

# The London Magazine

Luxury lifestyle, prime property

Inside:  
PEAK SKI  
CHALET  
CHIC

ART  
DECO  
100 YEARS OF  
DESIGN INSPIRATION

Gen Z wish list

What young homeowners  
really want

Divorce rings

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# HIDDEN

# TREASURES

WHETHER IN ALCOVES OR UNDER STAIRS,  
SECRET STORAGE AND CLEVER CABINETRY  
HELP MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY INCH OF  
VALUABLE SPACE IN THE LONDON HOME,  
DISCOVERS ALEXANDRA GOSS



**I**nterior designer Harriet Nicholls recently finished renovating her own house in Hammersmith – and her pride and joy is the utility space on the top-floor landing.

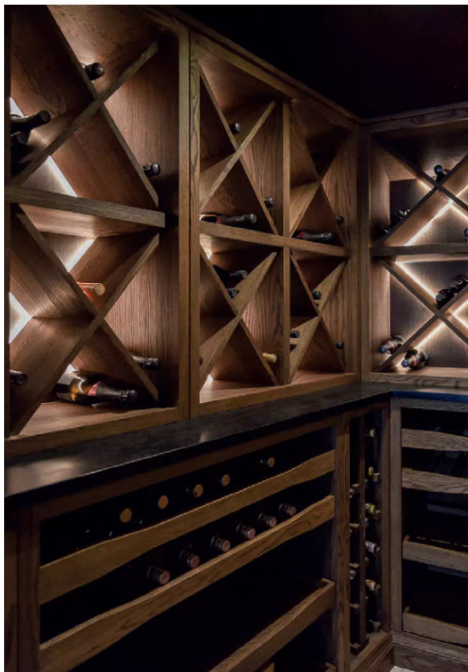
There's a drying rack above a radiator, a rail for shirts, and a bank of cupboards that fit the washing machine, tumble dryer, all household cleaning products, the iron, vacuum cleaner and travel cot. The area, which also includes a mini fridge and kettle, is multi-functional, intended for storage, middle-of-the-night baby bottle-making, or brewing morning teas for guests. And for laundry, of course.

"So much valuable square footage in London properties goes into stairs and landings and, where there's an opportunity to, I tend to promote the landing so that it almost becomes a room in itself," says Nicholls ([harrietchollis.com](http://harrietchollis.com)).

Most London homes weren't built to accommodate the needs of modern life but architects and interior designers are constantly coming up with ingenious solutions to store everything from washing to Wellington boots to wine.

George Omalianakis, director of GOA Studio residential architects ([goastudio.co.uk](http://goastudio.co.uk)), says the answer to keeping clutter at bay is "creativity, lots of bespoke joinery and an eye for detail".

Omalianakis advises using natural recesses in period buildings, such as alcoves and between chimney breasts. "Then visualise a straight line across the room that cuts off that



'hidden' area and see if the rest of the room is still functional and feels generous," he says. "It becomes a bit of a Tetris game and you can have lots of fun trying to find what fits where."

Iwona Budnik, senior interior designer at OWN LONDON ([ownlondon.co.uk](http://ownlondon.co.uk)), creates libraries or reading nooks in alcoves and under stairs. "Partner with a joiner to ensure every millimetre is put to good use and also so they can disguise doors architecturally with a matching ceiling cornice and a continuing skirting to trick the eye," she advises.

A hidden door creates intrigue, reminiscent of the wardrobe in Narnia, and it can also be a practical way of creating symmetry within a room where too many doors could make a space feel more like a thoroughfare, explains Felix Milns, managing director of HUX London ([hux-london.co.uk](http://hux-london.co.uk)).

"A bathroom becomes a wonderfully secluded, spa-like room and a playroom immensely more fun when accessed through a secret door," Milns says. Mirrors, meanwhile, can make spaces feel larger and hide hidden doors; Dominic Schuster ([dominic-schuster.com](http://dominic-schuster.com)) recently created a bespoke mirror for a client who wanted to conceal their television discreetly.

**TUCKED AWAY**

Opposite, clockwise from top left: As part of a Colette van den Thillart interiors project, mirror expert Dominic Schuster created this bespoke folding design to conceal the client's television; Studio QD, Zulufish and HUX London collaborated to fashion this trick bookcase-embedded bar, dedicated to a family's collection of rare whiskies and cigars, this custom bar designed by Elicyon was crafted to evoke a sense of excitement and discovery, from the rich marble backdrop to its rattan-panelled cabinet doors; constructed by Charlton Brown to blend seamlessly with the primary bedroom's classic panelling, this hidden door opens to reveal a secret spa-like en suite bathroom

**TIGHT SPOTS**

**Previous page:** Designed by Taylor Howes for an apartment in The Bryanston development, this hideaway bar grabs attention with its orange inset wall. **Above, left to right:** The specialist joinery skills of HUX London were called upon by Studio QD and Zulufish to help create this bedroom's hidden mirrored door, with built-in drawers and uplit shelving, this Herringbone House wine store is an ingenious use of space

