



Hidden in PLAIN SIGHT

Ensure technological innovations for the home work in perfect harmony with the interior decor

ABOVE When not in use, this television becomes a mirror. *Eglomisé Geometric TV Mirror*, from £3,710, *Overmantels*

RIGHT This period residence is a good example of how home technology can be hidden away. The artwork on the right of the fireplace rises to reveal a television. *KnektD Integrated Media with integrated Crestron technology*, £POA

With the evolution of high-technology products for every need in our homes, it can be something of a challenge to integrate such gadgetry into the interior decor, particularly in a period home. Yet with careful planning and sympathetic design, it is possible to achieve a seamless finish.

ACCESS ALL AREAS

Whether it is warmth underfoot, cool air during a heatwave, favourite music being played throughout the home or lighting levels automatically adjusted to suit a mood, it can all be done at the touch of a button. As Louise Jones of Louise Jones Interiors explains, technological advances improve our levels of comfort and make life simpler. When it comes to determining where to employ such technological solutions in a period property, she advises assessing where it is worth spending the money. "It is all possible, at a price," Jones says. "Think about where you spend the most of your time - eating in the kitchen, relaxing in the living area or unwinding in the bathroom. In period ▶





ABOVE At the flick of a switch the glass in the fanlight above the door turns black to block out any light going into the drawing room beyond which is fitted with a home cinema (see page 123).

properties it is perfectly possible to install the technology; the challenge comes in making it look good afterwards. Consider Victorian switches to control a Lutron or Crestron lighting system; opt for traditional cabinetry to conceal air conditioning units; or think about engineering an old reclaimed floor to lay over underfloor heating.”

Nicola Fulstow, who runs luxury home technology company SONA, says that working closely with an experienced home technology designer can help to incorporate tasteful solutions in a period property where aesthetics, function and performance can all be accommodated. “If you are building a property with period features, or you’re renovating, it is vital to get the right infrastructure in place right at the start, otherwise you may have to compromise on design or function somewhere,” Fulstow says.

BOX CLEVER

A television tends to be a staple in the sitting room and often in the bedroom, too. To avoid it taking up much of the landscape in a room, consider concealing within a freestanding media cabinet or dresser with doors to close when it is not in use. Look, too, to the latest innovations, including screens that drop down from the ceiling and televisions that turn into works of art or mirrors when not in use. For the latter, try Mirror Media, Samsung and Overmantels.

“For larger budgets, hire a professional home technology integrator to conceal the screen behind an automated panel that will move to reveal the television only when you command it,” suggests Stuart Tickle, managing director of residential technology company AWE. “The Frame television by Samsung is another good option, as it looks like a picture on the wall when turned off. There is a choice of frame to match most interiors and the screen can be set to display either an artwork of your choice or your own images. To save energy, it has a motion sensor that detects when no one is in the room so that the television automatically switches itself off.”

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Music is an incredibly personal thing and many homeowners gain great pleasure from being able



to listen to their favourite tunes as they relax in the bath, work out in a home gym or entertain in the living area. “To maintain the integrity of period properties, loudspeakers can be discreetly concealed behind fabric wall panels, within joinery units or even plastered over so that they appear totally invisible,” Jones says. “With so many ways for users to access music, it is key to focus on providing solutions that are robust and simple to use and co-ordinating them to work with the interior decor.”

CLEVER KITCHENS

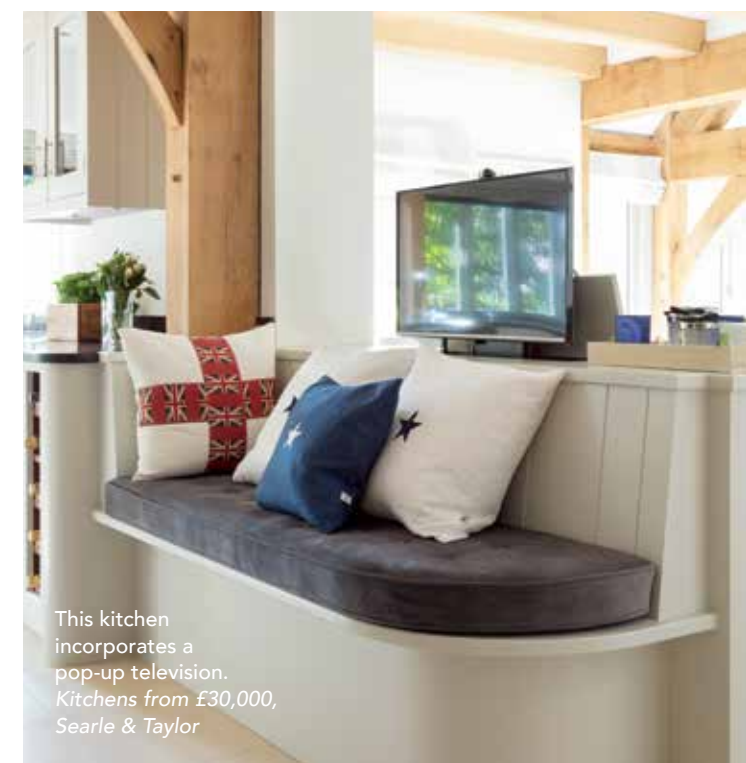
In order to make our busy lives easier, kitchens are another big area that have seen a rapid increase in the evolution of smart technology.

Many kitchen appliances can now be operated via Wi-Fi, enabling homeowners to turn the oven and washing machine on as they travel home from work. Some refrigeration designs feature touchscreen controls on the exterior, with internet connection that shows recipes and step-by-step guides depending on what is inside the fridge – some even send an alert when food is past its best-before date. For ▶

ABOVE LEFT This range cooker features Bluetooth technology that allows the oven’s timer to be controlled from a smartphone.

