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# Homes & Property

Wednesday, 15 October 2003

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## Creative space man

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Big profit in King's Cross Chelsea winners All black and white Wonderful Wales

# Creative s



The children's two-in-one bed, with space beneath for toys and playing, is a more inventive take on bunk beds

**Dominic Ash drew on his boat-building skills to fit his growing family into a tiny Barbican flat. His solutions are ingenious, says Pattie Barron**

**P**ERHAPS it is because Dominic Ash used to build boats in the Caribbean that he is so masterful at making the most of small spaces. At any rate, when his wife, Kate Mellor, found a tiny flat for sale near the Barbican with two bedrooms, he bought it, feeling confident that he could squeeze from it the three bedrooms they needed for themselves and their two children and have room, besides, for an office. "I'm of the opinion that it doesn't matter where it is, or what it is, I can always do something with it," says Dominic, a bespoke furniture maker who specialises in handmade kitchens.

Kate was born up the road, but her choice was mainly guided by the proximity of the primary school, where son Josh, now 16, attended, and where she wanted six-year-old India to go; a nursery school for Eden, now two, is minutes away. The flat was in an industrial building of red brick and galvanised windows, and was being overhauled by developers. "We said we'd buy it if they stopped working on the flat instantly. So basically, we took on a shell."

They called in architect friend Sarah Featherstone to help them rework the layout. The main living room, dining area and kitchen, now one light, airy space, was originally designed to be two bedrooms, and had a studwork partition wall. Sarah obtained planning permission to add two more identical Crittall windows so that the family could have sunlight streaming in from six large windows on three sides.

Dominic installed underfloor heating — radiators take up wall space, he reasoned — and laid down new floors of ash. On chilly evenings, dove-grey velvet curtains wrap around three walls, making the space feel, says Kate, like a preview cinema in Wardour Street.

The month they moved in, Kate became pregnant with Eden. "We thought, 'where are we going to put the baby?' When we moved Eden's cot into India's bedroom, it was a real squash. I took the children to the Channel Islands in summer and when we came back, Dominic had built the bed as a surprise."

His ingenious two-in-one bed in Barbie pink is more fun — and certainly more functional — than the usual twin-bunk solution. The curving frame of rubber, which



In the kitchen, an all-purpose island block of walnut houses the cooking hol

Dominic sprayed onto plywood, doubles as a climbing frame, and the white leatherette mattress that undulates from one bed to the other makes a great slide.

Beneath India's higher bed is a cubbyhole with shelving, in which the children play shops and tea parties, and beneath Eden's bed are double drawers full of toys and tutus. The matching pink MDF wardrobe backs half into Josh's room (think of it as a big box, divided into two), where it reappears as a wardrobe of high-shine petrol blue.

The couple's bedroom is even smaller, but Dominic rose



A wall-mounted TV and "floating" wall bench that doubles as storage frees up the living area



Above: cutting out unnecessary doors lets light flow through the space. Right: a spare alcove has been turned into Kate's office

# pace man



hob, mini-larder, rubbish bin and glide-out cutlery drawers

to the challenge, making a high platform bed of maple, with deep glide-out drawers beneath for shoes and separates. Opposite, looking just like a mirrored wall, is the seamless wardrobe, with no-show touch latches.

A boxed wall shelf at the end of the bed houses books and a TV, while drinks glasses are hidden on a narrow shelf behind the bedhead, flanked by individual reading lights fixed to the wall. Who could want more?

The hall, subtly lit with spotlights set into the floor, is a sleek, easy-on-the-eye corridor that, on closer viewing, reveals all kinds of interesting storage solutions. Press

one wall and a door opens to reveal a cloakroom; household utensils — ironing board, cleaning stuff — are stashed ship-shape onto the inside of the door. And in an alcove just wide enough to comfortably hold a chair, is Kate's office, complete with porthole window, a walnut desk with invisible pull-out drawer and a clever multi-shelved filing system, set into the wall, that reaches nearly to the ceiling.

