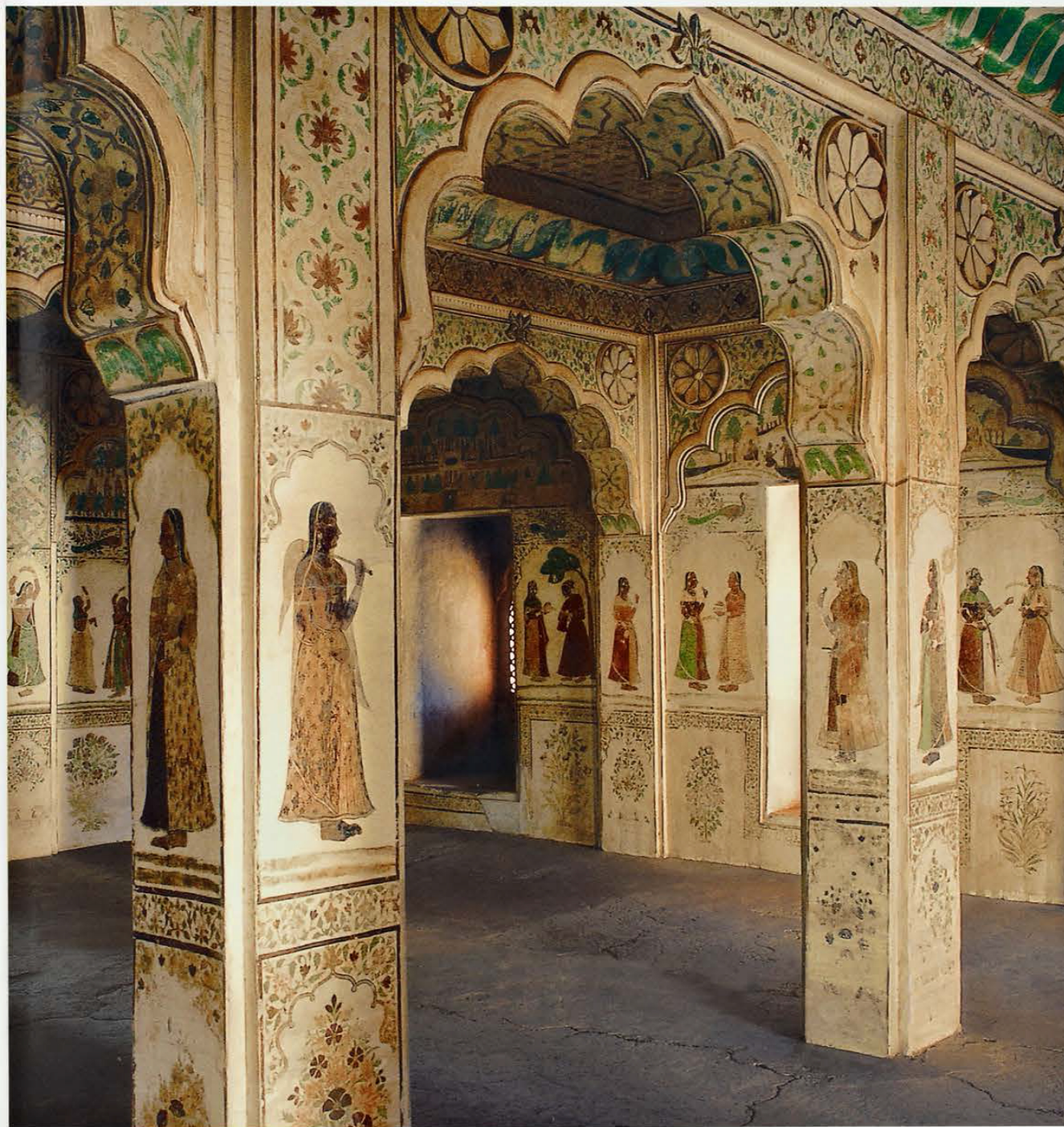


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"Free-Range Forum," *The World of Interiors*, January 2010.

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Giant building blocks – fabricated to order by Cloud & Horse – are strewn about The Hatch, many decorated with vivid, Memphis-inspired patterns. These, in their turn, seem to nod to the distinctive marks of particular 20th-century artists, be it David Hockney's ripples, Keith Haring's comic-strip squiggles or Sol LeWitt's graph-paper checks. Black-and-white Bolon woven-vinyl flooring is laid in exaggerated parquet chevrons

Just as hugely complex buildings can be erected from simple blocks, so the humble egg is the basis for dishes as diverse as aioli and zabaglione. That was the embryonic idea behind The Hatch, where giant Postmodern bricks and constructable models of famous buildings were scrambled with an interactive egg bar. The playful temporary installation in west London brought Stephen Patience's sunny side up. Photography: Tom Mannion

FREE-RANGE FORUM

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Top: Studio Toogood's riot of hand-painted patterns covers both the huge polyhedra and the walls themselves, where animalistic stripes are juxtaposed with pink egglike shapes. Above: the surfaces of the cyclopean bricks are coated in Formica laminate – including retro mahogany-effect veneer – or painted using Papers & Paints' range of 1950s and 1960s colours. Patterns range from stylised leopard spots to Pop-art diagonals

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Top: the strong diagonals and toytown shapes mostly evoke 1980s Postmodernism, though the room's plaster cornice adds an unexpected touch of Classicism. Above: in a corner of The Hatch is an interactive egg bar run by the Italian collective Arabeschi di Latte, former architects who specialise in food-related projects. A model of Phillip Dowson's 1963 house Long Wall (in green and pastel pink) stands on the table

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READERS WHO HAVE spent any amount of time eating eggs in front of architects will doubtless have been told that the humble ovum is one of the most structurally perfect shapes occurring in nature. Although its shell is thin, it is able to withstand disproportionate pressure due to its curvature; much the same combination of load-bearing strength and elegance can be seen in the use of arches and domes in structures throughout history. Add in the symbolism of the egg – it represents the act of creation, the very building blocks of life – and it's little wonder that the foodstuff finds such favour among the architectural community.

