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TALKING POINT



The Kitchen Pod

Architect Ewald Van Der Straeten of practice Bradley Van Der Straeten explains how he created a kitchen pod in his London home

When we moved into the maisonette, which sits on the fourth and fifth floor of a building, the place was made up of a series of rooms feeding into one another and was very boxy. We liked the idea of an open plan space. However, there was a service shaft running up through the building, cutting into the room, so we had to come up with a solution that worked around this.

The concept of the 'kitchen pod' came about after visiting a gallery up north where an installation was faced in one material with a separate material and colour concealed beneath — almost like taking an apple and carving it to reveal a different texture within. To recreate this, we chose a simple palette of three materials: MDF, plyboo and stainless steel. Grey-coloured MDF, which was chosen for its waterproof properties and for being easy to work with, clads the exterior of the pod. (To add interest and hide the radiators within the service duct, the grey MDF features punctured holes to allow heat to escape.) A hybrid of caramelised bamboo and plywood, called 'plyboo', has been used internally for the ceiling, kitchen wall units and floor, so that all three read as one — the material is incredibly strong as well as sustainable. Finally, stainless steel has been used for the kitchen handles.

IMAGES BRADLEY VAN DER STRAETEN



Cladding

In Ewald's home, 'plyboo' (LEFT) — a hybrid of caramelised bamboo and plywood — has been used to clad the ceiling, walls and floors. MDF clads the exterior of the 'kitchen pod' and has been used for its strength, and waterproof and sustainable properties.

Before introducing the 'pod', the kitchen was a small separate room, which for people who love to socialise and entertain, felt quite isolated from the rest of the living space. The low units with a large open picture window allows the kitchen pod to feel like part of the open plan space, yet helps to zone the cooking section from the living area. While the open nature of the kitchen pod has its social benefits, you need to consider fire safety if you decide to install one yourself. Here, the living room door — which effectively closes off the living area and kitchen from the rest of the house — is a fire door and has been lined with intumescent strips in order to be signed off by Building Regulations.

On projects short on space (and perhaps budget) you need to plan where everything will go early on and be disciplined when working out the minimum you need in your kitchen. If you can't extend then you have to work with the space you have. Here, every inch of space has been maximised, and it paid to have a carpenter who could make the finished result look as bespoke as possible. **H**