

Homes

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BOATY McBOATHOUSE



Inspired by the upturned hull of a ship, this unusual seaside home is moored in Poole. Rich Cunningham goes aboard

Of the thousands of cul-de-sacs in Dorset, this one in Poole is unique. The two properties at this address are like nothing else.

One is the Boat House. A 1930s white villa was a labour of love for Mr Cullen, a local businessman. He enjoyed travelling on the RMS Mauritania so much that he bought the contents of the transatlantic cruise liner's second-class lounge and installed them in the house. The Boat House includes a miniature ballroom and much art deco detailing. Yet cabins are not famed for their spaciousness, so the Boat House's current owner came up with a radical solution as a holiday home for his family – the Houseboat

Roger Zogolovitch is an architect, author and creative director of SolidSpace, a firm that develops odd urban sites into unusual homes. But his idea for this new building was something else. "My granddaughter said she'd demolish whatever I built here," says Roger. "In fact, some of the family thought I was mad when I told them what I was doing."

The Houseboat was designed with Meredith Bowles of Mole Architects. It looks like two black upturned hulls resting on a sea defence. Yet this

dark exterior belies the brightness inside. Two glass walls, divided by great timber mullions, flood the place with light. The building is open plan to encourage the Zogolovitch family to share time and space together. There are no internal walls or closed off corridors. "I wanted to give my family the space they need away from their busy lives in the city," explains Roger.

The kitchen, dining and living areas are all bridged by landings and stairs that make you feel connected to each social area no matter where you are in the main body of the house. Clever neoprene insulation soaks up unnecessary noise. So even in this open-plan space it's possible to find a quiet corner in which to read or sketch the beautiful view. "In a digital world it's important we find time to do something analogue," Roger says.

This trick with the insulation is just one of the many "small decisions" that have gone into making the Houseboat so extraordinary. Everywhere you look there are little surprises that bring the joys of life by the shore inside. There are portholes drilled out of the shell-ridden concrete, a lobster-pot chair that swings from the ceiling and a mosaic depicting marine life laid into the walnut floor, rooting the house to the harbour's edge and reaffirming its nautical identity.

This is a serious building, one shortlisted for the World Architecture Festival Future House Award, but it's also great fun to be in. Roger wanted to create a home that would produce a smile and he has certainly managed that. The Houseboat is a pleasure to walk around and being inside feels like an escape from mundane.

"In the world we live in," Roger says, "it is important to make time for our families." In the Houseboat, he has created the perfect place to spend that time. ■



All hands on deck: the Houseboat with (clockwise from above) its living space and sea views; mezzanine landing; sloping timber walls; and 'twin hulls' exterior

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