

Wednesday 19 October 2011

Homes & Property

The flame game

Design ideas to keep you warm
Page 11



BARGAINS BY THE TUBE **P4** EAST SURREY'S SECRETS **P6** PEOPLE WHO NEED STEEPLES **P26** SPOTLIGHT ON SPITALFIELDS **P30**



**The peerless
'Lord Shoreditch'**
My home: Page 24

ADRIAN LOURIE

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Slick: despite its expensive Bulthaup appliances and glitzy stainless steel, Steve and Sylvie insist that their vast galley-style kitchen is strictly functional

At home with the peerless

LORD SHOREDITCH

Big-brand clients can't get enough of 'the mad designer in funny glasses.' **Katie Law** meets Steve Edge in his lively east London family home

BRAND designer Steve Edge and his wife, photographer Sylvie Tata, have watched the area around their Shoreditch home turn from derelict wasteland to cutting-edge design district since they moved there in 1994. "Then the area was empty. There were For Sale signs everywhere. There were no shops and it was deserted at nights and weekends," says 53-year-old Steve, known locally as Lord Shoreditch for his flamboyant dress sense.

In their search for a home the couple managed to find and buy an empty 2,000sq ft, light-filled Victorian warehouse. The mid-Nineties housing market slump was at its deepest and Shoreditch was cheap. Having three children, aged five, eight and nine, and no budget for refurbishment, they had to be imaginative about how they would all live in its three rooms – an open L-shaped space, a small bedroom and a bathroom.

With his oversize black-framed Cutler & Gross spectacles, jazzy floral shirt, checkerboard suit and matey cockney banter, Steve is pretty unconventional. He grew up in a working-class family in Brixton; his father was a porter at Smithfield Market. Having been told he was "unteachable" at the age of five and later diagnosed dyslexic, he is entirely self-educated. But he has always been good with his hands and used his natural building ability to create an exciting family home.

"It was a totally different way of living from what we had known before," he says. "The floors were sloping and the

ceiling was a mishmash of plasterboard. But we liked it. We built a platform bed, a skateboard ramp, painted a track for the kids to rollerskate round and put up hooks in the ceiling for a trapeze."

Two more children followed, so Steve and his wife vacated their bedroom and moved their bed into the space under the three older children's platform bed. Sylvie says: "It may seem unconventional but when they were young, the kids were happy being able to see me all the time, even if I was doing something else, like the cooking."

As the children grew older, privacy became an issue, initially solved by putting up curtains "like gypsies", but they obviously needed rooms of their own.

At a school auction, Steve won an hour's consultancy with architects Theis and Khan, who proposed not just an extension on the flat roof above them, but a complete redesign.

He says: "We had to apply for planning permission to Hackney council to build the extension. There were issues about going upwards and blocking neighbours' light. It took six years to get permission, so by the time we got it, the three elder children had moved out and gone to university."

The couple are delighted with the privacy of their two-storey penthouse, its floors connected by a coiling Le Corbusier-style staircase. The two younger children, now 14 and 16, have a bedroom each and bathroom close to the "totally functional" Bulthaup galley kitchen and living area downstairs, while Steve and his wife are upstairs. In addition to their bedroom and bathroom, there is a study-TV room opening on to a decked



outdoor patio with tubs of pomegranate, olive, mimosa and cherry, and magnificent views of London.

The architects they used, says Steve, specialise in designing for families: "They told us the communal parts should be like the village square with the children's rooms close by and the adults'

In the pink: Steve casts off on his roof terrace with an item from his growing collection of fly fishing paraphernalia



Left: like the brands Steve helps remodel, at home the old school gets a modern setting



Above and right: the couple found extra space by adding a floor on the flat roof, though it took six years to get planning permission. Furniture is a mix of the modern classics

'Where else but London would you never pay a penny for your children to travel to school?'

been modest. "We've never paid a penny for the children to travel to nursery, primary or secondary school, let alone school fees. Where else but London could you do that? It's an amazing city in that way."

