

Industrial REVOLUTION

Architect Stephen Fletcher's sensitive renovation of this London apartment celebrates its past as a Spitfire factory



Many elements have been reused, including the wall of kitchen units and the oak floor

AT A GLANCE

Names Stephen Fletcher and Christophe Tytgat

Ages 45 and 41

Location North Marylebone, London

Property Third-floor apartment in a former Spitfire factory

Bedrooms 2 **Bathrooms** 2

Project started June 2010

Project finished

September 2010

Size of flat 100sqm

Build cost £60,000

French windows added in the Nineties flood the space with light and open on to a Juliet balcony



This dramatic canopy detail masks a stair bulkhead, while a mirrored Crittall window nods to the building's past



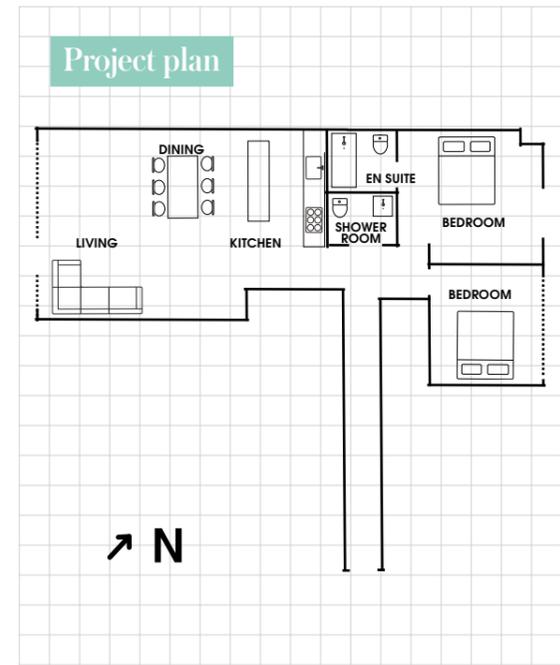
Spotlight on... Industrial conversions

>> From factories to warehouses, an abundance of empty commercial buildings are available for canny buyers prepared to deal with the red tape.

>> Careful consideration is needed. For example, commercial buildings can be subject to additional building requirements relating

to the conservation of fuel and power, which should be added to your costs.

>> Check with the local authority to see if the current owner can prove there is no market for the building in its current guise. It can take up to a year to get approval to convert, but the wait can be well worth it.



The art deco building was formerly the Palmer Aero Components factory



Jaehyo Lee's unusual wooden armchair is one of many eclectic pieces

Unusual industrial spaces can be hard to come by in central London, so when architect Stephen Fletcher saw that an apartment was for sale in an old Spitfire factory dating back to the Twenties, his curiosity was piqued. 'I had walked past the building a number of times,' Stephen says. 'The proportions and the light were an immediate draw, as were the Crittall windows.'

The striking art deco structure, which became the Palmer Aero Components factory during the Second World War, is tucked between the Westway flyover and Regent's Canal, in an area that Stephen describes as 'a bit of a no man's land'. The building has proved something of a magnet for architects, however, with renowned practitioner Sir Terry Farrell having both his home and his studio here. 'This flat was originally part of Sir Terry's offices, but when he moved the practice down to the ground floor in the early Nineties, the space was carved up into several apartments,' Stephen says.

By the time Stephen and his partner, Christophe Tytgat, bought their home in 2008, it was in need of a good overhaul. 'It was rather soulless, echoing and unloved,' says Stephen, who lived with Christophe in the space as it was for two years

while they planned a major renovation. 'There was no central heating and we only had inadequate electric heaters and a hot-water cylinder,' he recalls. 'Some of the Crittall windows are original, including the huge single-glazed one in the spare bedroom; we called it Social Siberia.'

The couple haven't made huge changes to the layout, which comprises a kitchen and living area on the west-facing side of the building and a master suite and guest bedroom on the east-facing side. Nevertheless, the works affected all areas. An unsightly stair bulkhead – which incorporates the staircase leading to Sir Terry's penthouse above – was masked by a canopy detail that wraps around part of the living space and is carried across to the kitchen.

The master bedroom, formerly an awkward L-shape, was made rectangular by reducing the en suite to nearly half its previous size. 'The bathroom may be smaller now but it actually feels larger because we raised the ceiling, which had been lowered to disguise just one pipe,' says Stephen, who also designed a tall sliding door, mirrored on both sides, to add to the sense of height and the illusion of space.

The front door was originally recessed by four metres →

'The proportions and the light were a draw, as were the Crittall windows'

The bath was reused and given a marble surround to match the floor



Grand idea



Mirrored door

Sliding doors such as this narrow, reflective design have improved the flow of the space, as well as accentuating the high ceilings. For a similar solution, try Wickes' sliding wardrobe doors, from £62.99 (0330 123 4123; wickes.co.uk)



The dark, narrow hallway contrasts with the high-ceilinged spaces beyond

into the flat, but the couple managed to purchase this awkward communal area, enabling them to create a long, slim corridor. One wall of this low-ceilinged space is painted black. 'I think it is interesting to have a low, dark corridor that leads you into a big, bright space with high ceilings. It is a good way to enter a building,' says Stephen. The shower room faces this corridor and Stephen added another mirrored sliding door, to visually elongate the hallway even further.