During the week of the 2009 London Design Festival, there was ample opportunity to eat eggs in the presence of architects – or, failing that, would-be architects. At Tom Dixon's showroom complex in Portobello Dock – a remote sector of Ladbroke Grove that has recently been spruced up, rebuilt, gentrified and generally regenerated – a temporary installation known as The Hatch was dedicated to the twin pleasures of cookery and the gestation of ideas. 'A lot of people were confused because there was nothing to buy,' says Faye Toogood, of Studio Toogood, which created the project. A former magazine stylist (her name will be familiar to longtime *World of Interiors* readers), she has in recent years specialised in styling and set design for clients such as Liberty and Dover Street Market, as well as certain other design magazines. (Studio Toogood was also responsible for the decoration of Dixon's showroom here at Portobello Dock.) This, then, is something new in the Studio Toogood oeuvre – a project she could immerse herself in without being yoked to the specific needs of magazine editors or commercial clients. Here in The Hatch there are no products to push or services to sell, but there are building blocks to be manipulated, and eggs to be beaten and eaten.

The main part of the space looks a little like the set of a BBC children's programme as designed in the 1980s by those doyens of in-your-face Postmodernism, the Memphis group. It is crammed with monolithic polyhedra that bring to mind the brash 'Superbox' cabinets designed by Memphis patriarch Ettore Sottsass 20 years earlier. Surfaces are either covered in eye-searing Formica laminate or painted with bold patterns: spots, stripes, checks, triangular shards, bricks, teardrops, lightning bolts, frenzied squiggles, zig-zags, dense agglomerations of lines – like a virus viewed through a microscope – and what appear to be fragments of the London 2012 Olympic logo are all represented. Much of the palette is derived from the work of David Hockney, and a number of the motifs are too. A pattern of curved breves on a white background, for exam-

ple, resembles the mural the painter created for the bottom of the swimming pool at Hollywood's Roosevelt Hotel. (In a case of all-too-predictable bureaucratic interference, this led to the pool's immediate closure on the grounds that Hockney's design might confuse the lifeguards.)

'I like the fact that it draws on all periods of 20th-century design,' says Faye. Indeed, details have been poached from various different eras – the harsh geometry of Vorticism, the graphic diagonals of Pop artist Derek Boshier and a touch of *Abigail's Party*-style petit-bourgeois sophistication (in the form of occasional mahogany-effect veneer surfaces) are all scrambled up together. But the dominant theme, without a doubt, is 1980s Postmodernist design. 'It is mostly that decade,' Faye concedes. 'I'm a child of the 1980s, after all.'

Across the room, the giant building blocks have scaled-down counterparts. A specially built table with a shallow trough in the middle displays models of four buildings selected by The Modern House, an estate agent that deals in properties designed by 20th- and 21st-century architects (and for which Studio Toogood offers a decoration service, to bring the newly purchased interior up to scratch). The four models are miniature pastel-coloured representations of David Levitt's rakishly sloping Ansty Plum in Dorset, Philip Dowson's Case Study-style Long Wall in Suffolk, Christopher Nicholson's early-Modernist Studio North in Hampshire, and Ernő Goldfinger's Balfron Tower in London's East End. Punters are given the option of recreating one of these with the blocks provided, or of being a real egghead and coming up with an entirely original creation. On the day of *Wol*'s visit, local primary-school children were avidly constructing their own interpretations of the Balfron's west London sibling, the Trelick Tower, and just as avidly knocking them down again.

Hatching out ideas is hungry work, and the brain food provided is, inevitably, that protein-rich little ovoid of cholesterol known as the egg. An interactive egg bar has been laid on, with a clutch of make-it-yourself recipes including such Italianate delights as *straciatella* soup, *passatelli* broth or the exotic-sounding *uovo in camicia*, otherwise known as poached egg. This being interactive, visitors crack and beat the eggs themselves, as well as contributing their own egg recipes to an evolving cookbook (one of which currently includes egg 'eyes' with olive pupils, Turkish *kaygana* and an egg-based fighting game from Bulgaria).

Like the cookbook, The Hatch is bound up in the idea of evolution, of building on past concepts to create something new. So which came first, the chic interior or the egg? 'The idea gradually evolved,' says Faye. 'It's about doing something that's intended to be seen in three dimensions, instead of from a single angle like a magazine shoot.' In other words, after the idea hatched, it grew into something that could not be contained by a double-page spread. Visitors are encouraged to interact with the space in a way that merely turning a page could never quite convey. And the installation engages a full range of senses that, sadly, cannot be captured by ink on paper, what with the clatter of tumescent towers toppling to the tabletop, the tang of the *passatelli*, and the scent of frothing egg whites as someone whips up a zabaglione. 'You don't get scratch 'n' sniff magazines,' notes Faye ■

To contact Studio Toogood, ring 07964 130874, or visit studiotoogood.com. To contact The Modern House, ring 08456 344068, or visit themodernhouse.net



Opposite: on a custom-built table, models of Modernist buildings selected by London-based estate agents The Modern House are displayed in cases beneath pendant lights from Historic Lighting. This page: visitors are encouraged to play with the custom-made bricks, either emulating Modernist masterpieces such as Ernö Goldfinger's 1960s Balfron Tower (in taupe and egg-yolk yellow) or creating something entirely new

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