



LEFT The nursery is brightened with wall stickers from Walls Of The Wild, a cot by BM2000 and a Marimekko fabric canvas. BELOW The mirror references Leo's favourite *Jungle Book* song. RIGHT A calming colour scheme is created in the lounge with a sofa and leather upholstered pouffe and coffee table by JNL and a rug by Esti Barnes. OPPOSITE PAGE The kitchen has a sofa by B&B Italia beneath a huge poster from Ikea



A space odyssey

When Staffan and Monique Tollgård designed their vibrant modern flat in the heart of London, they also wanted to give little Leo freedom to roam

WORDS JUDITH WILSON | PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON BEVAN

THERE COULDN'T BE a better environment for a little Leo than a space filled with trees, birds, lizards, a baby orang-utan, fish and chameleons. So no wonder two-year-old Leo Tollgård adores his nursery. But when his parents, Staffan and Monique Tollgård, first moved into this west London apartment, their starting point was

effectively a big, white box. "It had been done up in the Eighties by the minimalist architect David Chipperfield, but the minute we opened the door onto this long hall, we could picture it with a child zooming up and down on a bike," says Monique. "And that is exactly what Leo does now."

Many couples adapt their existing home when a baby comes along, but the Tollgårds went flat hunting with family life in mind. After moving here in spring 2007, they spent six months reworking the space – and they love it. There is a communal garden in the square outside, the location is central

(and a five-minute cycle to their offices) and the proportions are generous, with four-metre high ceilings. "Previously, we lived in a four-floor Victorian town house, so we were actively looking for lateral living space, with one staircase," says Monique.

It's plain to see that they are interior designers with a flair for colour, line and art. Originally from Sweden (Staffan) and South Africa (Monique), the couple met in their previous careers in the film industry – Monique was an actress; Staffan was a first assistant film director. Staffan chose a new career direction and trained in interior design, then, after Monique became pregnant, she left her job with a television documentary company to study interior decoration at the Inchbald School of Design.

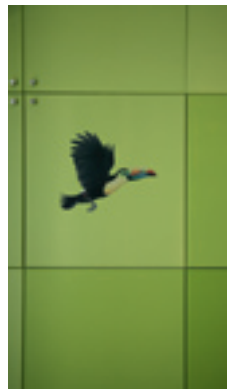
In 2005, Staffan set up his own interior design company, Staffan Tollgård Design Group. He also masterminded the day-to-day planning of the redesign. The couple both share a love of clean spaces and bright accents of colour, and Staffan likes to develop projects with what he terms a "red thread" –

"Bold pieces of art make the apartment bright and stimulating"





CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT
A painting by Tommy Penton adds colour to the white walls; a toucan wall sticker ties in with the nursery's jungle theme; the hallway is perfect for play and also features a rug by Marcel Wanders and lights by Herzog and De Meuron; Leo paints at the kitchen table. OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT The nursery's striking wall map of the world from The Conran Shop; a table by JNL, chairs by Massant and a rug from Nanimarquina add colour and texture to the dining room



strong visual cues that draw everything together. But did Monique mind playing second fiddle to Staffan's design vision here at home? "No, because the space is wonderful," she says, pointing out that the furnishings are distinctive and colourful, right down to a different upholstery fabric for each dining chair. "One is squeaky, another is furry – this is a child's paradise," she says. "I would happily have used furniture from our old house, but Staffan started again. The proportions are huge here, so many pieces were bought specifically for the space."

BOLD PIECES OF art are the vital component that make this apartment so stimulating, ranging from the wire *Andrea* sculpture by Randy Cooper, bought in Paris, to the three-metre tall Fifties poster for the *Daily News* that hangs next to the dining room. "We found that in New York, and it came in three separate sections. We love it because they are kissing," says Monique. At the end of the hall – which the Tollgårds call "the gallery" – is the kitchen. Here, a limited-edition poster from Ikea in vibrant comic-book hues hangs above the sofa.

Originally, the kitchen was the least family-friendly room, with too many fixed features. "It was like an obstacle course," says Monique. Now it is a combination of dark wood cupboards teamed with a run of dark-green gloss units and a sensuously curved island unit – deliberately child-friendly – topped with stainless steel. It is cosy, yet chic. "I was brought up to believe that children should eat in the kitchen, and I have the same rule with Leo," says Monique. "Nonetheless, we still have fun in here – if we're going to paint, we put on our smocks and we go for it."

The greatest changes, in terms of layout, were made in the basement, where two bathrooms, three bedrooms, and a

laundry room now nestle. Every inch of space has been cleverly used: tucked into the corridor is a walk-in wardrobe, and in the light well outside Leo's nursery, where there is no view, there is a bustling image of people passing the London Eye by artist Tommy Penton, Leo's godfather. Every morning, when the blinds are drawn back, Leo can view London's South Bank in all its glory. "We wanted something stimulating to look at, but you can't take a mural with you when you move," says Monique.

Although there are flashes of bright colour, most of the decoration is neutral – walls are painted in an architectural off-white, and the oak floors have been stained with a grey oil. Yet downstairs in Leo's nursery, the room is suffused with colour. "Green is a great shade for children, as it is both restful and energising," says Monique. The cot was the starting point: Monique wanted something more exciting than a traditional white wooden cot, so when Staffan saw the green cot by BM2000 at the Valencia furniture fair, they snapped it up. Around it, there's a jungle theme: one wall has built-in storage – in green to match the cot; another has a vintage *Jungle Book* film poster alongside tree and orang-utan wall stickers, while a mobile featuring numerous animals adds a traditional touch.

By contrast, the master bedroom is a haven of tranquillity. The walls above the bed are finished in a grey perlata paint that imparts sheen with a subtle sparkle and adds depth. To hide the basement 'view', a sheer white curtain gently filters the light, with remote-control black-out blinds. "On a weekend morning, Leo wakes at 6.30am, but we'll bring him into our bedroom with a box of toys and he'll play happily until 8.30am," says

"As soon as we opened the door, we imagined Leo running in the hall"

Monique. "Then we'll have a relaxed family breakfast together."

Back upstairs, the large interconnecting sitting room and dining room is the social hub for the whole family. Here, Staffan and Monique have many of their favourite modern design pieces – a giant JNL leather-upholstered pouffe-cum-coffee table and the Seventies circular chair, where Staffan likes to sit with Leo for story time. "It's a lovely mix of comfortable pieces that are laid-back, yet elegant," says Monique. "I think this is also Staffan's favourite room – it's usually where I find him."

Yet doesn't the combination of a design-savvy home and Leo – whom Monique describes as having "his own particular brand of non-stop motion, investigation and demolition!" –

pose a conundrum for the couple? "People expect us to be precious about furnishings – but instead of bothering about felt pen marks on upholstery, we accept that nothing lasts for ever," laughs Monique.

But she does explain that having a place for everything, and a few house rules is key.

This home allows the Tollgårds to have a relaxed lifestyle in the heart of a bustling city, and the communal gardens definitely play a part. "It's brilliant – there are swings, and all the children from the square play there, so there's a sense of community," says Monique. "In summer, there is a positively Mediterranean lifestyle, with children staying up late. It's refreshing to realise you don't have to put your baby to bed at 6.30pm." Evidently one little household rule that this design-conscious mother is more than happy to break ■

For more design ideas, visit www.tollgard.co.uk. For stockists of featured products, turn to Stockists on page 129.