

STYLE

THE SUNDAY TIMES

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Bright young thing

HOW **DAISY
EDGAR-JONES**
WENT FROM
MUSWELL
HILL TO THE
HOLLYWOOD
HILLS



Plus

**HAUTE
HOSTING**
FASHION UP
YOUR GARDEN
TABLE

**NOSE OR
NIPPLE?**
RISE OF
THE MIDLIFE
PIERCING

DEAR DOLLY
I FAKE ALL
MY ORGASMS.
HELP!

The grey in the reading
nook (Graphenstone's One
Colour Grey) was chosen
to contrast with the
mustard light



Small wonder

Design expert Betsy Smith has transformed her cramped ex-council flat in Peckham into a light, bright and joyful home, says **Jessica Salter**

As she looks around the inviting and impeccably dressed rooms of her Peckham flat, the interior consultant and stylist Betsy Smith describes them as being akin to "a series of little sets". Which is perhaps no surprise from someone who worked as the head of design for Conran stores for 25 years, in charge of creating mini tableaux designed to tempt customers inside.

"Mini" here is the operative word, because her 1970s former council flat is small. "Like, micro," she laughs. But despite being compact, Smith, 51, has made the two-bedroom home feel light, airy and almost spacious thanks to a clever use of colour, a disciplined approach to design and a willingness to tackle any DIY project.

Smith bought the flat in 2006. "At the time Peckham wasn't quite so lovely as it is now," she says wryly. "It was pretty bleak." So was the flat: "It needed a huge amount doing to it. The windows were painted in red glass, there were ceiling fans and horrendously dated carpet everywhere... It wasn't pretty. But I'm practical, I enjoy the process of making things, and I was up for the challenge."

What she loved was the light that poured in through the living room windows on a sunny day. She also knew she could make more of the overall space. So she started by tearing down and rebuilding stud walls to reconfigure the rooms: "I moved things around to allow more light in or make spaces work harder." The building work, done by Smith after her day job, was slow. "I was without a kitchen for a year and a half because it was my workshop."

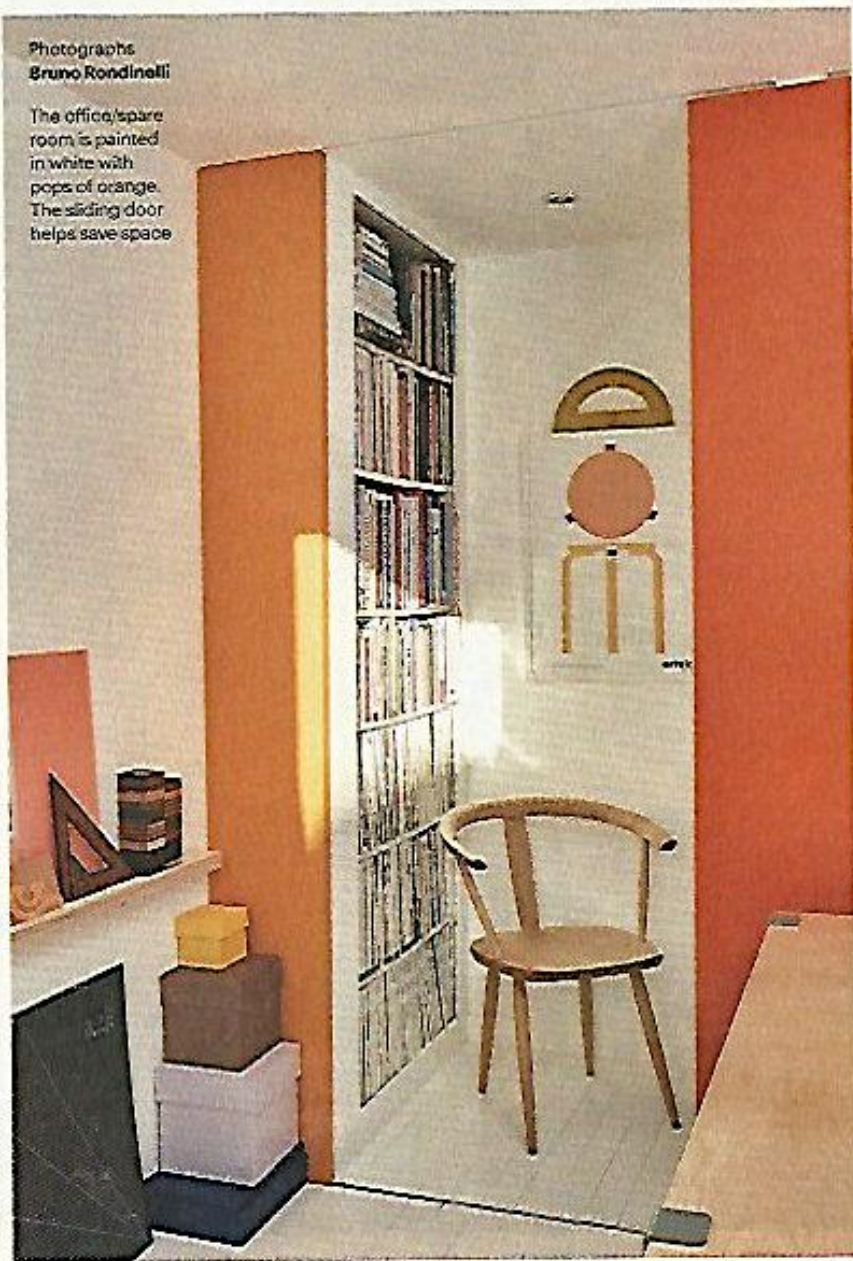
Once the configuration was sorted, Smith, who has a background in fine art, started to decorate. As the flat had no period features, "it meant I had to create my own areas of interest and develop my own narrative."

