

THE  TIMES

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Shop! Men's special

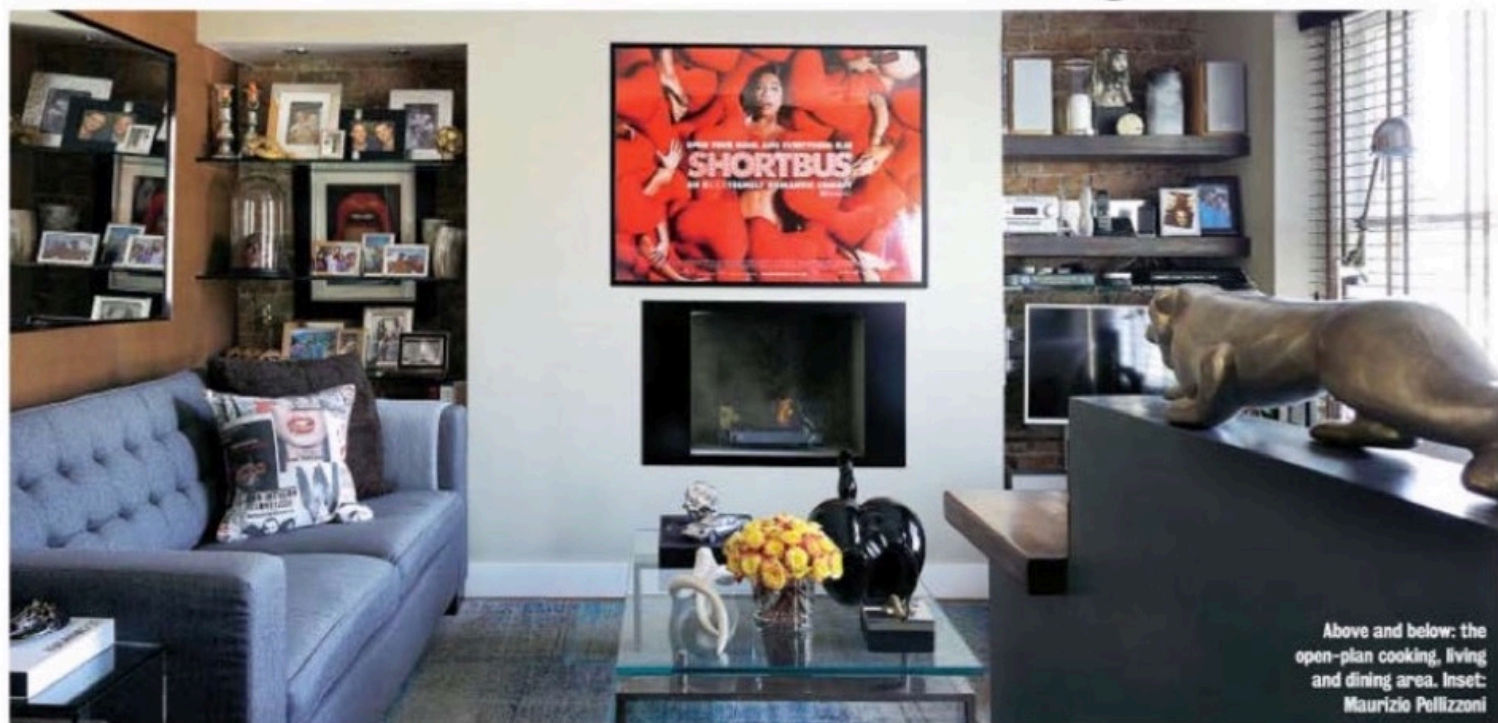
# MAGAZINE

*'My persona? It's a mask. It's not the real me'*

**JEREMY CLARKSON**  
**THE YEAR I LOST MY  
MOTHER, MY HOUSE  
AND MY JOB**

*By Charlotte Edwardes*

# THE STYLE PAGES



## SMALL AND PERFECTLY FORMED



*Eighteen years ago, architect Maurizio Pellizzoni spotted the potential in this tiny flat in Lewisham, southeast London. Now the area is the capital's latest hotspot* **REPORT** Ruth Corbet **PHOTOGRAPHS** Gianni Franchellucci

**W**hen Maurizio Pellizzoni moved from Italy to London 19 years ago, aged 23, he got a job at McDonald's, learnt to speak English, and a year later bought this tiny, top-floor property in Lewisham, then an unassuming and unloved corner of southeast London. "It was cheap. I had

no money and I had to be realistic about what I could afford," says Pellizzoni, now an interior architect.

"Lewisham was considered so far from central London at the time, it may as well have been in Scotland." Nowadays, the area is being touted as "the new Hackney", and Pellizzoni, despite considerable success in his career in the intervening years, has stayed put.

