



MOVIN', ON UP

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EVERYTHING ABOUT THE ROOF GARDEN APARTMENT BY LONDON FIRM TONKIN LIU AND LORD RICHARD ROGERS SEEMS TO CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES, INCLUDING THE ASSUMPTION THAT FAMILY LIVING AND URBAN LIFESTYLE DON'T MIX

BY TERRI PETERS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD BRYANT/ARCAID.CO.UK



At night, the Roof Garden Apartment competes with the most dramatic buildings on London's Shoreditch skyline: a two-storey glowing lantern perched on top of a once boring warehouse. From the street, vertical bands of colour – vibrant orange, pink, yellow, green and blue – emanate from within. What might surprise a passerby is knowing that this skyward rainbow that is lit up by neon comes from the bedroom walls of four daughters who live in one of the city's most unusual family homes.

Designed by local architects Anna Liu and Mike Tonkin of Tonkin Liu, in partnership with celebrated architect Lord Richard Rogers, everything about this project seems to challenge expectations. For instance, the family doesn't enter the home by going through the front door and up the stairs. Spatial constraints made it impossible to build an elevator inside the warehouse. Instead, access is via a neighbouring building, where a mesh-clad bridge connects the two rooftops.

Entering the house through a bright red door at the end of the bridge leads to a double-height foyer, and to the children's rooms, arranged around a built-in, cushion-filled conversation pit. Upstairs, the space is an open concept with triple-glazed windows surrounding the kitchen and living room. Tucked behind the kitchen and skylit bathroom core is a sleeping area for the parents. From this level, a mesh-clad spiral staircase leads to a green roof terrace that houses solar panels, a garden and space for play and admiring the view.

Tonkin Liu's glass house, built on top of an old warehouse in London's Shoreditch district, is now home to a couple and their four young daughters.



ACCESS TO THE HOUSE IS VIA A ROOFTOP BRIDGE THAT CONNECTS TO A NEIGHBOURING BUILDING

Structurally, the house hangs from a steel frame – a necessary measure, since the building could bear no weight, aside from on the heavy brick piers of the perimeter walls. Braced by steel columns, the exposed steel and glass looks high tech, but Liu explains that low tech was the overriding approach to making the complex seem straightforward. To minimize overheating, for instance, the house is shaded on two sides by a steel structure that forms a loggia with fragrant climbing ivy. At ground level, the building steps back to create shaded areas. In addition, ventilation grilles have been installed and automatically open in warm weather, pulling cooler air upward to circulate through the upper floor before reaching the rooftop vents. Amazingly, this rooftop house uses only passive methods for temperature control, with no air conditioning to pick up the slack.

This ambitious project not only succeeds in transforming an unused rooftop but helps dispel the notion that family life and urban living don't mix. **AZ**



ABOVE To keep overheating in check, the architects incorporated a number of green features, including triple-glazed windows, automatic exterior blinds and lots of greenery on the rooftop deck.

TOP RIGHT The upper level combines the living room, dining area, kitchen and master bedroom into one loft-style space. A four-piece bathroom is tucked behind the kitchen area.

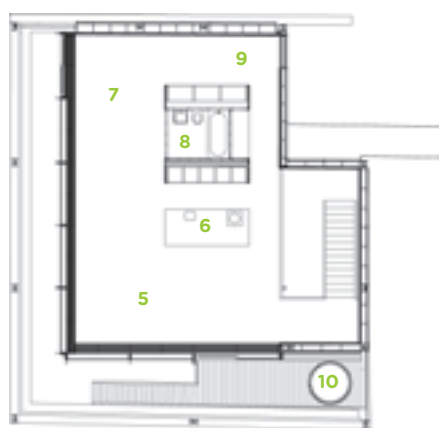
BOTTOM RIGHT On the main level, the front door leads to a double-height foyer and a conversation pit. Designed as a play area for the children, the cushion-filled pit can't be seen from the street.

MAIN LEVEL



- 1 Children's bedrooms
- 2 Bathroom
- 3 Conversation pit
- 4 Bridge

UPPER LEVEL



- 5 Living room
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Master bedroom
- 8 Ensuite bathroom
- 9 Office
- 10 Spiral stair