She started painting everywhere white as a base layer. "I associate white with creating space and clarity to think clearly and be productive," she says. It also has the advantage of uniting her home. "In small spaces you've got to have a consistency throughout to keep the flow," she says.

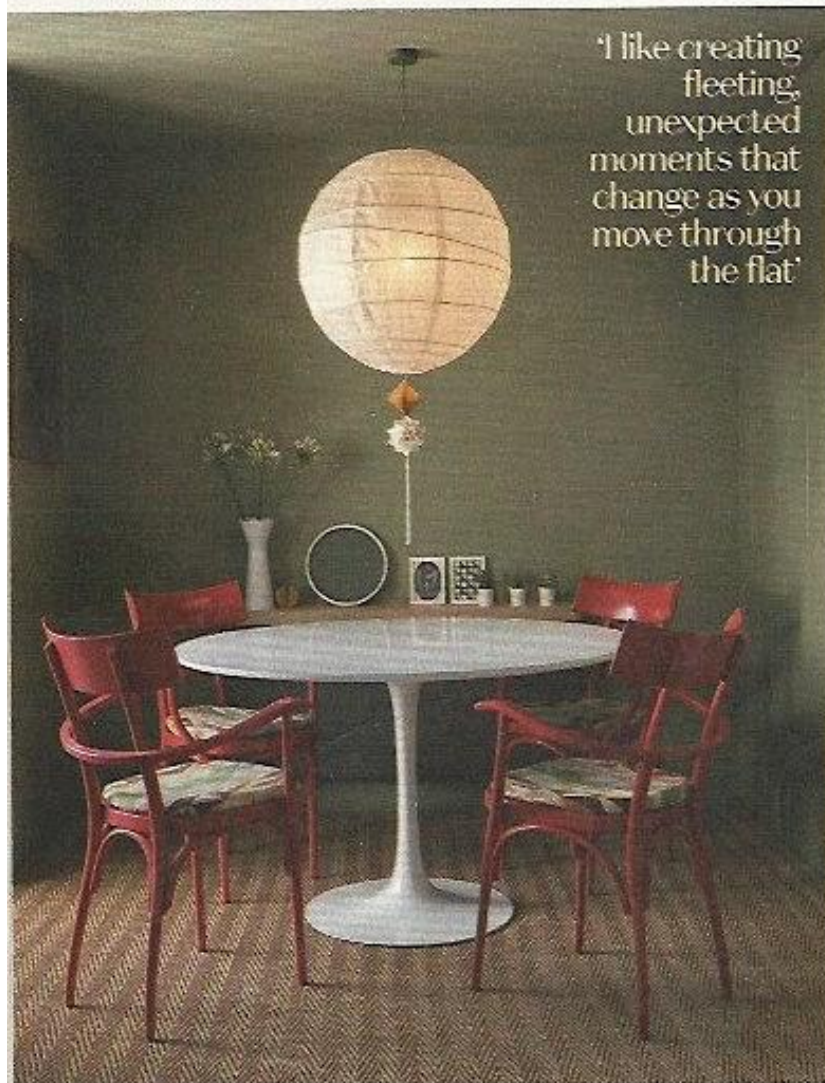
Then she set about creating what she calls "colour pockets": small areas of interest that either zone a space — say, the reading nook (painted grey) or the dining room (painted

Photographs
Bruno Rondinelli

The office/spare room is painted in white with pops of orange. The sliding door helps save space



Right Before starting landscaping the garden, Smith built a scale model complete with bonsai trees. The grey timber helps the foliage stand out. **Below** In the dining area the red Conran chairs, bought at a sample sale, pop against the olive paint. 'I thought I'd repaint them but they sing against the green,' she says. **Below right** Betsy Smith



'I like creating fleeting, unexpected moments that change as you move through the flat'

olive) — or provide a focus. 'I like creating fleeting, unexpected moments that change as you move through the flat,' she says.

These colour pockets can also create a filmic effect. For instance a window recess in the hallway is painted a coral colour that creates a reflected pink glow on the opposite wall. 'It completely changes shade throughout the day, from a warm peachy blush on a sunny morning to a moodier lilac towards the end of the day.'

Important, too, is the way the colours work with each other; the orange Formica door to the cloakroom, for example, overlaps with the reflected pink. 'Orange is a great companion to pink because it gives a contemporary edge that doesn't feel overtly feminine,' she says.

Thanks to the restless nature of her styling work, Smith is constantly updating her home. 'I reinvent the spaces and narratives regularly through colour updates,' she says. Which, when you live somewhere micro, is relatively easy. As she says: 'It doesn't take long to repaint a little nook.'

Smith is a colour consultant for Graphenstone; graphenstone-ecopaints.store





This picture in the hallway, with the downstairs loo beyond, orange paint from a window recess casts a pink glow on to the walls. **Left** Mirrors give a sense of space in the bedroom



The hanging plants in the living room give privacy. 'I didn't want a curtain as it would have been overpowering in the space,' Smith says