



The ultimate kitchen

PHOTOGRAPHY *VARIOUS*

In Conversation with Sarah-Jane Pyke.

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Gillian Serisier: Sarah-Jane, I'm going to jump straight in here, Arent&Pyke has often been referred to as the Queens of Kitchen design, but where do you begin?

Sarah-Jane Pyke: It's hard to know where to start with a kitchen, but coming to my mind as essential are the comforts. Banquettes are probably not where everyone would start but they have great importance in terms of the comfort of the family. It's the casual dining, and the warm invitation of a textile of fabric that invites you to come and sit with the family. I also think the built-in bench seat is where you often get to have a beautiful lighting and art moment. It's that combination where a built-in bench seat, a wall light, and a painting, is the golden trio that you want to have.

GS: Your islands are almost the opposite in terms of materiality, how do you make them inviting?

S-JP: We like to think of the island as a piece of furniture. Often it is the intermediary between the kitchen and the cooking zone and a family living or dining zone. It might be looking into a lounge room or dining room. It's a transition between where I'm doing serious cooking work and where I'm living and entertaining, and the island is the thing that bridges the gap. We love it to be a sculptural element, to be something interesting and dynamic. And then it's often where we will showcase a beautiful piece of stone: where the natural stone gets to be the hero.

GS: We are seeing more adventurous stone in the kitchen, what is prompting the shift?

S-JP: There are two parts to that movement. One is, as a culture, we've just become happier to see colour. We've become more accustomed to bold things and it's taken a long time for the stone to follow cabinetry or paint. But using stone that's a little bit more interesting has happened as people become more comfortable with it. The other thing we see is that stone suppliers are getting more and more daring so we are being exposed to more and more choices.

GS: Working with different stone is a hallmark of your kitchens where everything harmonious to the palette. What comes first, the stone or the palette?

S-JP: It's always been part of our practice that choosing the stone becomes the linchpin for the rest for the scheme. We will put together a scheme and direction, then go out with the client, and choose the slabs. We allow the clients and ourselves to get carried away, to find something that is really breathtaking, and the thing that they love. And if they're having a big gasping moment, we'll tweak the scheme to suit it. And we let the stone be the hero. There has to be some fluidity in that too, and some flexibility.

GS: So, is the hero, the stone itself or the island?

PREVIOUS
A tall window at the end of the butler's pantry in La Casa Rosa, Arent&Pyke. Photography Prue Ruscoe.

OPPOSITE
The paler stone for the island is sculpted while the heavily figured stone is kept plain in La Casa Nova, Arent&Pyke. Photography Prue Ruscoe.





OPPOSITE
A floor of green and white marble invites the garden into the home in Garden House, Arent&Pyke. Photography, Anson Smart.

ABOVE
Glossy tiles add rhythm and interest to a marble benched nook in Garden House, Arent&Pyke. Photography, Anson Smart.

S-JP: It's the depth of the scheme, which can't be two dimensional. It's got to have the texture of the stone and the texture of the splashback, and the texture of the light, and the texture of the cabinetry, and the texture of the handle. You've got to have all of those different things that are creating the scene and the fourth dimension.

GS: How does the island form come into the equation?

S-JP: Where the island is often quite pared back and streamlined it may be the curves or angles that make it inviting. It's about approaching something like an island, which is often so big in a space and a monolith and you want to be invited to come up close. There is also room for an island to have a bit of fun, and that's also about the stone detailing and edging and that's something I'm loving much more with my client's response to stone.

GS: What are your thoughts on the increase of butler's pantries, sculleries and breakfast cupboards in your projects?

S-JP: I think we are aware of how someone uses a kitchen versus how they want it to appear. It's how we would love to live, because kitchens are aspirational at heart. I think renovations are that aspiration, you don't renovate for who you are, you don't build a kitchen for the person who's never put the toaster away, you build a kitchen for your aspirational self. And, you can build in all that functionality for that end result. Some people want it all to disappear and others want it all right at their fingertips because they hate having to walk to another room to get this or that, and for other people that tucked away second kitchen is such an incredible feature.

GS: What attributes do you like in an extra kitchen or butler's pantry?

S-JP: It's where you can have all the fantasy appliances like the thermomix, the great juicer, the fancy coffee machine, all those things that you don't want cluttering up the kitchen. But if you had that extra space, you might have a beautiful blender and make your smoothie. And there's an element of practicality that people get fiber functional about. Sometimes it's third ovens, and second fridges and second dishwashers.

GS: What is the must have in a kitchen?

S-JP: Definitely, I'm in favour of a second dishwasher, it is the ultimate luxury, fantastic backup of everything. Self-cleaning ovens too, I think it's just absolutely a minimum requirement. And if you can build in a really good



ABOVE
 MThe warm tones in the marble marry well with eth blonde timber in Speargrass House, Queenstown, New Zealand, Arent&Pyke. Photography, Anson Smart.

OPPOSITE
 Bespoke handles expand the artisan craftsmanship of Speargrass House, Arent&Pyke. Photography, Anson Smart.

multifunction oven, you can have it all, steaming, dehydrating and functions to mimic the airfryer, so a good multifunction oven says yes to everything but you have less appliances. And, get the oven up to eye level if you can. For me, the ultimate hack is the 76 centimetre oven, which almost all the brands do now, which is not the 90, it's just a bit bigger than the 60, but it's taller, and it has better internal capacity. As to stovetops, improvement in induction is where it's at. That just gets better and better.

GS: You were early advocates for interesting lights in the kitchen, how do you keep it fresh?

S-JP: The kitchen is like a big element. It's tall, and the island is short, and then you want something that sits in the middle. For me, lighting is always dynamic, it's a dynamic shape that creates movement visually in the space. And light over the island is creating intimacy. You have the chance to bring your focus and attention tightly to something, whether that's where you sit and eat, or that's where you have your vase of flowers or the kitchen sink, but it is bringing your attention to something and creating that more intimate moment.

GS: What is the essential element that needs more consideration?

S-JP: Hardware for me is the jewellery. It's the last little thing. It's the earring put on just before you walk out the door. It's the last touch. There was such a big trend for no hardware for so long. No handles, no handles no handles and then we started to bring them back in. And I think most people do want handles again, because they've become so gorgeous. They used to be utilitarian and now you've got all these organic shapes and hand rubbed bronze. Things that can really elevate.

GS: On a last note, overhead cupboards, yes or no?

S-JP: No. It's something that we've been doing for many years. It's not a hard and fast rule, but where you can avoid a lot on the wall so you're able to see the back wall of the kitchen, it gives the room so much more depth. Overhead cupboards become a crowding element, and what we've been doing is using the rangehood as a feature element with a beautiful tile finish or plaster finish that can add a lot of character.

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ABOVE
The entire kitchen reads as a piece of furniture within the large volume of Speargrass House, Arent&Pyke. Photography, Anson Smart.

OPPOSITE
Engaging the livingroom, but also the courtyard, the kitchen is very much a central hub that engages with all. Speargrass House, Arent&Pyke. Photography, Anson Smart.

