

Child-friendly chic

ANNA BARNETT HAS TWIN BOYS, BUT HER HOME REMAINS STYLISH AND CLUTTER-FREE. HERE'S HOW SHE DOES IT



Left: Anna in her open-plan kitchen/dining space. Below: twins Renzo (left) and Marlon and their bedroom



The living room sofa is by Oka; the coffee table is from Audo

WHEN ANNA BARNETT and her husband, Thom, finished the renovation of their Georgian townhouse in east London, food writer and podcast host Barnett was five months pregnant with twin toddlers. The renovation was hardcore. It took many months to re-model the layout of the four-storey end-of-terrace house, getting to grips with the planning issues that come with doing up a listed property, budget blow-outs and lots of DIY, which included rendering with micro-cement ('horrendous') and applying plaster paint ('never-ending'). The end result, though, was a home in soft tones of beige, with pale oak floors, statement marble surfaces and carefully curated artworks, along with shelves of books and glassware that together created a super-stylish and peaceful oasis.

Into this tranquillity burst Renzo and

Marlon, who are now boisterous toddlers. The house, however, still retains its calm mood and chic aesthetic. Despite sleepless nights and the relentlessness of raising twins, Barnett has managed to keep things on the stylish straight and narrow. True, some concessions have been made – a pair of high chairs at the marble table, a stair rail at the top of the staircase that leads to the basement living room, and a low shelf, once filled with decorative glassware, is now largely bare – but the house is free of the clutter that seems to manifest itself as soon as young children come along.

So, how has she done it? 'We have adapted and figured things out as we've gone along,' says Barnett. 'The glassware was moved when the boys started to toddle and the designer dining chairs with particularly sharp corners are out of the way for now.'

And we're not too precious,' she says. 'When we bought the marble table, the maker told us to use it because the stains and marks become part of its patina and its heritage, so that's how we treat it.'

Storage is also key. While old Fortnum & Mason hampers make for tasteful toy boxes, the heavy lifting is done by banks of floor-to-ceiling cupboards in the living room, as well as in the kitchen and two bedrooms. 'We built it in wherever we could,' says Barnett, 'and it really does allow us to put so much stuff away, out of sight, and that makes a difference.'

The family also spend much of their time in the ground-floor kitchen, which leaves the living room, in the basement and in tones of cream, free of sticky toddler fingers.

Relocating the kitchen from the basement to the ground floor was a crucial aspect of the renovation. For a cookery writer with a big social media following and popular foodie podcast, *The Filling* (the new season with guests such as Jeremy Lee and Natalie Silverton has just launched), the kitchen was always going to be an important space. 'I'm obsessed with natural light and, as the kitchen is my workspace, where I cook and shoot and spend much of my time, it had to be somewhere that got plenty of light,' says Barnett. 'We lived in the house for a few months before we began work and it became clear where the kitchen had to be.'

Although it is a four-storey property, the rooms are not large, so almost all of the entire floor was opened up to allow for a



good-sized kitchen, which is dominated by a large marble-topped island. 'We wanted to extend both the basement and ground floor, but those renovation plans were turned down, so we spent what money would have gone on the extension on heirloom-worthy pieces and designer furnishings,' says Barnett.

The main bedroom was moved from the loft to the first floor to catch the morning rays that come with views to a tree-filled square. 'I had this vision of me in bed with the babies, having a cup of tea, looking out at the trees,' she says. 'That didn't happen! But I wanted a hotel-room vibe and the room definitely has that.'

While configuring the house was logical, decorating was a challenge. 'I wanted the house to be timeless and enough of a blank canvas that it could evolve, but trends at the



PREVIOUS PAGE: ANNA WEARS TOTEME FROM NET-A-PORTER



'A MARBLE TABLE'S STAINS AND MARKS BECOME PART OF ITS PATINA'

time were all about layering checks and gingham,' says Barnett. 'But then I had to remember that I don't want to live with that and to stay focused.' It helped that Barnett had enlisted the help of interior designer Laura Lakin. 'She kept bringing me back to the mood board I created before we began, which helped keep that clarity and stop the look being muddled by trends and other people's aesthetics,' says Barnett.

'My main inspiration was the Danish brand Audo, which I saw first-hand at its

Left: above the De La Espada marble table is an artwork, bought to remind Barnett of her late grandmother. Below: beneath the stairs, the marble desktop is an off-cut from the bathroom.

Far left, from top: the ensuite bathroom in the twins' room; in the boutique hotel-style bedroom, the side table is from The Conran Shop with lights from Audo; carefully curated shelves in the deVOL kitchen



house in Copenhagen,' she says. 'I fell in love with the texture, their plaster paints – we've used St Leo Dolomite Plaster in Rue Bottero on the walls – the furniture and accessories. When I ran out of steam after fruitless hours scrolling through eBay, Vinterior and 1stDibs, I went back to Audo, chose what I loved and repeated it. It was not how I envisaged doing things, but the upside is that there's continuity through the house, which helps give it a sense of calmness.' Even with small children running riot.