Richmond Deluxe range cooker with Zeus Bluetooth-connected timer, from £1,899, Stoves

ABOVE RIGHT The Ruark MRx connected wireless speaker on the shelf is compatible with all leading music streaming services and can be linked up with other speakers for multi-room music. *MRx Bluetooth Wi-Fi connected wireless speaker, £399, Ruark*



This kitchen incorporates a pop-up television. *Kitchens from £30,000, Searle & Taylor*

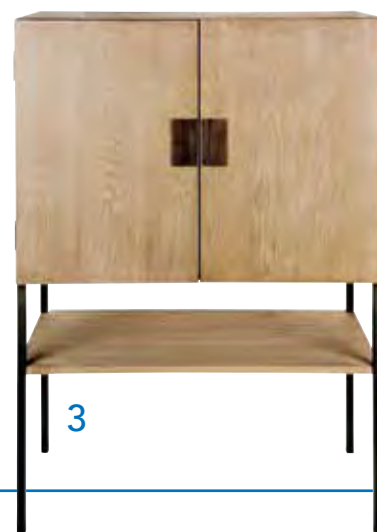
Decorative concealment



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- 1 Mendel television stand sideboard, £599, Swoon + John Lewis & Partners
- 2 Warm Elm, television cabinet, £1,565, Shimu
- 3 Gaston Media Unit, £1,460, Sweetpea & Willow
- 4 Henley television dresser in Smoke. Available in 28

- bespoke colours, and in a 4ft and a 5ft version, from £2,800, Neptune
- 5 Pagoda Chinoiserie television cabinet, £1,550 Oka
- 6 Finn Media Unit, £620, Perch & Parrow



charging up smartphones and tablets, consider installing a work surface with an integrated wireless charging area or a set of drawers with USB ports inside for charging without having messy plugs and cables on show.

“Just because the kitchen may be more traditional in style, it does not mean that you have to forego more contemporary technological aspects,” says Darren Taylor, managing director at bespoke kitchen company Searle & Taylor. “That said, if these aspects can be hidden when not in use by being built into furniture or behind pocket doors, then they will be less incongruous than if permanently on show.”

Taylor advises considering intelligent solutions to incorporate pop-up Wi-Fi-enabled flat-screen televisions within the kitchen area. “These can be concealed within a central kitchen island or in the back of a seating unit, for example,” he says. “Using a remote control, the television will rise up, and will then disappear from view when no longer required. We always create a design that ensures a television

will be housed in a location that faces the cook, so that they can also use the screen to look up recipes online [if it is a smart television].”

ILLUMINATING IDEAS

“At all times within a period property there are issues around the sensitive nature of adding lighting and controls,” says Nic Black, managing director of audiovisual solution company The Pyramid Group. “Working in period or heritage properties forces the lighting designer to think very hard about the practical impact of adding lighting, ensuring that the fabric of the building is not compromised as a result. This is a careful balancing act, but there are many technologies that employ robust wireless communications in order to minimise the need to run all manner of cables through walls and floors, for example, but equally allow the lighting to be installed in a flexible and creative manner.”

Simon Walker, residential business development manager for Crestron, which provides smart home

TOP LEFT Duette energy-saving blinds can be motorised and voice controlled via Amazon Alexa and Google Home, and be operated remotely using the smartphone app. *The PowerView Motorisation system is available to buy with all shades, prices from £150, Duette*

TOP RIGHT This drawing room converts into a home cinema. At the flick of a switch, a screen drops, a projector lowers, the curtains in the room shut and only a couple of chosen mood lights stay on. *Interior by Thorp Design*

FAR LEFT Worktops can include wireless capability thanks to the Corian’s discreet Charging Surface, as shown with this Grey Onyx work surface. *From £310 a metre, Corian*

LEFT Samsung’s The Frame television allows users to display artworks on its screen from a variety of different sources when it is not in use. *The Frame television, from £1,199, Samsung*



LEFT While away time in the bath by having a waterproof television in the bathroom. Smoked-glass and mirrored options are also available, with demister screens to prevent condensation. *Bathroom by Ripples, £POA*

ABOVE RIGHT

This bedroom has a remote-controlled housing to conceal a pop-up television at the end of the bed. *Fully fitted bespoke bedroom furniture, from £10,000, Simon Taylor Furniture*

RIGHT Crosswater's Belgravia digital shower valve features colour-changing LED lights to indicate ideal water temperature and a remote control device that can be fitted up to 10 metres away from the shower. *Belgravia Crosshead single-outlet shower valve, £649; Belgravia 200mm showerhead in chrome, £169, both Crosswater*

RIGHT The Stratum-N base unit includes Bluetooth speakers, and auxiliary socket and internal lighting. *Stratum-N base unit, £2,297, Roca*



automation technology, says, "Crestron touch screens provide an easy-to-use interface for adjusting interior lighting schemes. This eradicates the untidy appearance of multiple light switches and dimmers, as well as the time spent turning switches up and down trying to find the perfect level. Lighting plays an especially important role in the bathroom, as natural daylight is often limited. Cleverly positioned lighting can be played up to counterbalance this and colour-changing and dimming effects can be used to change the ambience, creating a therapeutic space."

SAFE & SECURE

Many of the latest high-technology innovations in the home are for wireless and smart security systems. For example, lighting that can be programmed to turn on and off at a set time from a smartphone, keyless doors, key safes and even doorbells that can be answered via a smartphone so it is possible to talk to – and even see – who is at the door, whether at home or not. Look for a registered member of the Customer Electronic Design & Installation Association (CEDIA – the international trade association for companies who design, manufacture and install technology for the home) for experts in the design, installation and integration of home automation systems. Names to note include Ideaworks, Crestron, SONA, AWE and Tillman Domotics. ■