

# winning warehouse

Part of a luxury warehouse conversion, this award-winning kitchen fuses the building's industrial aesthetic with a sophisticated edge, writes Gabrielle Chariton.

**O**nce in a while a project comes along that makes housing professionals remember why they love what they do: a project that allows unfettered creativity, unconstrained by budget limitations, lack of space, or fussy clientele.

David Bartlett, owner of Art of Kitchens, was handed such an opportunity when approached to design and build a kitchen in a luxury warehouse conversion on the fringes of Sydney's CBD.

It was clear from the beginning that the project would run on a somewhat elevated plane. The client, John Winning, CEO of the Winning Group, founder of Appliances Online and fourth-generation leader to the family-owned company, Winning Appliances, was intent on transforming the interiors of his prosaic-looking 1920s brick ex-factory into an eclectic architectural wonderland.

Several years in the making, the light-filled 1,100 square-metre home spans two magnificent, magical levels, designed and built to fulfil a dream rather than conform to conventional ideas of what makes a 'home'.

The ground floor houses a state-of-the-art entertainment area, guest bedrooms, and indoor pool. The open-plan living and dining areas are on the first floor; the vast space punctuated by a huge, cloud-shaped fibreglass 'pod' that balloons up into the trusses. Enclosed within is the main bedroom and ensuite. The pod is positioned centrally and dominates the space: its hyper-modern curves in stunning conflict with the rustic, industrial bones of the building.



The kitchen is opposite: dwarfed in size by the pod but a stand-alone showpiece in its own right. It's an opulent, stylized space that glorifies the warehouse's urban roots, and provides a glamorous showcase for a range of high-end appliances.

The look and feel of the kitchen, which is now regularly used to host celebrity cooking demonstrations and high-end product launches – is a pivotal visual feature of the main living areas.

'The brief given to us was for a unique, modern kitchen that complemented the industrial look of the warehouse,' David explains. 'The kitchen had to be a showpiece; it had to be really special to blend in with everything else in that conversion.'

The attention lavished on this kitchen – from concept right through to the meticulous detailing in construction – is evident at every turn. David worked closely with owner John and his interiors consultant at the design stage, presenting several options before the final plan was decided on. To be working with an unlimited budget and



*Above: David Bartlett, owner of Art of Kitchens with Keshia Bull, Art of Kitchens designer.*

an open-minded client 'who's so willing to look at different ideas', enabled David to step right outside the square in terms of 'off the radar' materials and unusual applications.

A wall of golden, lustrous cabinetry – possibly overpowering in any other setting – imbues the space with warmth and richness. 'The cabinets are clad in stainless steel but it looks like brass; we had the metal dipped to create the new colour,' David explains. ▶



The mirror-like chrome-tiled splashback creates a contemporary edge, while the industrial aesthetic is expertly introduced by way of a matte-lacquered steel bulkhead and side panel, both dressed with utmost attention to detail with imitation rivets.

Despite its inner-city vibe, this is a luxury kitchen, and charcoal-hued marble benchtops provide the requisite sophistication, abutting a rustic breakfast bar crafted from reclaimed timber.



**Working towards the future**

Based in Sydney, Art of Kitchens specialises in the design, manufacture and installation of high-end, luxury kitchens. The company’s work is regularly recognised with industry awards – a fact that owner David Bartlett believes is the reason they were selected to design and build the kitchen in a recent warehouse conversion for John Winning of retail empire Winning Appliances.

‘John really has the pick of everybody and I think my involvement with the HIA and winning awards that year was part of the reason he came to us,’ David says.

As chair of the HIA NSW Kitchen & Bathroom Committee, David is committed to excellence across the industry, and believes training future tradesmen is a fundamental aspect of this. Art of Kitchens currently has six apprentices training with the team – students fortunate enough to learn from highly experienced craftsmen on high-quality projects.

‘I am passionate about training,’ David says. ‘Without a strong training platform the whole industry will suffer. As soon as the building industry gets busy, it’s hard to get good, qualified people.’

However, he believes the existing training framework is due for an overhaul and is campaigning for change: ‘If we’re going to train people in NSW there’s got to be something in it for the employers; employers need a reason to take them on.’

‘The solid timber in the breakfast bar is actually reclaimed timbers from an old wharf in Sydney,’ David says. ‘It literally came from the wharf to the house and we took the material from there. It took us some time to dry it out and be able to manufacture it.’

Given the client’s retail interests, the kitchen was designed to showcase the carefully selected range of high-end appliances: over-size Sub-Zero refrigerator; Wolf free-standing oven, steamer, cooktop and drawer warmer; and a custom-made Qasair rangehood that spans the width of the overhead joinery. A Sub-Zero glass-fronted wine fridge is also seamlessly integrated within the joinery.

While the galley-style layout of the kitchen appears straightforward, it was designed to conceal some of the warehouse’s inner workings: ‘Behind the kitchen is a powder room at one end, and at the other end there’s a butler’s pantry which also houses the electrical switch room and some of the airconditioning plant,’ David explains. Likewise, some of the airconditioning is concealed behind the bulkhead.

The devil was in the detail. ‘There was a lot of onsite metal work that had to be done,’ he says. ‘And we’ve actually got little fake rivets welded to all the steel and there was a lot of hand-finishing work associated with that.’

As a material, stainless steel is easily damaged and incredibly unforgiving, particularly in the polished finish used on the cabinetry. This, combined with the incredibly diverse nature of materials used within the kitchen, demanded the highest calibre of workmanship from the Art of Kitchens team.

The completed kitchen, a reverent acknowledgement of the building’s origins, has already won several industry awards (it was a finalist at the 2016 HIA–CSR Australian Housing Awards) and has garnered plenty of media attention.

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‘When you walk in, it really does blow you away,’ David says. ‘It was a great project to work on. A couple times in your life you’re going to get a client that wants something that’s really out there. Nothing about this kitchen was standard – the finishes were different, everything was super high-end, and every part of it was custom made.’

‘I feel very privileged that Art of Kitchens was asked to be part of this project and I really put everything that I had into it.’