leslie Martin & Sadie Speight http://www.ukmoho.co.uk/html/architect/John_Leslie_Martin_Sadie_Speight.html
- British Listed Buildings - Brackenfell, Brampton, Cumbria <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101388267-brackenfell-brampton>
- British Listed Buildings - Royal Festival Hall, London <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101249756-royal-festival-hall-bishops-ward>
- RIBApix <https://www.ribapix.com/search?adv=false&cid=0&mid=0&vid=0&q=Sadie%20Speight&>
- Women Designing: Sadie Speight. University of Brighton <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/womendesigning/2015/11/12/sadie-speight-1906-1992/>
- YouTube. Kit Martin on Leslie Martin & Sadie Speight [Kit Martin talks about his parents Leslie Martin & Sadie Speight of the C20 lecture series My Parents the Architects in spring 2015. 59 mins. 17 secs] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4PLHv5-YxY>