Buying the freehold of the Victorian house was a shrewd move, enabling Pellizzoni to extend into the empty loft space, and add an extra 20sq m to the apartment's meagre 60sq m footprint. The dark, poky kitchen and a windowless bathroom gave way to an open-plan cook, live and dine area. A luxurious, mosaic-lined shower room was installed, stealing a little room from the reconfigured guest bedroom adjacent to it, and on the new floor above, the master bedroom and dressing room were fitted. A cast-iron spiral staircase links the two floors, its open treads adding to the feeling of spaciousness and light.

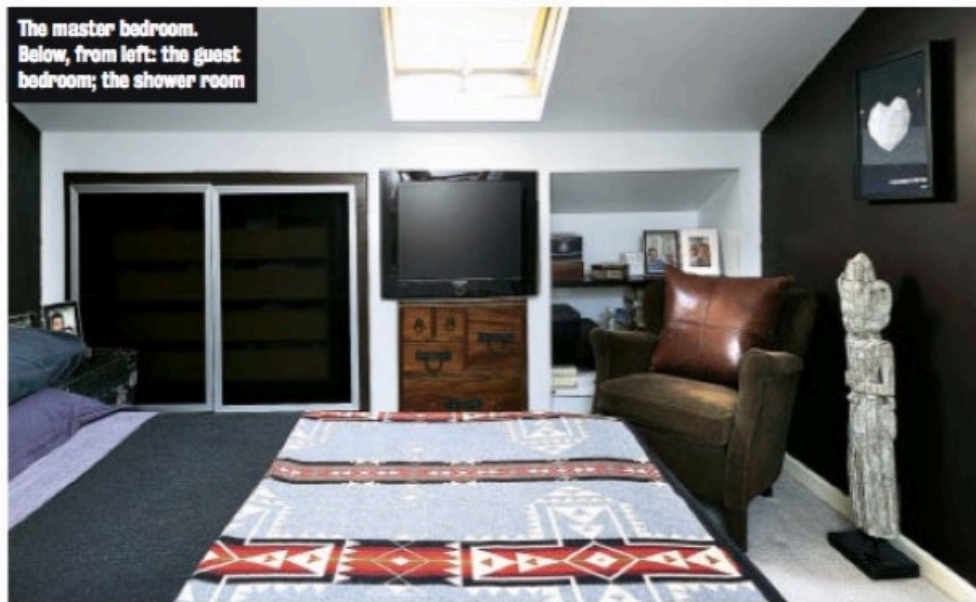
While many interiors experts will insist on decluttering a small space to maximise its potential, Pellizzoni did the opposite. Here, every surface is crammed with objets d'art, walls are covered in paintings, framed fashion photography and rare pop and film posters, with more of the same propped casually throughout the scheme; sofas are strewn with cushions, and beds layered with luxurious fabrics. It's the antithesis of the pale, spare Scandinavian style that has grabbed all the interiors headlines in recent years.

Every inch has been used: alcoves feature glass shelves groaning with personal items and mementoes; the loft has been kitted out with bespoke storage; the kitchen, with its sleek cabinetry that extends into the dining area, provides ample space for household kit.

Zoning has been used subtly to differentiate one space from another, with grey herringbone tiles for the kitchen floor and timber boards throughout the rest of the living space, the sitting area demarked by a patchwork rug.

The furniture Pellizzoni has chosen is flexible, too. Transparent side tables give a feeling of space; there's a sofa bed in the living room, a dining table that extends to seat six people, and drawers beneath the beds. "Two years ago my family came to stay for Christmas – my mum, brothers and their partners, and my partner, me and the dog. It was good to be together, but a week was enough."

The master bedroom. Below, from left: the guest bedroom; the shower room



A lack of time and money in the early days meant it took Pellizzoni nearly seven years to complete the refurbishment, during which time he worked for Ralph Lauren as a window dresser, which paid his way through an interior architecture degree. "I went back to Ralph Lauren after university and spent three years as part of the creative team, which was a great education in itself. They teach you how to dress spaces properly, meticulously."

Structural changes aside, it is indeed the dressing of this apartment that is so impressive. "It's a warm look, with masculine colours, lots of textures, like the crocodile wallpaper, the wood, the steel of the staircase.

We're two guys living here. We don't want to live in a soulless white box."

Pellizzoni set up his design consultancy seven years ago. Now he works internationally, anywhere from Milan to Portland, Oregon, via Godalming in Surrey. He spends a lot of time in New York, where he has found a clientele that fully appreciates his luxe interior aesthetic. Little do they know it all started from such humble beginnings.

"I fell in love with this area all those years ago and I still love it. You never know," he adds, "maybe I'll own the whole house one day." ■

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