

SITTING ROOM
 Matthew's vintage furniture complements the history and proportions of the apartment. For a reproduction of this original Kubus sofa designed by Josef Hoffmann, try Iconic Interiors, from £1,424



DISTINCTIVE

HOME TRUTHS
THE PROPERTY An apartment in a Grade II-listed Peabody Trust building
LOCATION East London
ROOMS Hall, sitting room/dining area, kitchen, study, one bedroom (en suite), bathroom, roof terrace
PURCHASED 2012
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'I moved here after living in South Africa,' says Matthew.



SEVENTH HEAVEN

Having moved house six times, Matthew White never imagined that this characterful but downtrodden apartment would be his ideal home

FEATURE CHANTAL HINTZE/EMMA J PAGE | PHOTOGRAPHY PENNY WINCER/FEATURES & MORE



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I KITCHEN
 'The units are simple, but they work beautifully within the confines of the space, which has very few straight walls,' says Matthew. Cabinets, price on application, Howdens. Find a similar two-door wine cabinet, from £509, CDA

makes the interior feel light, airy and spacious. Cult Living's Chiswick walnut chair, £99, would work here

2 HALL
 The double-height design

3 DINING AREA
 Well-stocked open shelving adds to the informal feel. Oiled beech Wishbone chairs, £670 each, The Conran Shop. Tripode G5 floor lamp, from £516, Twentytwentyone, is a close match

The first thought Matthew White had when he walked into the apartment he had just bought was, 'What have I done?' Following a four-year stint in South Africa, where he ran an art gallery, the digital consultant returned to the UK in 2011. After a year spent searching for the right place, he finally got lucky when an apartment in his desired neighbourhood came onto the market. 'I first bought a loft in Shoreditch in 1998 and, Cape Town aside, I've considered this part of London my home ever since,' says Matthew.

As well as the location, the apartment ticked several other boxes. Situated in one of Spitalfields' landmark buildings, commissioned by the Peabody Trust in the early 1850s to

provide affordable housing, the flat had ample character. However, it was in need of an update and, when the keys were finally in Matthew's hands, the thrill of new home ownership quickly disappeared. 'Without any furniture, the sorry state of the apartment was suddenly much more apparent,' he says. 'There were waterlogged carpets, and the windows were held in place with electrical tape.' Luckily, he did not remain fazed by the task ahead for long.

As this was his seventh renovation project, Matthew had established a good working relationship with a team of skilled builders in the past, as well as with architect David Bellis, of Bellis Architects. 'David is very pragmatic, and he knew the best plan was to remove the entire interior,



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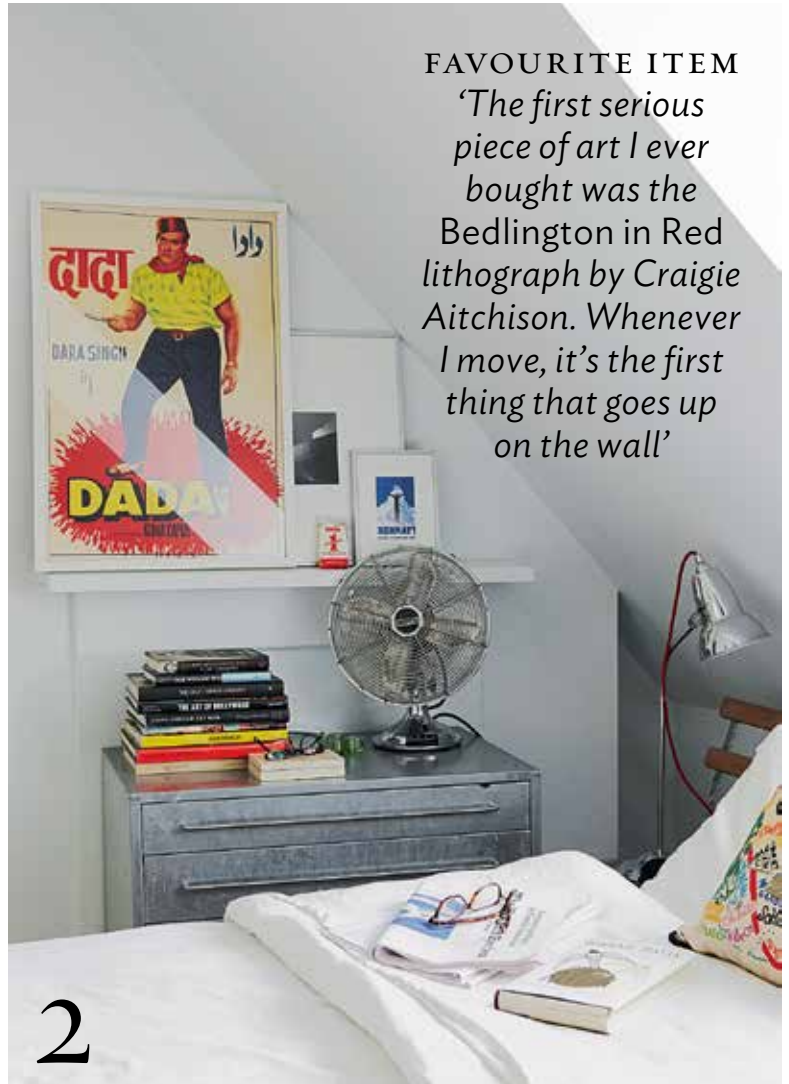


1 STUDY
A second bedroom on the top floor doubles as a handy light-filled work space.
 Darcey desk in walnut and oak, £399, Made.com, recreates this look

2 BEDROOM
Tucked away up in the building's eaves, this is a serene space, punctuated by pops of colour from

bold textiles and artwork.
 King & McGaw sells vintage movie posters, from £70

3 BATHROOM
The avocado-coloured suite that Matthew inherited has been updated, so the room now has a sophisticated look with sleek marble tiles.
 Pietra Grey marble tiles, £24.97sq m, Topps Tiles, have a similar look



FAVOURITE ITEM
'The first serious piece of art I ever bought was the Bedlington in Red lithograph by Craigie Aitchison. Whenever I move, it's the first thing that goes up on the wall'



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including the internal walls and ceiling, and start from scratch,' Matthew explains.

Yet, despite the strip-out, Matthew was keen to retain as many original features as possible while also giving the compact space some of its historical identity back. 'I just couldn't see the point of living in a building that's almost 200 years old and having a super-modern interior,' he says.

While he has not shied away from kitting out the two-floor apartment with mod-cons, including an integrated sound system, the look Matthew chose is decidedly old school, thanks, in part, to the vintage parquet flooring he has installed. 'Funnily enough, it appears to have come from a church in South Africa,' he says. 'The Kubus sofa is also a Twenties

original, which I fished out of a skip and had refurbished. It's now as good as new.'

Matthew elected to keep the interior neutral, allowing his books and artwork from the likes of Leon Morrocco and Craigie Aitchison to lift the schemes. 'A home needs to make you happy, whether it's a forever place or not,' he says. 'Every time I walk into a room, I want to be able to enjoy the space and atmosphere.'

Initially, Matthew had considered this place to be the latest in a series of renovation projects and planned to stay for only a year or two. But the building has since won his heart and tamed his wanderlust. 'That "What have I done?" moment has long since passed,' he affirms. 'This place feels like a real home to me now.' 25