

An island paradise in Barnet

Kitchen designer HØLTE bridges the gap between bespoke and mass-made

It's fair to say that everyone planning a new kitchen would opt for a bespoke design if they had the chance. The problem is that though they may represent the ultimate in personalised practicality and style, they're generally beyond financial means. By contrast, the alternatives are mass-produced, off-the-shelf, one-size-fits-all designs that often require compromises on aesthetics, functionality or worse, both.



All photography by Sara Hibbert.

HØLTE balances the best of both worlds: the flexibility and uniqueness of bespoke; and the accessibility and efficiency of the mass-production network. From its workshops in Hertford and newly opened studio in Hackney, HØLTE provides a semi-bespoke design service intended to make good, personal design more accessible, bringing custom-made, one-of-a-kind kitchens within the budget of as many people as possible.

HØLTE

Although a number of businesses are able to supply door fronts for proprietary cabinet systems such as IKEA's, HØLTE is unique in being able to pair this with a personal design service, helping customers feature custom elements such as kitchen islands without incurring the kinds of costs typically associated with bespoke services.

A recent project in Barnet, North London, offers an insight into advantages of the HØLTE approach. Saddled with a kitchen that was cramped and impractical, the young family owners of a three-bed Victorian semi had commissioned an architect to design an extension that would expand and elevate the kitchen area to become the open-plan family hub of their home. They needed a space that functioned as a kitchen and family dining room; somewhere they could keep an eye on their son as he played; with ample storage and an island focal point. The design needed to be timeless, but in keeping with the age of the property, and the materials needed to be durable, the fixtures well engineered to survive everyday family life.



HØLTE founders Tom and Fi worked closely with the family and the architects to make it happen. Taking the architects' plans and the owner's aesthetic choices as the starting point, HØLTE developed a design that met the needs of the client and made the most of the layout of the space.

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A long skylight on the lateral extension, glass door and large round window ensured the new space received plentiful natural light, which created scope for bold colour choices. To elevate the IKEA base units, the owners opted for HØLTE's Fenix Verde Comodoro doors – a dark green shade that works best in bright spaces, and subtly alters in appearance and texture as the light evolves through the day. On the wall units and island, the oak veneer behaves in a similar way, as the shifting sunlight changes picks out different patterns in the grain.

The use of two distinct cabinet fronts sets up a material and colour contrast that adds interest and distinction to the space. The dark green cabinets also contrast effectively with the white quartz marble worktop, giving the kitchen a primary palette of forest green, wood and white. These three colours are in turn picked up in what is arguably the most compelling material feature: the splashback and island worktop. These are made from Marmoreal, designer Max Lamb's take on terrazzo produced by Dzek, which features large chunks of marble bound in polyester resin – creating a visually striking surface material with the longevity and textured aesthetic of marble, but without the associated premium. The three types of marble featured – Verde Alpi, Giallo Mori and Bianco Verona – echo the three key colours of the kitchen, tying the design together.



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Key to the island's visual impact is the recessed plinth upon which it sits, reducing its monolithic quality and giving the impression that it floats above the floor. There's an echo of this effect in the 'shadow gap' between the top of the island and the Marmoreal worktop, which appears to hover above the surface. This too introduces a feeling of lightness and draws the eye to the beauty of the worktop's edge – particularly effective when it is seen from the dining table.

It's this sort of detail-oriented thinking that makes kitchens like the Barnet project something much more than simply an IKEA kitchen with custom fronts. They demonstrate the thinking and care behind HØLTE designs and they introduce a personal element into the space, making it distinctive for the owner and remarkable for the visitor.

"We believe that good design should be available to everyone, no matter what their budget. Much like the made-to-measure suit did for bespoke tailoring, the semi-bespoke approach recognises that everyone is different and has different needs and gives more people the opportunity to create something unique and beautiful."

– Fi Ginnett, co-founder, HØLTE

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Notes for editors

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About HØLTE

Launched in 2017, HØLTE designs high-quality, hand-finished fronts and worktops for IKEA cabinet carcasses, bringing a high-quality but accessible designer finish to any kitchen. Founded by architecture and fashion veterans Tom and Fi Ginnett on the back of their own kitchen design project, HØLTE has quickly established itself at the forefront of the rapidly evolving 'semi-bespoke' design market, earning a reputation for timeless design, robust engineering, cost efficiency and dedicated client service. Alongside its workshop in Hertford, HØLTE operates a canalside design studio on Broadway Market in the heart of Hackney.

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