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PLUS
*A topiary garden
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...ue touches abound throughout
...lat. The pine tree in the living
... was cut and dried, then its
...ghs were rehung with artificial
...les. Box-like wooden panelling
...ides book storage and shelves
...hich to display framed pictures

Rooms for improvement

This former warehouse in Paris was converted by its interior-architect owner into an unusual flat, comprising a series of cabin-style rooms set within the large, open-plan space

TEXT **TINA HØM** | PHOTOGRAPHS **JEAN-MARC WULLSCHLEGER**

W hen interior architect Grégoire de Lafforest and his wife Stéphanie first saw this single-storey, former warehouse in the eleventh arrondissement of Paris, they immediately saw its potential. 'It had high ceilings and lots of space, which was what we were looking for,' they explain. However, it took a lot of perseverance to transform it into a comfortable interior. 'When we first visited, it was basically a dark tunnel with a big boiler in the middle of it,' says Grégoire. 'The only way we could bring light into it was to put windows in the roof.'

Getting planning permission and also the approval of all the building's co-owners to replace the original zinc roof with a glass one took nine months – and on top of that the boiler, which once heated the building, had to be cut in pieces to be removed. Still, those nine months gave Grégoire time to think the project through, and also to give free rein to his creativity. He imagined 'a cluster of six small wooden cabins' as a way of creating a structure within the voluminous space. Each 'cabin' corresponds to a room: three bedrooms; one bathroom; a scullery; and a glasshouse for the kitchen.

The renovation materials were simple: metal was used to construct the partitions, which were then covered with plasterboard and wooden panelling. The maritime pine tree, which dominates the living area, adds a touch of a village square to the place, but it's not quite what it seems, having been cut and dried, and had its branches carefully re-covered with artificial needles.

Another quirky but rather more practical touch is the way that Grégoire has placed the kitchen in a glasshouse – a self-contained unit within the living area – so as to enjoy the light from the skylight above. 'It is a simple garden greenhouse kit,' he explains, 'which we painted black and mounted around an Ikea kitchen.'

Kitchen aside, the flat is impressive. 'We replaced the dark zinc roof with glazing, and kept the ceiling height in order to be able to create interesting installations and have a big living space,' says Grégoire. 'We live and work in this space, and the children play here while we work at the big dining table.'

The choice of a sober colour palette – greys and white – pulls the varied spaces together and makes for a serene and neutral atmosphere, against which the sharp yellow of the furniture and accessories looks particularly vibrant. The flat is filled with clever ideas and Grégoire's own designs. This unusual space certainly showcases its owners' ability for thinking outside – or in this case, inside – the box □

Grégoire de Lafforest: www.gregoiredelafforest.com

FAR LEFT FROM TOP Ikea kitchen units (top) were fitted inside a greenhouse (centre) to provide a separate kitchen. Grégoire made the light above the dining table out of a metal barbecue. LEFT Bleached-oak parquet flooring and a glazed roof contribute to the feeling of lightness in the apartment. The yellow 'Facett' sofa is from Ligne Roset. RIGHT FROM TOP An 'Olab' light designed by Grégoire sits in front of a fresco by Alix Waline. Statement walls include a polka-dot wallpaper from Au Fil des Couleurs in a child's room and 'Vivienne's Lace' from Cole & Son in the main bedroom