PHOTOGRAPHS: GUY LEITCH; HERRINGBONE HOUSE: DOMINIC SCHUSTER; INTERIORS: TILLY HILLIARY; ELYCION





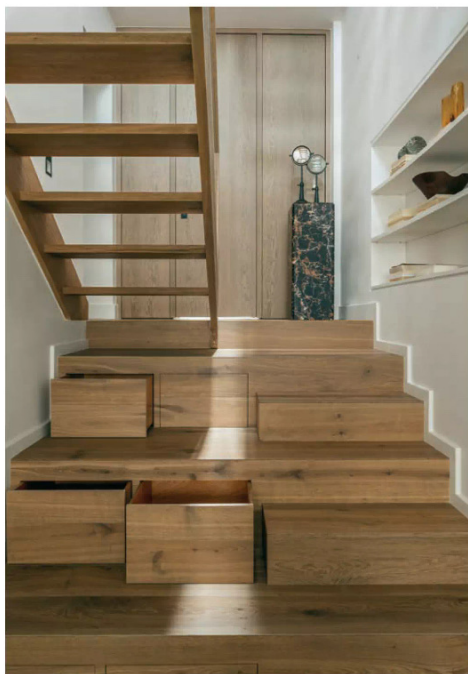
Portia Fox, founder of Portia Fox Design ([portiafox.com](http://portiafox.com)), often uses hidden joinery in a study to provide invisible storage for confidential documents, or conceals a drawer within the tread of a staircase. "This can hold shoes, off-season clothing or books," she says.

And multi-functional furniture saves precious space. Trying to work in a small north London flat inspired Seb Kouyoumjian to design [Bou.London's](http://Bou.London) FOLD desks ([Bou.London](http://Bou.London)). "No more clearing the dining table every evening," he says. "Your work environment vanishes discreetly – cables, monitors and all."

Kitchens are starting to look less like kitchens, with most worktop appliances and white goods being obscured, says William Durrant, director of Herringbone House ([herringbonehouse.com](http://herringbonehouse.com)). "The main kitchen is being used as more of a social space with open pantries or back kitchens acting as the main cooking area," he explains. "This hides mess, allows for a tidy place to entertain and creates more functional storage."

A breakfast bar hidden behind cabinetry "opens to reveal a space for coffee preparation, small appliances and all the morning essentials, ensuring the kitchen

**IN YOUR CORNER**  
**Clockwise from top left:** This one-bedroom apartment's wholly concealed kitchen artfully crafted by Christian Bense transforms the space from day to night, created as part of a wall of hidden cupboards by Bellamy & Single; this bespoke wine cabinet, conjures up an element of surprise with its Zsa Zsa print wallpaper; with a [Bou.London](http://Bou.London) FOLD desk your work space can be put out of sight and mind when office hours are over



remains clutter-free,” says Huseyin Bicak, senior interior designer at Charlton Brown ([charltonbrown.com](http://charltonbrown.com)).

The luxury kitchen and cupboard maker Plain English ([plainenglishdesign.co.uk](http://plainenglishdesign.co.uk)) often creates “service corridors” with custom cupboards to make the most of dead space in hallways, while boot rooms are as useful in the capital as they are in the countryside. Molly Derbyshire, head of sales at John D Wood & Co. in Parsons Green, recently sold a property with a secret boot room; she says these spaces are increasingly sought after by families with dogs or even simply those juggling a busy lifestyle.

When designing the boot room in her tiny quarryman’s cottage, Katharine Pooley, founder of Katharine Pooley London ([katharinepooley.com](http://katharinepooley.com)), chose Farrow & Ball’s

Lulworth Blue and Parma Gray to brighten the space. “I then added a good-sized underhung Belfast sink, which is a must for cleaning boots and even small dogs,” she says.

For homes without cellars, wine storage can be carefully hidden – as in a project by SHH ([shh.co.uk](http://shh.co.uk)) where a chilled wine store was concealed behind a full-length bespoke feature wall made of dark solid hardwood squares of varying depths, with occasional inset squares in antique-bronze glass.

And what could be more fun than a secret bar? Jane Landino, creative and design head of studio at Taylor Howes ([taylorhowes.co.uk](http://taylorhowes.co.uk)), often builds bespoke bar units, designed to be showcased with the doors open. This creates an arresting focal point when entertaining, but means it can all be tidied away when the bar isn’t in use.

To up the “wow factor”, paint the inside of the bar a bright colour or use wallpaper, as in a bespoke wine cupboard by Bellamy & Single ([bellamyandsingle.com](http://bellamyandsingle.com)). “It forms part of a wall of concealed cupboards with moulding to emulate the original French panelled doors to the dining room,” says co-founder Tori Single. “The flamboyant Zsa Zsa wallpaper by Divine Savages provides an element of surprise.” ■

**HIDE AND SEEK**  
Above, left to right: With boot and lead hooks, Nickleby cabinetry and an underhung Belfast sink, Katharine Pooley-designed Lake District bolthole’s boot room is a study in economic use of space; hidden joinery, such as the tread drawers in this OWN LONDON staircase, help ensure that hallway floors remain free of clutter

“THE MAIN KITCHEN IS BEING USED AS MORE OF A SOCIAL SPACE WITH OPEN PANTRIES OR BACK KITCHENS ACTING AS THE MAIN COOKING AREA”

PHOTOGRAPHING: CHRISTINE HUNTER; STYLING: ANNE BIRCH; INTERIORS: CHARLTON BROWN; OWN LONDON; KATHARINE POOLEY LONDON; TAYLOR HOWES; SHH; BELLAMY & SINGLE; DIVINE SAVAGES