

I LOVE THIS



Catherine Aitken

The London-based furniture-maker appreciates the pared-back simplicity offered by the Argyll artists' residency centre

Overlooking Loch Long near Helensburgh is Cove Park artists' residency centre, where artists can live and work for short periods alongside peers from around the world. I spent two rewarding months there a few years ago and left full of admiration for the place and all that it offers.

The 50-acre site has housing and studios in the form of 'pods' and 'cubes', but the main building is the Artists Centre, which was redesigned by Cameron Webster Architects in 2016. There is a huge emphasis on letting light and the surrounding landscape filter in, which brings a stillness and sense of calm to the interior spaces.

At the heart of the Centre is a communal kitchen and dining area, which encourages dialogue between residents and is the setting for larger monthly dinners. The views are a huge draw; I remember eating there one evening and gradually becoming aware that everyone had turned their chairs towards the window.

The connection with nature is direct and inescapable: I stayed in one of the 'cubes' – essentially a shipping container which, thanks to its grass-covered roof, sat discreetly on the hillside; one wall had been replaced by

sliding glass doors, with decking and a lake beyond, and many a morning I would wake up to find one of Cove's Highland cows bathing just metres from my bed.

One of the delights of Cove Park is its transient community of artists, musicians and poets, their different worlds temporarily aligning. Materially, there's nothing surplus here; the luxury is instead felt emotionally and intellectually, in the quiet progression of one's work alongside others. If architecture's success can be measured in the positive atmosphere it creates, Cove Park in its own humble way deserves praise. ■



From Part of Ori, Catherine's new collaboration with Another Country and Ekkist promoting health-focused furniture pieces