

Composite Index

Corporate high-flyers and admitted neat freaks Bruce Thatcher and Kirsty Leighton couldn't handle the chaos anymore. With two small boys and demanding jobs (he works in hedge funds, she's a PR executive), they craved order, light, and space but were prepared to settle for a washing machine. In came architect William Tozer with a plan that inserted clean

white planes into the envelope of their Victorian terrace house in London. Christened the Composite House, this renovation collates Tozer's decade of experience making small partial renovations into a complete overhaul that builds on, rather than obliterates, its Victorian origins. As the sky darkened on a rainy afternoon, Bruce and Kirsty showed us around.

MY HOUSE



As told to Nicola Twilley
Photos by Matthew Williams

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MY HOUSE

you can see all the way through the house. In summer, the sliding doors are always open so it's all one big space. In cooking and everyone else is flapped out in the courtyard.

Kirsty: A glass of wine, the stars, no wind. It's perfect.

The Space Under the Stairs

Bruce: This was the only piece of wasted space to my mind. But William said it was important architecturally and for the children's sense of what

the house. They drag their duvets down there.

The Master Bedroom

Bruce: We even talked about what we were to be in with William. We spent a year planning before we started.

Kirsty: The entryway is at boob height so that I can get out of bed without wanting to be bothered.

Bruce: We agree, it's great. I'm glad we've got a small house about our size. Kirsty: I wanted to make sure it felt

comfortable. In the end, I softened it up by having one wall papered. My girlfriends love our bedroom.

Bruce: We've had a whole stream of people in and for dinner to see the house. People come round at four, they bring their kids, and then they spend the night or stay for Sunday lunch. It's a sociable space, but it's so open you don't get claustrophobic.

William: It's not for everyone. It's not for the outside. You come in and see all this space and light in



Bruce and Kirsty loved the idea of a kitchen island rather than traditional work surfaces around the walls. Bruce fancied himself a chef and hated to have his back to everyone

when he's cooking. This island, from the Boffi line designed by Piero Lissoni, allows guests to gather around for teppanyaki, sushi rolling or casual breakfasts.

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The Utility Room

Bruce: This all started because Kirsty said she wanted a utility room. We liked the location...

Kirsty: ...but the house had been made into flats and then made back, so there were rooms around all the windows and lots of internal walls. We spent all our time in the sitting room with our laundry and pushchairs and junk. We had a big house but we lived in a tiny house inside it.

Bruce: The original idea was to put a little basement in the front. I said, if we do that, we should probably think about putting in a playroom, too. Then I thought, if the kids are getting a playroom and Kirsty's getting a utility room, I'd like a wine cellar. We started by talking to the London Basement Company, but their proposal was dark and too expensive for not doing anything to change the way we used the rest of the house.

Kirsty: Back then we had no idea what was possible. We never thought we'd end up with our main living space in the basement.

Bruce: The utility room ended up being the least of it.

The Kitchen and Courtyard

Bruce: We contacted a young architect we'd seen on TV and William Tozer, who we found through the Royal Institute of British Architects' website.



Kirsty's favorite space in the house is the living room (top), where she and her girlfriends curl up on the sectional sofa to gossip over a glass of wine. With the sliding

doors open, the kitchen (bottom left) connects to a courtyard and spare bedroom, where friends who come over for dinner sometimes take up residence for days.

Architect William Tozer cut through floor plates to create views through the house; here, the family's gathering point—the kitchen table (bottom right).

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Dwell

MY HOUSE



Maker's Mark

If tidiness is paramount for the family, a place for the kids to play outdoors is equally important. The climbing wall at the back of the garden is entirely the work of Mark Tunks, who built the Composite House and who relished a chance to step out from beneath Tozer's plans and design an aspect of the house himself.

Globes Theatre

Bruce worried about what to put in the double-height space above the kitchen table—until he found these Tom Dixon-designed mirror balls. "They were installed at random and when William came over that evening, he said, 'Fantastic, well done.' So we left them like that." tomdixon.net



Downward Spiral

Bruce is a wine enthusiast and a stickler for efficiency, so this prefab concrete collar with an ingenious passive ventilation system was a natural choice. It maintains a constant temperature, and its stacked horizontal bins can store up to 1,400 bottles of wine—a good excuse to keep adding to the collection. spiralcellars.co.uk



Genuine Fir

Blond Dinesen Douglas-fir floorboards stretch the length of the house, framing its clean planes and lines. The stairs, which cantilever out from the house's original bare brick walls, are mounted on brackets and made from the same material. The house and Dinesen itself are well matched: Both are just over a century old. dinesen-gulve.dk



Made to Measure

Bruce and Kirsty are obsessively tidy, so copious storage was a must. An entire wall in their bathroom opens to reveal a cabinet that is exactly the depth of a fat roll of toilet paper, and one of their kitchen cupboards was specially fireproofed in order to house that dastardly appliance, the toaster. ■

Click here for more information:
Wine cellar: spiralcellars.co.uk
Pendant lights: yigihina.com
Douglas fir: dinesen-gulve.dk

Make It Yours

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