



BauHouse

Camberwell, London

Architect : Unagru Architecture Urbanism
Structural Engineer : Structures Made Easy
Contractor : Rimi Renovations
Joinery : Progetto 172
Photographer : French + Tye

Completion Year : 2022
Area : 53 sqm
Budget : £200,000

House for a family of three The project aimed to extend the ground floor to provide more space for the dining area and refurbish the rest of the floor to create a coherent whole from the entrance to the garden.

The project was featured in the Open House Festival 2022 with great success.

The Backstory

Thanks to a previous roof extension, the house was already very comfortable. The ground floor, however, was too fragmented and lacked several comforts. The kitchen and dining room, in particular, were way too tight and dark for the needs of a modern family who loves to cook and entertain: the ceiling was very low, the kitchen had very little worktop space, and the dining table was tucked inside a small bay with a bench.

The clients, Euge, Erin and six-year-old Luca, are all foodies and music lovers. The parents have a PhD and work in the culture industry and academia. The couple loves to entertain and are great cooks, as we've tested several times. So the kitchen and dining area were the centre of their life at home. Their current kitchen setup did not allow enough space for the full potential of their talents. Little Luca is a very active child who loves spending weekends playing in the garden with his friends. The front of the house was sometimes converted into a projection room by hanging a screen between the front and rear sitting rooms. So after living for several years and making some improvements on the top floors, the family decided to progress with the extension project.

The Project

During the early design stages, we identified the right proportions for the extension, which needed to be large enough to fit the new kitchen and dining areas comfortably but not so large as to become too expensive or overbearing on the compact garden. Together, we tested several options to arrive at the optimal depth. The final solution is generously set back from the rear wall of the house to create an intimate courtyard at the kitchen level and comfortable access to the garden steps. Although compact, the extension allows reimagining the kitchen and dining areas into a functional, spacious room with plenty of light and storage.

By extending the kitchen and dining area into the side garden, we created new access to the rear of the house through the former rear sitting room window. The new space in the middle of the house is transformed into a service area with a small WC, coat storage and access to the cellar. The compact kitchen and dining area are achieved through bespoke joinery and seating furniture we designed with the clients and ordered from Italy. The front sitting room is opened to create a larger, more comfortable space, with more direct access to the entrance, improved insulation and windows, and new finishes. From an interior design point of view, we had lots of fun interpreting and redesigning the client's references, ranging from classical Victorian to early 20th century Bauhaus and a lot later Art Deco influences. The front sitting rooms maintain a classical taste, with herringbone parquet flooring and muted decoration: a very subtle grey band replaces skirting boards and cornices, resulting in a lighter feeling. Instead, the kitchen and dining room are an 'explosion' of colour and geometry with black and white joinery, multicoloured floor and walls. The strong geometry of the composition refers to both Bauhaus and the Art Deco examples we discussed with Erin.

The result is a visually open-plan space on two levels, with a complex shape, pockets of privacy and the flexibility to separate the front from the rear through a sliding door. The light pouring from the roof lights into the middle of the layout brightens the entire ground floor. The kitchen faces the garden and acts as the centre of the house. The dining room is carved into a deep niche at the back of the house, inviting people to sit close to one another. The front rooms have a more flexible layout, allowing ample space for the clients' furniture inherited from their parents, a piano, and millions of Erin's books. A bespoke cabinet hides an electrically activated projector screen that allows to convert the rear of the house into a media room.

The extension is finished in dark grey bricks with dark mortar and crowned with a roof light box-up clad in charred wood planks. The dark construction declares itself against the white-rendered ground floor finish and compensates. To elevate the sense of openness and brightness, the side extension is almost entirely glazed with a new pivot door to the garden and a huge roof light that fit into the rooms' geometric composition.