

Kbbreview Industry Awards 2007

CATEGORY: Showroom Award for Kitchens

FINALIST: Kitchen Culture, Esher, Surrey

What is your overall showroom strategy?

There is a more than ample choice of kitchen showrooms in Esher itself and the local vicinity, so having the best one is the only way we can attract new clients and continue our large bank of recommendations. This is a sentiment backed up by our clients when they visit, who instantly have no doubt in their mind that they are in the best showroom.

Our showroom is our statement of intent, the first thing that interacts with a client's senses. Therefore it's professionally cleaned everyday, and looks pristine. It is light and airy but also intriguing. Our displays are designed to leave a lasting impression on a client, to make them think about what they want to achieve, rather than what another company is able to provide them with, freeing them of the shackles of anywhere else they might have visited.

Our showroom demonstrates what real and intelligent design is about.

It's also a relaxing environment. Over a fresh coffee or glass of wine a client can spend as long as they want soaking in the sights, feeling the kitchens, the depth of quality and the level of inspiration. Accessories are from Alessi. The sound systems are Bang and Olufsen. Our showroom is meant to make a client feel like Kitchen Culture is the only company good enough for their home.

How have you considered the customer's journey through the store?

Our client's journey starts before they set foot in the showroom. Our façade is constructed with full height glass, allowing an unimpeded view through our showroom.

The first display is an ultra modern rendition of German design and sophistication. The quality is second to none, each door and panel perfectly veneered, the metal work flawless. Finished predominately in chocolate brown the island is set off with a contrasting light worktop. An internal inspection of the cupboards demonstrates an attention to ergonomic detail beyond the normal bounds. Everything has a home, a specific area for it to live in. This sets the precedent for the rest of the showroom.

Underneath the mezzanine lies our second display, a study in space maximisation and simplicity. Full height oak veneered panels slide elegantly to each side of the units, uncovering a full battery of the most cutting edge appliances. The island features a rare and special piece of work top, with animates splayed across its complex grain. The juxtaposition of the strong tones of the worktop and sliding panels against the oak banded natural tinted glass units completes this dramatic effect. Finally. Clients would have caught tantalising glimpses of this area from even before they walked in, and shown great resistance to bypass the other displays. The back of the showroom is where the flavour changes with the country. Our Italian suppliers are renowned for creating products oozing with style and shot-through with a hewn-from-solid feel. Yet it also needs a theatrical backdrop to be presented in, and this is exactly what we have created for our clients. Upon a raised platform, floored with slate tiles sits our star display. It is hard to know where to look at first. Against a black wall and apparently in suspended animation are six steel brackets, architectural in design, supporting floor to ceiling glass screens. Back lit with LED lighting, the glass effortlessly glides out of the way, revealing the units and appliances behind. The doors, drawers and unit fronts are finished in shocking red glass, a bold statement. The island is resplendent with the same treatment, with a matt black glass worktop. Only the best Gaggenau appliances are fitted, crowned by a

full-height and operational (and loaded) wine cooler. Every conceivable tool an expert cook might need is available straight to hand. Clients could almost use this kitchen straight away without being told where anything is. The design is so right, they just subconsciously know.

Which is exactly what our showroom needs to do. From start to finish a customer makes their way through, almost instantly imagining how we can fill up their designated kitchen room, and then the bathrooms, the studies and so on. This has been done with this very display. It has been recreated twice for two individuals, and the actual display was sold just after it was unveiled, with some 11 clients showing firm commitment to acquire it, if it becomes available.

What innovative ideas have you come up with for your showroom that sets you apart?

For our customers our showroom is a haven of inspiration. For our staff it's a mechanism to nurture that inspiration into a sale. A balance has to be created between the two. The client will spend almost all their time in showroom throughout the buying process, and needs to be relaxed, contented and informed.

Obviously our displays are the star of the show. Each one is a design masterpiece, and no less. They are also designed to complement the architecture of the building to be a complete piece rather than units stuck on a wall. This is something we take pride in.

The vast majority of the appliances are live. We can show a client the different climate zones in our wine cooler for either red or white wine. They have a limitless supply of fresh coffee. We run frequent cookery demonstrations in our showroom, using our kitchens, ovens and hobs.

Our showroom is also perfect for presentations. A presentation is where you show a customer how you have dealt with their potential dream. We use 42inch plasma screens to show our presentations. In some cases we actually take photographs from an existing view from a customer's project and incorporate it in the presentation, so they will be looking at the same view they'll see in real life. All these things add to the attention to detail, and in the end, help secure a sale.



