



### My problem kitchen

It was tiny for this size of house and not a family kitchen at all. It was a bit of a DIY botch job, with cupboard doors clashing with one another, no dishwasher, and no dedicated space for eating and socialising.

### How I made it work

I designed a single-storey extension going out five metres across the back of our 10-metre-wide house. Now, we have a

huge kitchen-dining-living room that gives everyone space to do everything they need to do, without being on top of one another.

### My favourite part

A large extension can feel empty without proper planning, so I'm really pleased with how we've nailed the flow of the layout. I also loved moodboarding the space, and the thrill of sourcing a vintage bargain that makes it unique to us. There's nothing I'd change.

'Colour is so joyous but it's important to create balance like I do in my graphic design projects,' says Mel. 'I had my heart set on seating and art that popped with a pared-back kitchen'



### About me

I'm Melanie Sramek-Bennett, a freelance graphic designer and art director @aspacesforsomething. I live here with my husband, Darren, also a graphic designer, and our children aged 17 and 13. We've lived in our four-bed 1960s house in Hove, East Sussex, since November 2015.

## MY DECOR SHOWS

# I'm not afraid to be bold!

**Melanie Sramek-Bennett** combined Scandi simplicity with eye-catching Pop Art and mid-century furniture in her multifunctional space



I love the sixties design era so we were on the hunt for a 1960s house where I could dial up the interiors with bold style, colour and a touch of Scandi. This chalet bungalow was perfect; with wide rooms and a huge garden. We knew from the start that we'd extend and knock through, because the separate dining room and kitchen were too small. However, our application to build a double-storey extension was refused, so I redesigned a single-storey addition with ceilings as high as allowed to create volume and a sense of space. It took three years to get permission.

I adore colour, whether it's in my branding and design work, or my home. My Pinterest boards are full of colourful furniture and I was really inspired by Morag Myerscough's vibrant home on Instagram. I was tempted by a yellow kitchen but, to absorb the madness of the brights elsewhere, I decided to create cohesiveness with neutral cupboards.

Darren is all about details and accuracy and I throw in colour and design, so we work well as a team. We designed a low-level kitchen with a neat bank of cupboards for a pantry, fridge-freezer and oven, hidden along the new utility room wall where the old kitchen used to be. We created the work triangle with the hob on the island. A local, no-frills kitchen shop did us a good deal and we found a company up north for the worktop, which was much cheaper than anywhere else, even with delivery. We got a lot for our money by shopping around and buying secondhand.

We all love hanging out in here now. I don't think this is the end though! I'm always moving art or furniture, and I might paint a mural on the back wall – it's a great way to keep the room feeling fresh.



'I like furniture and art with character that isn't afraid to stand out,' says Mel. 'This is what draws my eye. I'm a real hunter.'



Mel bought the swivel chair in a junk shop for £20 years ago, and had it reupholstered in a wool fabric from a mill on the Isle of Bute



## Style advice

Three simple tricks to try in your own home

### 1 Zone for comfort

The extension is a generous 50 sq m, so the layout needed careful thought. A wall of drawers set out the linear layout with a bank of floor-to-ceiling cupboards tucked out of sight. The island, with stool seating for casual dining, frames the kitchen and provides the link between food prep and eating. 'Low-level lighting defines the table, made in white plywood to reflect the white frame of the 1960s sofa that creates the next boundary for the living space. Everything feels separate, even though it's one room,' says Mel.



### 2 Harmonise bright colours

Mel balanced her passion for bright colours with a grey kitchen, anchored by an anthracite wall. 'Even though the room is overtly bright, and I sort of throw things together, there is some order in my decisions,' she says. 'I chose warm-grey cupboards, which quietly blend into the background, while everything else in the space stands out. We were lucky the cork floor was a good match for the doors, and together with the plywood ceiling and camel leather handles, creates warmth and harmony in the colourful room.'

### 3 Customise furniture

Mel bought the sideboard from a friend, put together a colourful collection of original mid-century seating, and Darren's brother made the wooden side tables. 'I had the secondhand swivel chair reupholstered in an aqua green wool fabric,' says Mel. 'The pair of mid-century armchairs by Jaroslav Smidek are from Slovakia. My dad, who's from Czechia, has a flat there, and it was cheaper for his friend to drive them over than to buy here! My mum upholstered one of them with the leftover green fabric to match.'