



The kitchen is opened up into the main living and dining room but can be refigured (see below)

'It is as if we can breathe out again'

WE BOUGHT the house knowing that we would completely redesign it," says Dirk van Dooren of the home he shares with wife, Anna Dickinson, and their two sons, Otis and Ty. "Anna is a glass artist and I work for the design collective Tomato, so to live somewhere that was really badly designed would just grate on us."

The house, which they bought five years ago, is on a private Dulwich estate of Modernist-style houses built by Wates in the Sixties. The previous owner had stuffed the house with Seventies extravaganzas, including lashings of William Morris wallpaper and gold, swan-shaped taps.

"It was like walking through a giant William Morris drug trip," says Dirk. "The building itself was very well built but we wanted to open up the views to the outside and make the entire space flow much better."

They dabbled with the idea of building a ground-floor extension to the five-bedroom house but eventually, with the help of Mae Architects, they decided to reconfigure the space completely within the building's existing parameters. "The brief was very open — I think if you find someone good you have to allow them the space to be creative," says Dirk.

By knocking down the partition walls between the kitchen, dining and living areas, the architects created one large open space into which they dropped a very clever and exquisitely executed kitchen.

"For the kitchen they came up with the idea of a box that would be able to open and close," says Dirk. "The problem with open-plan living is that if you've got the TV on and you have a frying pan 20 feet away the competing noise irritates everybody. We wanted to create an open space that you could walk through but that you could also enclose."



Dirk and Anna have redesigned their home

The bespoke kitchen pod was built from iroko wood (to match the existing floorboards) and large panes of glass that enhance the feeling of transparency.

"This amazing company called Bewley Griffiths built the kitchen and they were completely obsessive about detail," says Dirk. Large doors at either end of the kitchen slide effortlessly on runners built into the ceiling. "We can configure the rooms in three different ways, so we've created more space and got a lot more for our money."

The project took a year to design and build. Planning was not an issue because it was all internal work. The kitchen itself cost about £30,000 to design and build.

"We lived in the hallway, cooking with a microwave and a hob and washing up in the bath," says Dirk. "It was a nightmare but now it is finished the whole downstairs just flows so much better. It is almost as if we were holding our breath and now we can breathe out again."



Pictures by Mark York

The kitchen can be closed up into a box to stop noise and smells

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Homes & Property

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Wednesday, 21 May 2008