

Interiors



Eleanor Flegg with the best in design and decoration for your home



The 'As If From Nowhere' unit acts as a set of shelves which you can pull a table and chairs from (right)

Coming OUT OF THE closet

Visible storage solutions let home owners display the things they use most... but in an attractive way

CONSIDER your cutlery drawer. The contents evolved through natural selection – basically all the cutlery that hasn't been lost or broken over the years. Half of the stuff in there is never used.

The outdoor clothes drawer is not much better. I recently counted five single gloves. None of them had a partner. And, along with the one woolly hat that I wear every day, are several that I haven't worn in years. I open the drawer and wince at the chaos in inside. Then I close it again. The basic principle is – out of sight, out of mind.

There are two main ways of storing things in the home. One is to shut them away in a drawer or a cupboard. This works, up to a point, but the disadvantage is clutter builds up behind closed doors.

The other is known as visible storage. You keep the things that you use in plain sight, but display them in a way that looks attractive. It's not a radical notion. People have displayed books this way for centuries. Now, other everyday items are coming out of the closet.

Not surprisingly, some of the coolest visible storage products come from Scandinavia.

"We're much more familiar with these ideas in Denmark," says Louis Weyhe Funder of Nordic Makers. An architectural historian who always wanted to have a shop, he now runs Nordic Makers in Blackrock, Co Dublin, with Klaus Kristian Sorensen.

Their design ideas for visible storage include the Copenhanger (€195), a minimalist floating hanger. Once installed, the sturdy wooden pole hangs vertically from the ceiling on a leather cord. You have to drill a hole in the ceiling to install it. There are ten knobs on the pole, irregularly placed like the branches of a tree, on which you can hang things.

"The room defines the function," says Funder. "If you have it in a chil-

dren's room you can use it for toys. In a hallway you can hang coats and scarves on it. We've just sold one to someone who plans to use it in her bathroom." One of these might take the pressure off my outdoor clothing drawer. I could display the things I use all the time and the rest could go to the charity shop. In a perfect world...

The Moodboard (€195) is a wall-mounted device along the same lines. It's a wooden board with 12 holes into which you can fit a selection of pegs of different lengths, including magnetised pegs to hang your keys. Change the configuration and you change the display.

Other stylish display units for outdoor clothes include the Hat Tree (from €262) by Ben Fowler from the Futon Company. Like all visible storage solutions, it looks best with just a few things on it.

Funder does admit that visible storage is not for everyone. "I think displaying your everyday items needs a simple home. It doesn't work in an interior that's very ornate or full of antiques. These ideas work best in a home that's a bit more modern."

Nordic Makers also has a cutlery drawer solution. The Liana E51 (€195) is a wooden shelf, just big enough for a couple of mugs. The underside of the shelf is magnetised so that you can use it to hang your cutlery. A fork, for example, hangs with prongs down. The shelf works as a way of drying cutlery, but also as a way of storing cutlery.

It's designed by Nicolai Estanga Hansen who had the idea when he noticed the amount of unused space beneath his kitchen shelves. "My idea with the cutlery shelf was to turn



this idea – upside down – I saw the bottom of the shelf as a place that I could take advantage of, both practically and decoratively."

Wall-mounted bicycle storage is not a new idea, but it's formerly been more about necessity than style. Now, with better mounting solutions available, bicycle enthusiasts are using their state-of-the-art machines as wall features.

"The bicycle is a beautiful machine – we make it easier to show them off," says Jon Taylor, designer of the Cactus Tongue (from around €98). It's a wall-mounted steel tongue with attractive curves on which you hang your rothar. More expensive versions have hand-stitched leather sleeves. Displayed on one of these, a nice bike does look stylish. But it would turn more than sophisticated mounting

to transform my battered bike into a design statement.

I'm probably never going to be able to afford one of these, but my absolute favourite visible storage solution is "As if from nowhere..." by the Irish designer Orla Reynolds. It's a deep bookcase which, at first glance, has colourful lines of inlay. Look a little closer you'll see that the coloured sections are a table and four chairs that can be pulled right out of the unit. Talk about hiding in plain sight!

If you don't want a massive bookshelf in one room, the unit can be separated into blocks, still containing the furniture. "My sister has them dotted around her apartment," says Reynolds. "And I have one underneath my television. I keep forgetting that there's a chair in there."

She had originally hoped the unit

could be accessibly priced but, during the long, hard struggle to bring the design into production, had to accept she would never be able to have it made to the standard she wanted for a price that first-time buyers could afford. The unit currently costs €3,000.

"It's for professional people who live in small spaces," says Reynolds who finds the unit has a special appeal for the Transformers generation, men in their mid-30s who played with the toys in the early 1990s. Now it's a bookshelf, now it's a bookshelf AND a table and chairs!

"I think I'm bringing them back to their childhoods," says Reynolds.

For more information on the products mentioned see orlareynolds.com, cactus-tongue.co.uk, nordicmakers.com, futoncompany.co.uk.



Orla Reynolds' unit has special appeal for men in their mid-30s



Left to right: The Hat Tree; the Mood Board features 12 holes in which you can fit a selection of pegs; a storage rack from the Futon Company; and the Copenhanger