Next to the office is an acid-etched glass panel that brings more light into the hall and indicates the bathroom, hidden behind a space-saving sliding panel. Dominic says it is a proper wetroom: "I made the walls watertight by bonding Formica to marine ply, and sealed them, so you simply shower the whole lot down. The floor is granite, textured to make it slip-proof."

The mirror opens to a cabinet, naturally, and the teak seat across the corner in the shower doubles as a shelf. He made the handsome curved wooden basin which, he explains, needs no waterproofing.

***"Teak is the most durable of woods, which is why it's used for boat-building"***

"Teak is the most durable of woods, which is why it's used for boat-building. Squeeze the sawdust together, and it forms a ball, which gives you an idea of its high oil content."

It is the main living area, however, that best shows Dominic's skills of working with wood. A "floating" bench of American black walnut runs the length of the room, with a working limestone fireplace set into the centre; it also serves as low-level storage space for CDs and videos, and a cabinet for the stereo system. The windowsills are finished in the same wood.

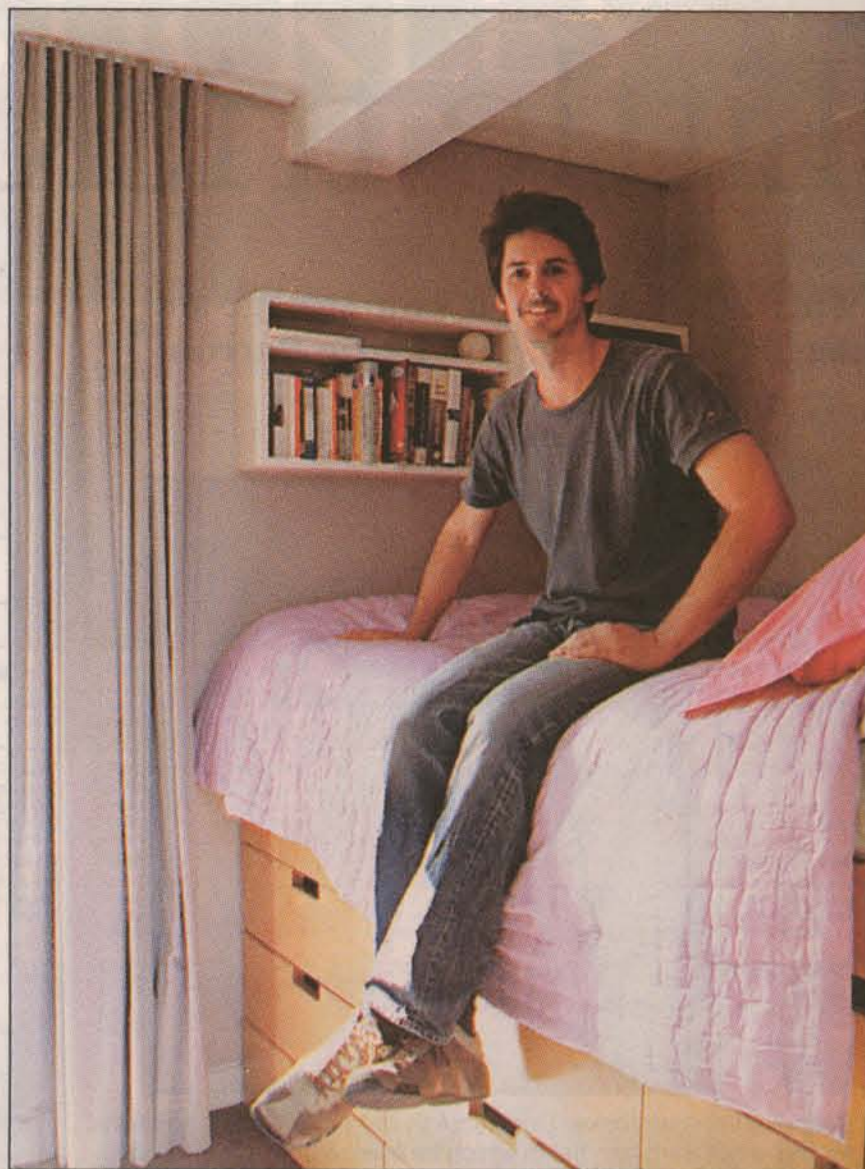
A walnut cube makes the ultimate island kitchen unit, housing hob, rubbish bin, mini-larder and cutlery drawers. The dining table Dominic made, from grainy, hard wenge wood, can be easily moved around for entertaining. With these warm, textural woods, polished gloss kitchen cabinets and stainless-steel worktops contrast purposefully.