Steve's branding company, Edge Design, which employs 12 people, is around the corner and the three elder children, now all in their twenties, live nearby and visit often. His clients, who include Fortnum & Mason, Purdey guns and Lock hatters, are mostly dyed-in-the-wool, established English companies and it is Steve's job to bring them into the 21st century by updating elements such as image, logo and online presence.

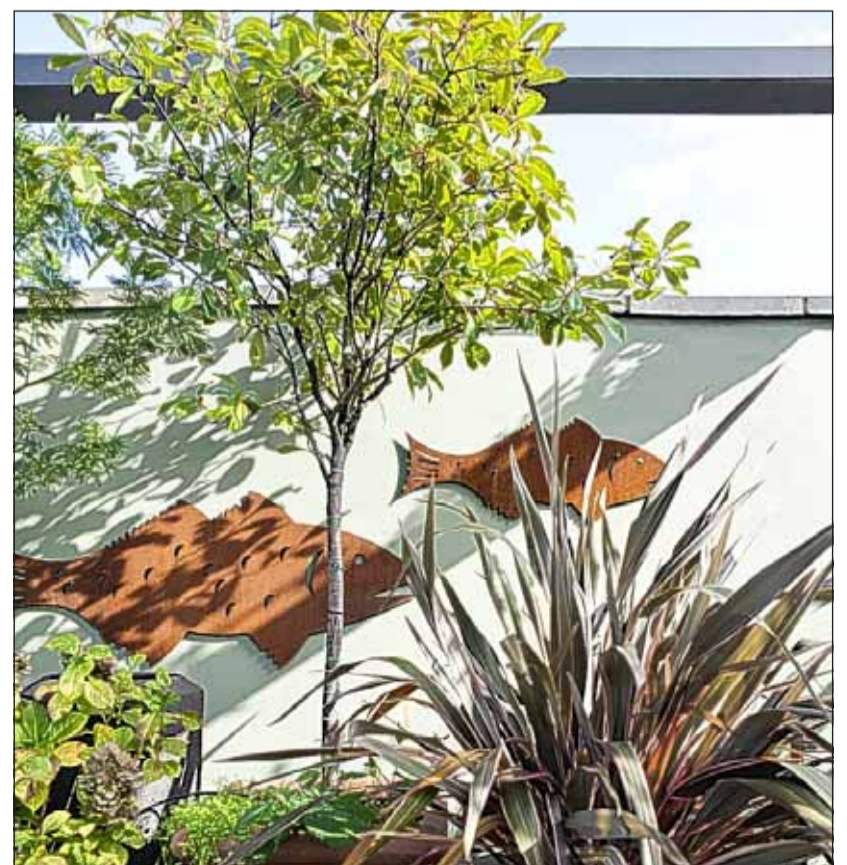
"When a mad person comes into their boardroom in a funny outfit and big glasses, they might be thinking, 'What is he?' but within five minutes they're hanging on to my every word," he says. "Any business I work for I try to identify the core message. There's far too much information in design. People don't have time to absorb it all. It's important to keep your identity clean and sharp and to identify the story in every product."

"I learned that from my father. When I was young, he gave me my first rucksack. He said this is a Bergen rucksack, which the Danish Army use, and it's what keeps all their equipment safe, from the snow and the wind... and he created a story around the rucksack."

Steve's personal favourite brands include Manchester United and Cutler & Gross, but his most successful brand is himself – Lord Shoreditch.

■ steve-edge.com; thisandkhan.com

Photographs: **Adrian Lourie**



In the shadows: a dappled corner of the terrace, which has views across London

bedroom as far out of the village as possible." Clever details include walls with open apertures to accommodate Steve's collection of objects, including his fly fishing paraphernalia. Furniture is a mix of classic Eames and Barcelona chairs, Matthew Hilton sofas, Vitsoe floating

bookshelves, Eileen Gray tables and lighting by Castiglione. The floors are tough American walnut and the open-plan wardrobe displaying Steve's colourful clothes is from Ikea. Despite the high conversion costs, Steve is pragmatic. The property was cheap to buy and their living costs have