



SPLENDID IS THE



Last week I had an acute attack of kitchen lust. Most of the time I feel pretty contented with my own dear schloss. And the kitchen itself – though not grand, and maddeningly short of worksurfaces – is pretty and gives me pleasure every day. But after spending a couple of hours poring over a new “concept” kitchen that former junior Australian tennis star, theatrical-set designer and performing-arts director Andrew Hays has created, I wanted to throw the whole lot out and start again from scratch. That’s what awesomely imaginative design can do – it makes everything else seem dowdy and forlorn, like an old banger creeping along in the slow lane while the top-of-the-range Jaguar or Aston Martin goes whizzing past. And it’s not as though it is something that happens to me often. The acres of shiny cabinets at the Milan Furniture Fair’s EuroCucina, created by the design world’s finest, leave me unmoved.

Hays calls his kitchen The Fourth Wall (from £350,000, pictured on these pages). The name is derived from his theatrical background, for in the theatre it is used to define the imaginary boundary between the audience and the actors. Here it stands for the ethereal

Andrew Hays for Poggenpohl The Fourth Wall concept kitchen, from £350,000

GLASS

A new kitchen is creating a serious buzz among design insiders. It’s boundary-breaking, says Lucia van der Post, at an exclusive first look



From top: Grand Cuisine blast chiller, £12,360, and combination oven, £17,988. The Fourth Kitchen concept wine cellar and larder

domestic market, boasting a blast chiller (which restaurants use to time your steak, so that they can stop the cooking instantly and keep it in a state of perfection), induction zone, combination oven, vacuum sealers and an industrial-strength stand mixer. Chef Magnus Nilsson of Sweden's cult restaurant Fäviken (number 19 in the World's 50 Best Restaurants 2014),

likes using it because it means "I can actually have appliances in a home kitchen that won't technically limit me. It is basically the same kit as I have in my restaurant but with a different skin." The blast chiller (£12,360) is the hot new gadget, while the combination oven (£17,988, both pictured far left) has a large fan base, as does the induction zone (£14,388), a big ceramic-glass surface all of which can be cooked on. (Electrolux equipment, because it needs a lot of explanation, is only sold on a bespoke basis.)

Unconnected to the cooking, but once again central to the fact that so many people spend a great deal of time in their kitchens these days – and the point of this one is that a family would want to spend a lot of time in it – is a special technology drawer. Inside is a host of power points where all mobiles and tablets can be stored and charged. From here, recipes can

also be uploaded from one of the gadgets and displayed on the television screen, which is discreetly hidden in a cabinet – but emerges at the press of a button.

While Hays refers to his creation as "the kitchen equivalent of a fashion designer's runway collection" – in other words, an idealised version, something to catch the eye that will eventually be turned into a more everyday accessible version – aspects of it can nonetheless be incorporated into more quotidian kitchens. Which isn't to say that the fantasy can't be bought wholesale. It can: the week it was launched it created such a buzz that many of Poggenpohl's clients came to its Waterloo showroom to see it and at least five have expressed serious interest in the whole shebang – all £350,000-worth or so – though adapted to suit their own spaces.

The excitement from designers such as Tom Dixon and Ilse Crawford, to name but two, was palpable.

But Hays is also at pains to point out that all the elements are interchangeable. Though the display is very large – taking in a big dining table, a sitting area around a fireplace, a wall of cabinets, one of which holds the "now you see it now you don't" TV screen, the larder, wine "cellar" and butler's pantry, as well as an in-built Grand Cuisine combination oven and blast-chiller system – parts of the scheme can be adapted and scaled down. A larder of almost any size can be installed wherever convenient. Wine "cellars" these days are often quite small and found under a sideboard or covering a kitchen wall – but they can easily be fitted with the sophisticated glass and have temperature and humidity controls added. The butler's pantry is a nice idea, but clearly not essential. And a single drawer is enough to house Hays's notion of the electronic needs of a techy household.

Although all Poggenpohl kitchens are bespoke, The Fourth Wall is a new and tremendously exciting trailblazer for the brand. One that dreams are made of. + Grand Cuisine, www.grandcuisine.com and see Poggenpohl, Poggenpohl, 213C Newnham Terrace, London SE1 (020-7902 5245; www.poggenpohl.com).

What makes this kitchen so desirable is its blend of drama – one can't help but be wowed by the visual impact – and functionality

barrier between the cook or host and their guests, as well as for the magical glass that acts rather like a stage curtain: opaque one moment and transparent the next, revealing what lies behind it. What Hays has done is to reimagine the functional aspects of early kitchens – the larder, pantry, wine "cellar", food-preparation area and fireplace – in an utterly contemporary way, so that it has all the emotional satisfaction of a homelier era, combined with state-of-the-art technical performance.

These days Hays is creative director of Poggenpohl, which asked him to dream big, and come up with something wonderful without worrying about cost or ease of manufacture. What makes his kitchen so instantly desirable is its blend of drama – one can't help but be wowed by the visual impact – and functionality. The theatricality of the lighting strikes one first. It makes for an impressive sight to see the larder (pictured above) and the wine "cellar" (pictured top right) – with its humidity and temperature-controlled air space, bottles all organised – both lit up through the glass.

Hays believes in storytelling, which is what he's tried to do here. "Most new kitchens these days revolve around the latest textures, finishes and handles on the cabinets," he says. "There's no concept, no story... They don't look at how to store food in the right conditions for root vegetables, for breads, for grains, for wine. What I've done is to put a sensual love of food at the heart of the story. This kitchen is all about the food journey – how it is stored, prepared, cooked and finally enjoyed. I've brought back the concept of the larder and made it central to the food preparation. And there's the option of the modernised version of the old-fashioned butler's pantry, or scullery if you like – clear all the debris and the dirty dishes into it, press a button to make the glass opaque and it disappears from view, leaving everybody to enjoy the rest of the meal or the after-dinner drinks in perfect tranquillity."

Until now it has been the more artisanal brands such as Smallbone, Old English Kitchen Company, Harvey Jones Kitchens and Mark Wilkinson Furniture that have managed to make a more emotional connection with



their customers. Hays is trying to forge the same link, but with a high-tech, contemporary model. "I've tried to engage all the senses – from the sound of the crackling fire to the texture of the many different materials." The idea behind the glass technology is that with one click the cook can see and then access the food they need. The larder has special compartments for flour, grains, root vegetables – all humidity-controlled for optimum storage. When the cooking is finished, guests have arrived or the family simply wants to settle down to eat in a calm environment, the glass can be rendered opaque and the store cupboard disappears. In other words, as Hays puts it, "this kitchen isn't a closed-off area – you can live in it without food, without the mess and debris that cooking often creates being in your face."

As Xavier Dupuy, who runs his family cooker company, La Cormue, once pointed out to me, "one of the reasons there is so much demand for spectacular and entertain in their kitchen, so it gets to be seen". Which explains why Poggenpohl has teamed up with Electrolux, whose Grand Cuisine range (from £51,600 for the cooking system and a personal chef's advisory service) I wrote about in these pages some time ago. It was the first professional cooking system for the