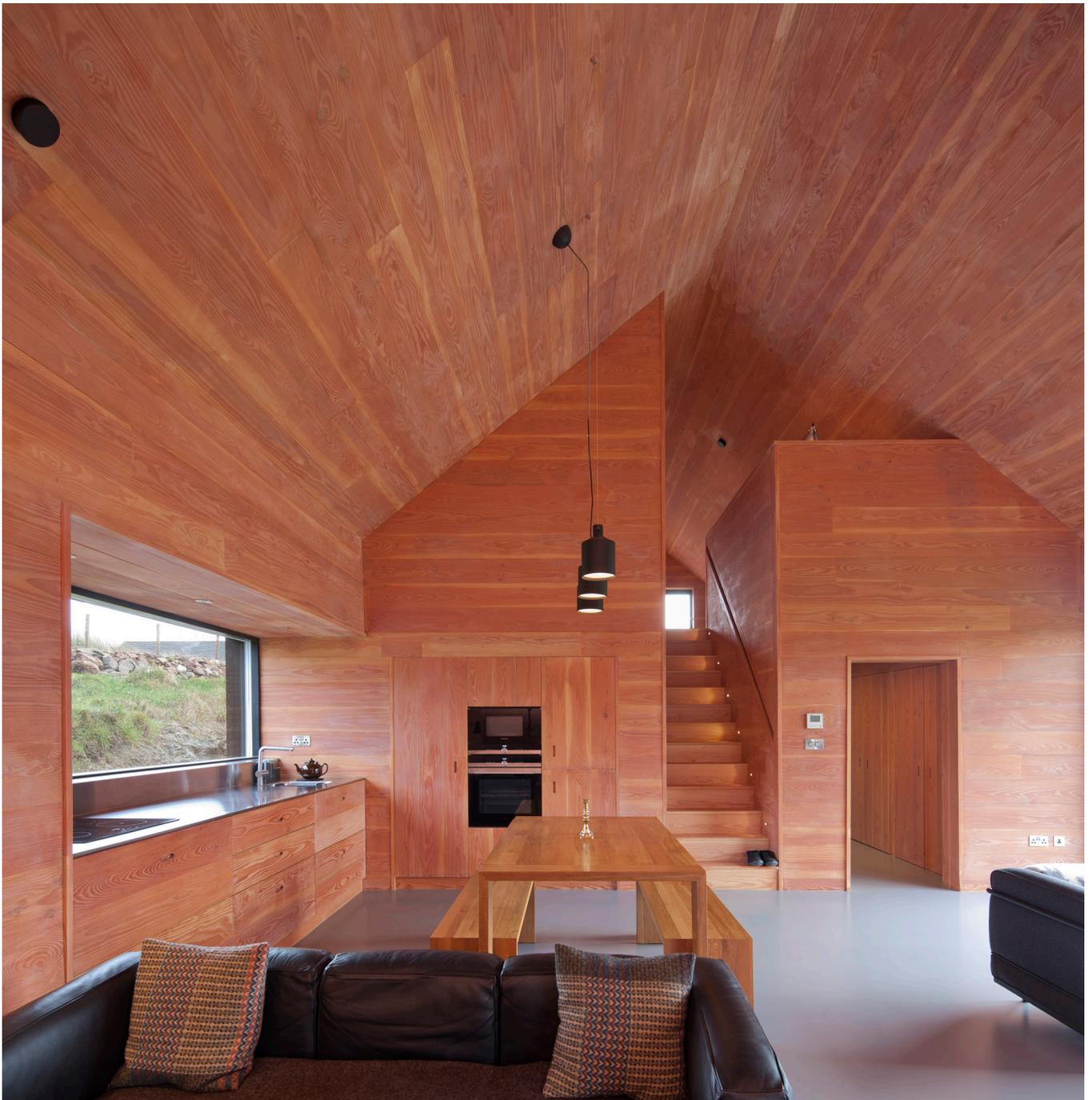


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BEST USE OF TIMBER AWARDS CASE STUDY
The Black Shed



“The timber has a beautiful warm glow when sunlight, light from the stove or artificial light hits it. The effect of the light continuously changes the feeling of the space”

Helena Webster, client

We spoke to the owner of the Black Shed Helena Webster to find out her views on the project:

Why Timber?

Judith and I spent many walking holidays on Skye before deciding to relocate there. During our walks we noticed that many of the nineteenth century houses were lined internally in vertical tongue and groove boarding. There was a particularly nice example in the fisherman’s house at Camasunary bay in which the panelling went from floor level to a shelf that ran around the room just below ceiling level. What we liked about this tradition was that it made the rooms feel warmer and more tactile than painted plasterboard. So, when we were talking to Mary about the internal finishes for our home we suggested lining the house in timber as a sort of homage to the Skye tradition. However, we were keen to extend the tradition rather than to slavishly replicate it. Therefore the final design employed 200mm wide Douglas Fir boards that ran horizontally, except for the doors where the boards ran vertically.

What was your favourite part of the project process?

That’s a difficult question. There were so many exciting parts of the project interspersed by lots of challenging parts. The design phase was extremely exciting. It was fantastic to have a design dialogue with someone as creative as Mary. We had great fun talking about how we could create a house that truly reflect the way we wanted to live while at the same time extending the architectural traditions of Skye, particularly the Blackhouse typology. Naturally we also loved see house emerge on site.

What is your favourite aspect of the finished project?

We both love the Douglas Fir lining. It works fantastically on so many levels. We particularly like the experiential contrast between the hard black profiled aluminium exterior and the warm, soft, textured, and slightly automatic timber interior. The timber has a beautiful warm glow when sunlight, light from the stove or artificial light hits it. The effect of the light continuously changes the feeling of the space.

What advice would you give someone who wants to build remotely?

Building remotely proved challenging for us. We were used to the speed of transactions that occur in cities. The most important lesson we learnt was that everything takes more time than you are promised and you need to learn to be patient. Rushing any part of the procurement process ends up being counterproductive. Maintaining good relations with the team is paramount if you want a good end product.

How does living there make you feel?

The Black Shed, which is tantamount to being one big space, facilitates the way we want to live our daily lives brilliantly. It allows us to work, play or rest together or apart. The house also deepens our connection with the incredible landscape and climate that surrounds us, producing a sort of primordial connection to place. This is a once very sublime, grounding and humbling.

Project Overview

When Mary Arnold-Forster met with the clients to find out what their ideas for their new home would be they asked for an open plan house stating that they had no real desire or need for separate rooms. Adopting the ethos of the traditional Blackhouse which is local to the Highlands and Islands, the clients wanted the simplicity and warmth that a Blackhouse provided, the result was The Black Shed.

Traditionally Black houses were not built to exploit the views. People worked outside, and houses were for shelter against the wind and rain. The Black Shed is not flooded with daylight but there are a few carefully chosen windows and the passage of the sun can be traced through the house from the morning window into the upstairs bedroom and from the long entrance corridor through to the south facing dining room doors to the fixed window pane on the west gable.

A reduced palette of materials was used - outside, black corrugated metal sheeting clads the building with a grey resin floor guiding you through the inside. The walls, ceiling, stairs, doors and kitchen are built entirely from Douglas Fir which gives the interior a real warmth and a relaxed feeling. The Douglas Fir was also used to craft shelves, cupboards, drawers, handrails and desks.





Location: Isle of Skye
Date Completed: April 2017
Building Type: Residential
Architect: Mary Arnold-Forster
Client: Helena Webster
Contract Value: £330,000
Main Contractor: Allen Cowe
Timber Supplier: Dinesen
Photography: David Barbour