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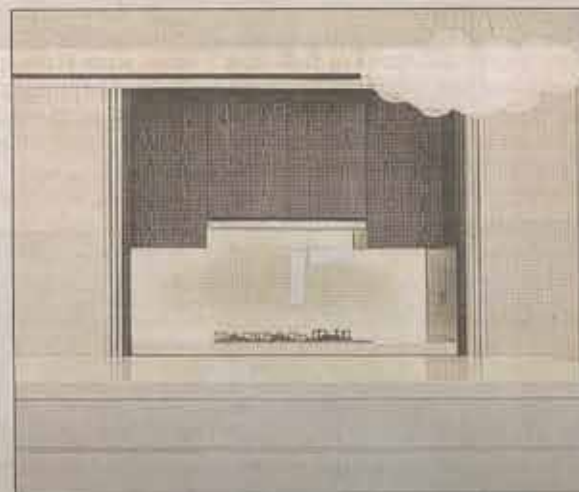




The disappearing kitchen is the latest London trend. New designs enable all precious surface space to be multifunctional, says **Richard Warren**



THE KITCHEN:

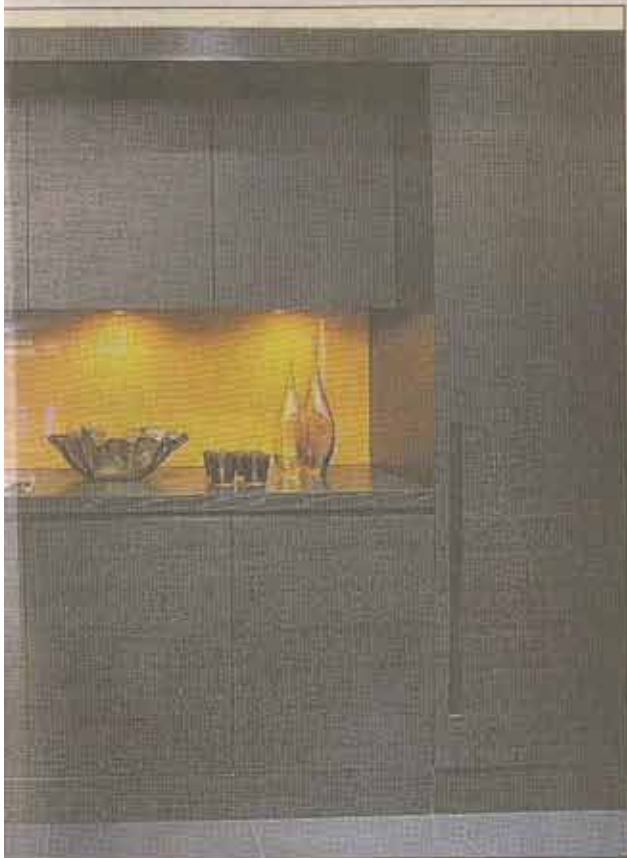


All white: the kitchens, above and left, at de Laszlo House

KITCHENS are disappearing before our eyes. Designers are doing their best to make fridges and other appliances appear invisible, so kitchens can become part of a living room.

In Fitzrovia, Exemplar and Aviva Investors are building Fitzroy Place, a residential development where living areas in all 13 suites will have wall-mounted kitchen units that can be hidden behind a sliding panel. The interior designers at this project, Johnson Naylor, helped create concealed kitchens for suites and studios at Ballymore's Pan Peninsula residential towers in Canary Wharf.

Using a mechanism inspired by Audi's hydraulic boot-opening system, a cover can be used as a wooden shelf when



Where did it go?:
a kitchen, left
and right, at
Pan Peninsula
residential
towers in
Canary Wharf



NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

folded down and its stainless steel underside as a splash-back for the sink and hob when folded up. At the Pan Peninsula homes, the black lacquered, wooden kitchen drawers and cupboards match the style, colour and materials used in the rest of the suite or studio.

Fiona Naylor, co-founder of Johnson Naylor, says concealed kitchens are increasingly popular. "They are a fantastic way to calm down the space and expand the living area, particularly in smaller urban apartments."

In larger properties, kitchens become part of an entertaining space. At The Fountain House penthouse overlooking Park Lane, an 18sq m kitchen has been designed by devel-

oped entertaining area when double doors leading to the adjoining reception room are opened. The oak veneer floor-to-ceiling cabinetry in the kitchen and reception room are painted the same shade of grey, and walls are painted white, so at first glance the rooms blend together. On closer inspection, sight of the kitchen island gives the game away, although the hob area at one end of the unit can be covered by an unpolished marble worktop that rolls across from the other side, revealing a shallow marble sink for pouring drinks at parties.

Amit Chadha, joint managing director of Luxlo, says there is "huge demand" for concealed kitchens. "This penthouse will be bought by a high-profile

space and the kitchen to be a show," he says.

Dandi Living has designed concealed kitchens for 15 years. At the de Laszlo House refurbishment project in Hampstead it has created kitchens that can be hidden entirely within cabinetry for all 18 apartments. They are intended to be artistic statements as well as functional spaces, says Eva Siskinova, lead architect at Dandi. "This is achieved by white Corian worktops and bespoke white storage units, with clever bi-folding pocket doors that can conceal the kitchen or be opened to create the culinary space. Dark plinths create an optical illusion, making the kitchen units appear to be floating above the flooring."

created to maintain a period property's room dimensions and aesthetics. In Cheyne Walk, John D Wood & Co is marketing a one-bedroom flat within a Grade II-listed Arts & Crafts building. The living room's kitchen units line one wall and are hidden behind folding doors painted to look like shelving, so they blend with the room's dark-wood wall panelling.

ROBERT Green, associate director at John D Wood & Co, says few home-buyers ask for concealed kitchens, but they like them when they see one. "They are good for pied-à-terres," says Green. "I have not seen it yet in bedsits, where it would be logical

people just use them as a base, then we will see more concealed kitchens."

But not everyone likes kitchens to be hidden. Guy Meacock, director at buyers agency Prime Purchase, asks: "Why is it so wrong that you can see the fridge? Brand-name utilities are increasingly sought after, people are asking for that sort of stuff, they want labels. Those labels can attract value. If designers are concealing everything, then that can worry people."

The growing number of concealed kitchens reflects how many of us use kitchens less, preferring to eat out, says Meacock, especially those who live in London part-time. Rather than being a transient trend, concealed kitchens may reflect our increasingly transient