

10 minutes with... MEREDITH BOWLES



Mole Architects' founder gives us the lowdown on his latest project – The Houseboat – which has been nominated for a World Architecture Festival Award (worldarchitecturefestival.com)

The Houseboat design was inspired by... 'The shapes of boat hulls leaning against a rough, sea wall. The site is in Poole Harbour in Dorset, overlooking the heathland out towards the Wareham Channel.'

The project is a collaboration... 'With Solidspace – a self-build company. It's an experimental project that's been built to encourage a wider understanding and experience of living in a Solidspace home.'

It's not finished yet... 'It's expected to be completed for short-term holiday let, before summer 2015.'

The design is similar to... 'It really is unique. But it will share with other Solidspace houses split-level sections and an open-plan interior. It will have generous spaces for entertaining, with cabin-style bedrooms below deck.'

The building is made from... 'It's a real hybrid. There's reinforced exposed concrete, Douglas fir structural ribs and prefabricated panelled walls and roof.'

The nomination is exciting... 'It's the first time we've been shortlisted before even finishing a house!'

People want... 'A sense of space and light, plus a house that gives them solace and fun. A view from the bath or an outdoor shower... a way to feel part of the natural world.'

Your style is... 'Bold, adventurous and inventive.'

Mole Architects (01223 913 012; molearchitects.co.uk); Solidspace (solidspace.co.uk)



FLOAT ON

A compact staircase can easily be a focal point in its own right. This design by Bisca (01439 771 702; bisca.co.uk) sits in a bungalow extension and uses a sleek low-iron glass balustrade to let as much light in as possible. Concealed steel supports reinforce the lower and upper stair sections, while luxurious walnut treads have been finished with cosmetic ends that both hide the balustrade connections and create the illusion of the treads passing through the glass. Prices start at £15,000.

Solid as a rock

At first glance, this stunning 500sqm house, designed by The Manser Practice (020 8741 4381; manser.co.uk), appears to have been constructed with dry stone walls that complement its woodland setting. However, it's made from blockwork, with back-mortared Cotswold Oolitic limestone, sorted into different sizes then angled inwards from bottom to top for a cambered effect and to improve structural stability. An air source heat pump provides hot water and heating.



REFLECT ON DESIGN

This proposed invisible home from architect JaK Studio (020 8746 0088; jakstudio.co.uk) is a novel idea for anyone struggling to get planning permission, as it uses mirror cladding on the first storey to camouflage itself against the greenery of a protected conservation area. While previous proposals were rejected for this plot in Lewisham, south-east London, this design merges seamlessly with the adjacent Georgian terraces. The building will also be a passive house, harnessing renewable energy and insulated enough that it needs to be heated for only a few days a year.



According to a recent survey by Reynaers at Home (0121 421 9707; reynaersathome.co.uk), architects say that space and light are two of the biggest issues in homes – with both absent in most UK houses. Just under half said space was an issue, while 30 per cent said that a lack of light was a problem.