

Wednesday 27 January 2010

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Page 10



SOUTH KEN'S SPRING CLEAN: NEW HOMES **P4** OYSTERLAND SPREADS OUT **P7** AUSTRIA HAS IT ALL **P8** GARDEN FROM SEED **P13**



BOYS ON A BUDGET

Style up your flat with no money but plenty of attitude

Page 18

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New term: the Battersea school was converted to flats in 2000



All sit: the refectory table, found on French eBay, is used for work and entertaining



IN THE 'MAD LAB'

SOME BOYS LIKE SCHOOL

A Victorian school in Battersea is the perfect studio and living space for a young artist. And its science laboratory theme gives it added interest, says **Katie Law**

WHEN 23-year-old artist Max Salvo began his search for a home in London he faced the same big problem that confronts us all – how much space could he find for his money?

He found quite a bit in a two-bedroom flat in a converted Victorian school in Battersea – big enough to work in while studying at St Martin's School of Art for a BA in Fine Arts.

Max asked his old friend, interior and

furniture designer John Teall, to help him divide up the space for living and working. John's company, FLUXinteriors, specialises in creating startling gallery-like rooms.

The layout was perfect for an artist's studio as the bedrooms were up a spiral staircase above a huge, open-plan area that could be used both for work and for living.

John explains: "I decided to build on the old school building theme and began to ask Max about some of his school memories. We spoke about the idea of science classes and their parallels to the artist's process. The idea would be to

mix up this mad scientist feel with that of a classic artist's studio, to give it an experimental lived-in/worked-in look."

But it all had to be done on a budget of £20,000.

Max, who comes from a large family in Argentina, says: "It was important not to feel restricted. I'm so used to having lots of space around me."

With John's help he turned to the internet in the search for furniture. A huge three and a half-metre refectory table was found on French eBay. It cost £1,000 and had to be lowered on ropes through the flat's second-floor windows, which was an expense but it still worked out cheaper than anything similar the pair could find, and it has proved to be a big hit. As Max says: "I love it. It is solid and hardworking and brilliant for work and entertaining."

To create their "mad lab" atmosphere they also searched for – and found – curiosities such as a collection of beetles from the 19th century in their original glass cases, a vintage Van de Graaff generator, a microscope, an old miner's lantern and several stuffed animals. In the kitchen, a row of glass chemistry bottles sits on the shelf above the sink, while elsewhere various anatomical figures – £71 each and previously used as teaching aids by medical students – are dotted about.

The furniture is no less idiosyncratic and delightfully boyish. A crushed, bright-red Ferrari was found on eBay for £500 and, topped with glass, has been turned into a coffee table; Max says it's always a talking point. A Twenties sofa (£1,500), upholstered using grain sacks, has been draped with a canvas flag advertising tobacco which was found at the archi-

Photographs by:
**Gavin Jackson/
Arcaid**

Far left: a crushed red Ferrari found on eBay is used as the base for a coffee table in the large, open-plan living area

Centre left and left: boys' toys are found everywhere in the flat, from rugby balls and Action Man figures to glass-boxed beetles and detailed science lab models





Mad lab: Max Salvo wanted interiors that would reflect the way in which both science labs and artists' studios are used to search for truth. His artworks sit alongside retro laboratory equipment

tectural salvage firm LASSCO. Two French Thirties tables with galvanised tops (£700 the pair) are now used as desks, and a set of reupholstered Sixties chairs (£125 each) make for comfortable seating around the refectory table.

Various artworks made by Max give the flat a personal touch, including a sculptural figure carrying a backpack made from plastic soldiers, while a row of cracked ceramic mugs adds to the character, and potted plants in vintage

urns (which cost £350) are set against plain, white-painted brick walls, helping to give a light and fresh backdrop to the main living space.

If the large room is open and airy, the upstairs, which was already configured as two bedrooms and a bathroom when Max moved in, is a relatively compact part of the apartment. One of the bedrooms, on an open mezzanine platform, is divided off for sleeping by two full-length, fluorescent yellow blackout

curtains on runners, again found on eBay; under-bed boxes offer storage.

Battersea has been a success for Max. The building, which was redeveloped in 2000, has gated security and is next door to Battersea Park and good shops.

"It is also close to Tate Britain, it's easy to get to other places from and it feels safe," he says. "At weekends it feels a very family place with all the children and their parents in the park. I certainly have no immediate plans to go home!"

WHERE TO GET THE LOOK

■ John Teall's FLUXinteriors for interior design (020 7091 9043; 07814 019781; www.fluxinteriors.co.uk).

■ Twenties sofa from Castle Gibson (www.castlegibson.com).

■ French dining chairs and

galvanised metal desks from The French House (www.thefrenchhouse.co.uk).

■ eBay in the UK and France for other furniture items and school laboratory equipment.

■ LASSCO for vintage flags (www.lassco.co.uk).



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