



Being in a conservation area meant the outside of the property (above) could not be changed. Filippo Ginanni and girlfriend Maura, left, relax on the decked roof terrace, where large windows replace brick walls to let in more light



A glass balustraded open-tread staircase leads into the living area and up on to the roof terrace, while ample storage space in the form of floor-to-ceiling cupboards makes sure everything is kept neat and tidy

Seeing the light



Filippo knew exactly what he wanted in his new home — right down to the brand of kitchen units (above). Floor-to-ceiling wardrobes in the main bedroom, left, hide Filippo's collection of shirts

Pictures by Mark York

THE challenge was to turn a rundown, one-bedroom flat with a workshop in the heart of Notting Hill Gate into a smart, functional home. Luckily, the owner knew exactly what he wanted, from the brand of kitchen units down to the style of the light sockets, which made the architect's job a lot easier. Between the two of them, architect Luke Tozer and his client Filippo Ginanni, a City trader born in Milan, have turned Filippo's dream into a modern, spacious and very light two-bedroom home with a roof terrace, on Portobello Road, behind a conventional period terrace façade. To do this they decided to turn everything upside down — putting the bedrooms on the ground floor and the living spaces above. The total cost of the overhaul was in the region of £250,000. For the previous four years, Filippo, who is in his early thirties, had been renting the house next door. "I've always lived in this part of London and never wanted to live anywhere else," he says. "I love the crowds around me, which make me feel a part of the city but I also love to retreat to the back of the house, which is quiet without traffic noise."

'We decided to flip the scheme upside-down when we realised the rooms upstairs get most of the light'

He bought the property two years ago and appointed Pitman Tozer Architects having decided he could not do it himself with a demanding day job. "I wanted the house to be 80 per cent me."

"So, along with my parents, who would drop in from Italy, we had lots of discussions with Luke to make sure the design suited our needs and made the best use of every square millimetre."

First they had to obtain the necessary planning permissions for change of use. As the house, which measures 1,100sq ft, is in a conservation area, they were obliged to keep the external façade exactly matching the neighbours' and the overall volume of the interior the same, but were allowed to reconfigure the inside as they wanted. "We decided to flip the scheme upside-down — after a suggestion from Luke — when we realised that the rooms upstairs get most of the light and height," says Filippo. "I wanted two bedrooms and two reasonably spacious bathrooms, but for me, a bedroom is just a place to sleep."

"I also wanted a separate utility room. In Italy, having your washing machine in the kitchen would be unthinkable, so we put a compact utility room and a

To convert a rundown one-bedroom flat into a modern town house took some creative thinking, says **Katie Law**



The kitchen is a glossy, all-white affair, split by a central island. Filippo loves to cook and entertain friends for lunch and dinner

second bathroom downstairs in the middle of the plan where daylight isn't needed." The ample storage space in each room has been designed into the walls behind spray-painted MDF doors, which go right up to the ceiling, including a walk-in wardrobe in the main bedroom that houses Filippo's collection of immaculately pressed white shirts. A glass-balustraded, open-tread staircase leads directly from the entrance hallway upstairs

into the kitchen and dining area, an all-white affair, split in half by an island. The extendible, white lacquered wood Athos table surrounded by white moulded plastic Verner Panton chairs is the focal point of family life for Filippo, who loves to cook with his girlfriend Maura and have friends over for lunch and dinner. The kitchen comes from Barzaghi store, which Filippo sourced from Italy, along with the travertine tiling used in the

en-suite bathroom. He reckons sourcing these himself saved him about £15,000. The floors are dark brown American walnut, and make a good contrast with the otherwise stark white decor and pure white walls, especially as they run up to the skirting boards. "We wanted to keep a simple palette of materials and colours throughout to help tie the different levels of the living spaces and the whole house together," Tozer says. Next to the

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kitchen is the impressively large sitting room, the two spaces divided by no more than a thick slab of clear glass and a small raised platform.

What was originally the loft space has been opened up to create a feeling of height, while the original brick wall at the back has been replaced by a large glass wall that overlooks the decked roof terrace.

This, together with the skylight above, allows in plenty of light, as well as connecting the indoors to the outdoor terrace, accessed by another staircase.

The space is dominated by an off-white Flexform sofa and a white leather lounge chair and stool, while the modernist light fittings come from Flos.

The look is cool and understated, with a large array of wine books filling the shelves — Filippo's only sadness is that there isn't enough space for a proper wine cellar. Wine is the other great love of his life and he hopes one day to specialise in the subject and become a wine merchant. But at the moment he is happy having somewhere delightful to raise a glass.



The floors are dark brown walnut and contrast well with the white walls

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