

Home Architecture



This Dorset beach house shuns swanky Sandbanks style for something more nautical – and very nice. *Hugh Graham* steps on board

Context is a buzzword for modern architects. It's no longer enough to build an avant-garde, cutting-edge design: it now has to reference the vernacular or an old barn next door. The HouseBoat, a new holiday home overlooking Poole Harbour, is a case in point. On the working side of the water, miles away from the swanky Miami-style beach houses on the Sandbanks side, this unusual dwelling was inspired by its nautical surroundings: a local shipyard and a nearby Royal Marines base. Not to mention the main house on the same property, a 1930s folly that incorporates the salvaged interiors of RMS Mauretania, a 1906 ocean liner. (Its original owner bought them at auction.)

When the current owner decided to build a guest cottage, his architect, Meredith Bowles, embraced the seafaring theme. The HouseBoat was built to resemble two upturned hulls dragged onto the beach. The curved larch forms were painted black, evoking the tar used to waterproof boats. The mottled concrete base is meant to suggest weather-beaten sea walls.

The interior, too, has a hint of the high seas. The main living spaces were designed to make you feel you are "on deck": they are up high and open-plan, with ship-style railings, lofty ceilings, sea views and no dividing walls. The four bedrooms, "below deck", are hunkered down on the ground floor and recall ships' cabins: all bunk beds, portholes and wood panelling. In the master suite, wacky walls curve upwards and, playing with your senses, test your sea legs. On this level, in the main entrance hall, there's a mosaic depicting fish and molluscs on the main floor.

A half-flight of stairs leads up to the kitchen/diner, where the steel balustrade has rope patterns. Another half-flight of stairs, "the bridge", takes you to the living room, which has more ocean-liner railings. Finally, a steel spiral staircase leads up to the crew's nest, or stye, an open platform that serves as a chillout/TV room. It's all clad in Douglas fir, with ribbed patterns that wouldn't look out of place in a boatyard.



WHALE OF A TIME

READER'S HOME

Shipshape
The HouseBoat's owner, Roger Zogolovitch, top right, has a nautical obsession. The interior is inspired by Moby-Dick; the exterior resembles two upturned hulls. Bedrooms are downstairs – or 'below deck'

"It's the most metaphorical house I've done," says Bowles, whose firm, Mole Architects, worked on the Balancing Barn, the Suffolk holiday home that is cantilevered over the edge of a hill. "It plays on the story of Moby-Dick and myths about being inside the belly of a whale, with the scale of that space, that ribcage within. It's a whale-sized building. The seafaring mythology probably comes out more when you've been on the rum."
The nautical theme suits the owner, Roger Zogolovitch, a developer from London. "Vintage boats were an addiction for me," says Zogolovitch, 69, who bought the main house on the site in 1987 as a holiday home for his wife, Carola, and three children. "When I was younger, I owned a 1936 Brown Owl teak motorboat. Later, I had 13 Redwing racing yachts. I became interested in boat-building, got to know about planking, caulking and copper tingles. These days, I spend quite a lot of time in my shed on the beach.

I collect things, driftwood or plastic, on the beach and make collages."
The HouseBoat's nautical feel is not entirely whimsical: its form was also dictated by function. The curved roof, for instance, allowed Bowles to build higher without upsetting the planners – the next-door neighbour's home has only two storeys. Bowles also wanted to maximise the maritime views and nestle the house amid the site's tall ponderosa pines.
Inside, Bowles did not set out to conjure up Captain Jack. But the cavernous feel incorporates the split-level configuration that is the trademark of Zogolovitch's company, Solidspace, which builds voluminous layouts in new London homes. He wanted the same here, so what might have been only two storeys is spread out over four half-levels that zigzag each other, linked by half staircases of six steps, with no walls between living spaces. It's a layout that feels bigger than

its 2,300 sq ft, but a potentially noisy one, as it was designed for visits from the owner's seven grandchildren. Yet the ribbed panelling has an acoustic purpose, too: the black stripes between the timbers are neoprene, which softens noise.
"The split levels work well here," Bowles says. "With a holiday home, you want a sense of communal living, and this is enhanced by the openness and seeing from one level to the next. It encourages people to come together. If a family had to live like that all the time, it might lead to fisticuffs, but people change their behaviour for a week on holiday. And they can retreat at night."
This sense of protection, oddly, is also found in the full-frontal glazing: timber mullions, spaced 60cm apart, frame the views and prevent the goldfish-bowl feel so common in modern beach houses. "Glass walls are a blunt instrument," Bowles says. "You have a view and that's it. Timber adds a material quality. It exposes



you to the view, but encloses the room, so it's not such a naked experience."
Indeed, this is not a cold, clinical beach house. The loungey retro decor suits the wood panelling and ship shapes: curved vintage sofas, funky purple and orange fabrics, potted palms and a wicker swing seat channel a Love Boat-era vibe. Aspidistra pots that Zogolovitch inherited from his parents bring a homespun feel back to this blingy stretch of coast. Old turquoise glass tiles and an Ikea kitchen customised with sea-green drawers add to the vintage seaside spirit.
The HouseBoat is a welcome change from what Bowles calls the "Florida lite" architecture in Sandbanks: the ubiquitous white render and glass cubes that are striking in sun-drenched Miami, but jarring in temperate Britain. The curvy, woody craftsmanship is both rustic and stylish, "shiver me timbers" for the Pinterest generation. The dramatic black exterior, which Zogolovitch compares

to the fishermen's huts and Jerwood Gallery in Hastings, gets with Britain's brooding shores.
"The black is an attempt to give it a seaside grittiness," Bowles says. "It's deliberately slightly rough; the edges of timbers are uneven and the concrete is aggregate. It has a material richness and roughness, and is designed to be the opposite of your footballer's house."
Zogolovitch spent £745,000 and three years on the build. "It's eccentric," he says. "I like architecture that has a relationship to the place. This was where a lot of the traditional harbour activity took place. The modern vernacular over in Sandbanks is quite showy, but that's not my style. This house is original and reflects my personal taste. I wanted to build something that leaves a legacy."
molearchitects.co.uk. The HouseBoat will be available to rent from 2018; bookings can be made at quayholidays.co.uk

GET THE LOOK

- **Douglas-fir ribbed panelling** (inside). Timber Frame Company, Bruton; 01749 814951; thetimberframe.co.uk
- **Mullioned windows** Frames: Haroys, Poole (01202 686236, haroys.co.uk). Glass: Dorset Glass (01202 673926, dorsetglass.co.uk)
- **Larch timber boards** (external). Christchurch Timber, Dorset; 01202 483471, timbermerchantsdorset.co.uk
- **Railings and architectural metalwork** Fineline Fabrications; 01202 669026, finelinefabs.co.uk
- **Concrete** Exposed aggregate finish. Solent Civils; 01425 650480, solentcivils.co.uk
- **Pendant lamps** Melodi, Ikea, £13; ikea.com
- **Model boat** Red sabre, £4,000; pondyacht.com
- **Vintage sofas** Paul Bert Serpette, Paris; paulbert-serpette.com (orange one is by Kvadrat and cost €4,000)
- **Building contractors** Shell: Task Artisan Builders; 01202 481320, taskled.co.uk. Fit-out: tekne; 01202 672121 tekne.co.uk. Frame: Timber Frame Company; 01749 814951, thetimberframe.co.uk