Central heating was installed, as well as a Lutron lighting system that can be adjusted at the touch of a button. Overhead lights could not be fitted into the concrete ceilings, so Stephen instead used wall lights that wash upwards, as well as table and floor lamps dotted around the home.

Where possible, existing features have been reused: the wall of kitchen units and a stainless steel counter were retained, oak floors were sanded and varnished and oak doors were sprayed white. A peninsula island was created to marry with the units, and a thick concrete worktop matches the new concrete sill beneath the living room window. 'It had to be poured in situ,' Stephen recalls. 'It took nearly a month to dry out.'

Next to this island, a boxed-in services duct was reopened,

creating a storage niche for cookery books, wine and the microwave. 'These relatively small tweaks can make a big difference,' Stephen says. 'By relocating pipes, we were able to make better use of the available space.'

For the wall beneath the bulkhead in the lobby area, Stephen wanted to provide a textural quality: 'I looked at cladding it in slate, but in the end I stripped off the plasterboard and decided to keep the exposed breeze blocks because they have an integrity with the building.' Painted black, this area is a dramatic feature and a good foil to an unusual piece of art, a drawing on a paper tablecloth made by Stephen's architect friend, Byron Bell.

The couple quickly went from owning the bare minimum of furniture – two chairs, a borrowed dining table and a bed – to a host of intriguing finds. 'I was on a bit of a mission,' says Stephen, who has picked up colourful pieces with Christophe including vibrant prints by Gillian Ayres, a Fifties cocktail bar and an original stool by Piero Fornasetti. The flat is largely painted off-white to allow these pieces to shine.

'Pretty much everything has a significance,' Stephen says. 'We now have a home that is very much personal to us.' **GD**

Classic Vitsoe shelving in the guest bedroom stores the couple's book collection



Suppliers

PROJECT TEAM Architect Stephen Fletcher (020 7637 1244; stephen-fletcher.co.uk) **Building contractor** Voytex (020 8568 5172; voytex.co.uk) **FIXTURES & FITTINGS** Kitchen lights Caravaggio by Lightyears at Skandium (020 7584 2066; skandium.com) **Kitchen worktop** Paul Davies Design (01932 563 832; pauldaviesdesign.co.uk) **Bathroom taps** Dornbracht (024 7671 7129; dornbracht.com) **Bathroom tiles** Imperial Bathrooms (01753 850 240; imperialbathrooms.co.uk) **Bathroom flooring** Ideal Stone Interiors (020 8917 9337; idealstoneinteriors.co.uk) **Bathroom lights** John Cullen Lighting (020 7371 9000; johncullenlighting.co.uk) **Mirrored Crittall windows** Lassco (020 7394 2100; lassco.co.uk) **FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES** Dining table Slab by Tom Dixon (020 7400 0500; tom-dixon.net) Dining chairs Fornasetti at Themes & Variations (020 7727 5531; themesandvariations.com) **Framed prints** (living room) Gillian Ayres at Alan Cristea Gallery (020 7439 1866; alancristea.com) **Sofa** Hepburn by De La Espada (020 3735 6823; delaespada.com; heals.co.uk) **Wooden chair** Jaehyo Lee at Albermarle Gallery (020 7499 1616; albermarlegallery.com) **Piano** Thirties Steinway Model S from Shackell Pianos (07971 985 302; shackellpianos.co.uk) **Rugs** Cityscape by Sam Turner and Form 2 by Tom Dixon at The Rug Company (020 3141 3040; therugcompany.com)

STYLE *finder*

Statement pieces and classic materials will recreate Stephen and Christophe's style

IN
DETAIL



Dramatic effect

Stephen and Christophe painted the exposed breeze blocks in black to create a striking feature wall that offsets their eclectic collection of artwork. Achieve a similar result with Little Greene's lamp black masonry paint, £58 for 5L. (0845 880 5855; littlegreene.com)



Get the look

1 Vintage accent Maya trunk in mango wood, £349, Swoon Editions (020 3137 2464; swooneditions.com)

2 Smooth curves Medium bell lamp in black, £289.90, Normann Copenhagen (+45 35 55 44 59; normann-copenhagen.com)

3 Industrial feature Airdrop fixed showerhead, £149, Bathstore (0333 241 2701; bathstore.com)

4 Art deco design Crittall window-style mirror, £345, Rockett St George (01444 253 391; rockettstgeorge.co.uk)

5 Classic style Ekenåset armchair in birch and cotton in Isunda grey, £150, Ikea (020 3645 0000; ikea.co.uk)

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Swatch watch

1 Contemporary finish Kitchen worktop in concrete, from £600 per sqm, Mortise Concrete (020 7859 4730; mortiseconcrete.co.uk;)

2 Fresh hue Vintage mint emulsion paint, £40 for 2.5L, Designers Guild (020 7893 7760; designersguild.com)

3 Golden glow Boulevard floorboards in oak in harmony, £132 per sqm, Junckers (01376 534 700; junckers.co.uk)

4 Luxury touch Arabescato corchia tile in marble in white, from £350 per sqm, Stone World (020 8838 3232; stoneworldlondon.co.uk)

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EDITOR'S VIEW

‘Eclectic touches enrich this home’s heritage industrial styling and add a personal stamp’