Dominic even stuck the mirrored mosaic chips, more than 2,000 of them, onto the kitchen wall one by one, so that they would catch the light at different points, making the world's most glamorous splashback.

Now even he admits that the family's cosy yet luxurious home might have reached its full potential. "We're pushing at the seams now, but who knows? I may still have a trick or two up my sleeve."

**Little tricks of the trade: see page 40**

**Pictures by Andreas von Einsiedel**



Dominic on the couple's compact bed, which has deep drawers beneath for storing shoes and clothes



To give the hallway a light, airy feel, Dominic used sliding panels for doors, set small spotlights into the floor and introduced a panel of acid-etched glass, which backs onto the bathroom

## GET THE LOOK

○ Dominic Ash can be contacted for commissions on 020 7377 1982 or email [dom@dominicash.co.uk](mailto:dom@dominicash.co.uk). He opens his flagship kitchen showroom on 3 November at Estilo Kitchen Shop, 87 High Street, Wimbledon Village, SW19 (020 8944 6868).

○ Architect Sarah Featherstone, of Featherstone Associates, is available for commission on 020 7490 1212.

○ B&B Italia sofa and pendant lights in the kitchen from Geoffrey Drayton (020 7387 5840).

○ Eames dining chairs from The Conran Shop (020 7723 2223).

○ Leather floor cushions by Matt Fothergill (01588 640908).

○ Stainless-steel worktops, GEC Anderson (01442 826999).

○ Mirror mosaic chips from Tile Superstores (020 8749 1115).

○ Granite bathroom floor from Gormley Ltd (020 8961 5651).

○ Reclaimed portholes from Lassco (020 7394 2102).

○ Crittall Windows: 01376 324106



# Little tricks of the trade

When space is tight, it's the storage and details that matter, says **Pattie Barron**

Continued from pages 38-39



Bespoke furniture maker Dominic Ash dreamt up smart solutions for the small Barbican flat in which he lives with wife Kate and children Eden, two (above), India, six, and 16-year-old Josh.



The couple invested in a smart charcoal-grey sofa by B&B Italia, which has modular pieces that slot neatly around the corner of the main living area, streamlining the space: Velvet curtains run on a track all the way around, wrapping the room in warmth and luxury.



Keeping kitchen units free of handles and giving them a light-reflective surface are two more ways of creating the illusion of space.



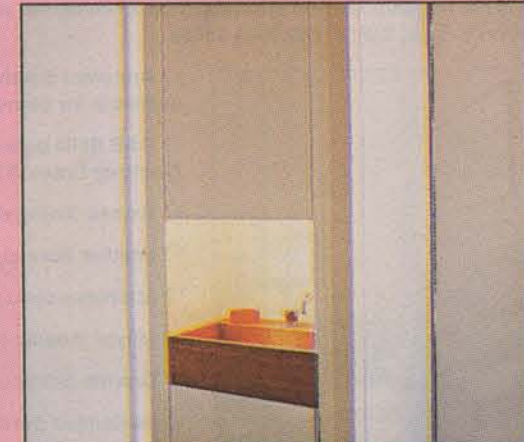
Dominic made the wall-mounted bathroom basin of durable teak.



A broad windowsill of walnut wood is an ideal spot for family photos.



Household utensils are stored snugly on the inside of the hallway cupboard door.



A more discreet customised basin in the loo, also made of teak, is inset into the wall.