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# CONTROLLING INTEREST

*Ann Boyd admits that her instinct for spatial planning makes her the 'guest from hell'. When she downsized to this tiny London flat, she put her principles into practice, creating an ingeniously ordered, bright and luxurious pied-à-terre*

TEXT **JUDITH WILSON**  
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**T**here's a certain novelty to a balcony in London, and visitors to Ann Boyd's new flat inevitably make a beeline for hers. Perched up here, one has a bird's-eye view of Chelsea Manor Street, plus a glimpse of the Natural History Museum. 'Isn't it great?' says Ann. 'The view from here is the focal point for the entire flat.'

As an established interior designer, Ann admits she has a natural instinct for spatial planning, adding that she always wants to rearrange her friends' homes, making her the 'guest from hell'. Within seconds of viewing this flat, she recalls detailing a soothing colour scheme and square panelling – out loud – to her startled estate agent. When the flat was completed, she invited the agent round for a drink. 'She couldn't believe I had exactly replicated my plans.'

Ann bought the flat in 2008, after realising that she was spending more and more time at her country cottage, and deciding to downsize her London base. A portered block offered the ideal back-up arrangement, and she specifically wanted a flat in Chesil Court. 'I had friends living here, and this place has always been at the back of my mind,' she explains. 'Mansion blocks have always scared me, as I don't like long corridors.' Chesil Court, however, has four towers with two flats per floor, so it feels intimate.



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With characteristic verve, Ann had the flat gutted and completed within six weeks. Out came all the added features – false ceilings, a repro chimneypiece and curved niches; only the original Crittall windows remained. Amazingly, the Thirties underfloor heating still works, so there are no radiators to ruin Ann's streamlined interior. The walls were transformed with MDF and mirror-glass panelling, the square design inspired by the windows. 'I am partial to MDF panelling; it hides a multitude of sins,' she says.

Ann has forged a reputation for creating crisp, elegant, predominantly pale interiors. She was brought up on the west coast of Scotland, so the pale hues of sand, sea and sky are her allies. 'It's not in my nature to live with strident colours; I like serenity,' she says. She also prefers bare walls: a single painting on linen hangs in the drawing room. This artwork, and most of the furniture, has been recycled from her old flat; putting favourite things into a new environment creates a fresh mood straight away. 'There is no point in change for the sake of it,' says Ann. 'Moving is expensive.'

Some small flats shriek 'space-saving solution' at every turn, but this cool, calm living space just looks effortlessly elegant. 'It is literally half the size of my previous home, but I like a challenge,' explains Ann. Discreet cupboards abound, from a suitcase cubbyhole above the kitchen door to a secret compartment behind the mirror-glass panelling. 'Except it's so secret I can't remember what's in it,' she says.



**ALL PICTURES** The bedroom is home to an antique linen press (far left) that came from Ann's family home; it now supports a collection of blue and white porcelain amassed over the years. Behind the oversize mirror-glass headboard (above), custom-made open shelving (top right) provides storage. In the bathroom (right), Ann has installed a short-projection loo and wall-hung basin - both from Bathstore - in combination with a backdrop of mirror-glass panelling to 'cheat' the room's compact proportions





OPPOSITE Ann planned the square MDF panelling within minutes of her first viewing at the flat; the painting on linen is by Deborah Nicholl. THIS PAGE The kitchen (both pictures) is fitted with handle-free units from Ikea teamed with a Corian worktop. Mirror glass has been used again - this time for the splashback - to create the illusion of space; the pewter chargers are from I & J L Brown

## Downsizing FROM A BIGGER FLAT MEANT DECLUTTERING. 'THAT IS A DISCIPLINE BUT IT IS ALSO A JOY'

Even the television appears to float on a narrow plinth.

Downsizing from a bigger flat meant decluttering, so Ann enlisted Sophie March, of The Order Restorers, to help her. It was Sophie who helped Ann winkle out forgotten piles of shoes and more than 1,000 books, and now she lives with only the essentials. 'That is a discipline, but it is also a joy,' she remarks. Yet looking at the twin, bespoke bookshelves, plenty of Ann's books - which she describes as friends - remain. 'I like to mix them up, so I am always surprised.'

As for the kitchen and bathroom, both tiny, Ann has applied a stripped-down aesthetic. While the kitchen is fitted with handle-free Ikea units, the bathroom has been clad glamorously in mirror glass, so that it appears twice its size. In the bedroom, tucked discreetly behind the custom-built headboard, open shelves are piled with Ann's favourite white, grey and black clothes. She surveys her mini dressing area with pride. 'It works brilliantly, doesn't it?'

Beyond being able to ease herself elegantly into her brand-new space, the best thing about the flat is, Ann says, 'My happiness - I feel very at home here.' Back on the balcony, she comments that she has also gained a sense of community. 'The people in this street are very friendly. Every day, when I'm walking my dog, Oz, I see a little blonde girl. She always says "Hello, Wizard of Oz." and Oz and I love that' □

*Ann Boyd Design: 020-7334 1660*



