



**Bold vision:** Kevin Twitney, above, gave architects free rein at his home, left



**M**ARKETING guru Kevin Twitney knows all about taking on huge projects – in 2012 he helped organise the celebrations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Describing himself as a consummate risk-taker – having broken numerous bones skiing off-piste and from falling off horses – he is no stranger to jumping in at the deep end. So the idea of transforming a grotty old office building in Covent Garden into a modern home wasn't daunting in the slightest.

Eighteen months after work began, the building is unrecognisable and the 65-year-old has a fabulous home, which is elegant and peaceful, despite being in a bustling area of town. Twitney credits tried-and-trusted architects Form Studio for the transformation, saying he just allowed them to "get on with it".

"In creative industries, you have to give people space," he explains. "They'll then make it their own project, and make an extra effort."

Life wasn't always so glamorous for Twitney. Raised in County Durham, he won a scholarship to art school in Birmingham, then came to London in 1971, where his first home in Belsize Park came complete with a "battleaxe landlady and a cooking ring on the carpet". Noticing that his artist friends were all impoverished, he went into advertising, getting a job with McCann-Erickson, and never looked back.

Since then, he has been building and selling businesses. Triangle, his consultancy, whose clients included Sainsbury's, was bought by Publicis in 2001.

**Vantage point:** a new top-floor studio, left, opens out on to twin roof terraces

## Star quality in Covent Garden

Marketing boss Kevin Twitney went shopping for offices – the dismal block he bought is now his stunning home, says **Philippa Stockley**

and Twitney joined the board. "Having founded a family business, I became director of a company with 60,000 employees," he says. He went on to set up Initials, which he sold in 2011.

Meanwhile, he was working his way up the property ladder, from a mews in Maida Vale, to a modern house in Primrose Hill, where a burglary led him to sell up and rent in Mayfair.

While living there, he heard about a big lateral conversion in Clerkenwell that was for sale because its developer had gone bust. Twitney bought it for £700,000 and it was through this that he met his architects, Form Studio, who were already on the job.

"It was very James Bond: all white and steel, with 360-degree views," he says. However, he didn't like living in a flat, so moved on again, this time to a Nash house in Regent's Park.

In 2013, while looking for new offices for his current business, Sense London, he instructed an agent to seek out anything with 5,000 square feet within a 10-minute walk of Charlotte Street, W1. The agent came up with a narrow, vertical, five-storey-plus basement brick terrace in Covent Garden, with a lift and stairs right up the centre, cutting the spaces in half. Twitney recalls the sorry state of the place: "Small, dark rooms, corridors, damp, musty, and so old it probably broke every law in the land." He bought it anyway.

But then his architects suggested turning it into a home instead. "I said, 'It's too narrow, it's too this, it's too that,' but they said, 'Why not try for planning permission anyway?'"

At that time local planners were keen for more houses in the area and Form Studio's proposals went through without any problem. They included stripping out the interior and creating a soaring, striking, double-height kitchen-diner. This room was to have folding doors on to a new walled courtyard with bamboo screens and a mirrored back wall. Form also planned to add a light-filled top floor with two roof terraces.

The plans were bold – but in contrast to Twitney's appetite for risk, Form is methodical and does everything by the book. Surprisingly, Twitney had only one request: "I told the boys I wanted parking built in for my little electric car, but they said no." It's his only regret. The four-bedroom house is cool and calm, with

**Top quality:** right and far right, the kitchen and marble-floored bathroom



**Striking transformation:** old Covent Garden offices became a home with a double-height kitchen-diner, featuring folding doors to a walled courtyard

immaculate finishes, from solid oak floors to marble-floored bathrooms. It isn't flashy... except, perhaps, the red-leather-lined lift with mirrored doors. And even that's more Art Deco than decadent.

Given that this home is in bustling Covent Garden, it is unexpectedly peaceful. In the top rooms, triple-glazed windows look out over roofs and treetops. At night, the private courtyard lights up. "You wouldn't believe it was right in the centre of town," Twitney says. "I can walk anywhere from here."



**High on light:** top-floor living space looks out to treetops – in the heart of town



**Elegance:** cool colour scheme and immaculate finishings, right down to the oak floors

**What it cost:** office building in 2013: in the region of £1.9 million  
**Money spent:** £2 million  
**Value now (estimate):** £6.95 million  
**Architect:** Malcolm Crayton and Mike Neale of Formstudio at formstudio.co.uk

Photographs  
**Charles Hosea**



**Everything included:** a cinema room completes the property