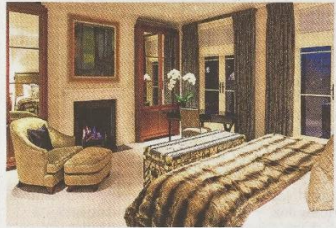


Property



Cover: a trunk at the foot of the bed conceals a television, by Studio Indigo, left; Halstock cellars take stock inventory, below right

The smart home just got smarter

Now you can dim the lights, check on the kids and let the dog out while barely moving a muscle. *Tory Kingdon* looks at the latest digital appliances for the hi-tech household

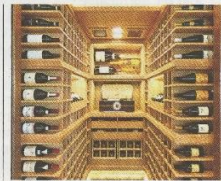
Much has been made of the rise of the "smart home" - integrated technology that promises to simplify our lives, reduce energy costs and generally make us happier and healthier. There are now mattresses on the market that wake you at the optimal stage of

your sleep cycle, kettles you can boil from your iPhone and fridges that text you when the milk has run out. These may be a step too far for the average home owner, but there are simpler products for your first foray into digital living. A survey of 2,000 households, conducted by PwC earlier this year, found that 72 per cent of participants are still not interested in having a smart home - but of those who had adopted the latest Wi-Fi-enabled technology, 95 per cent said they had already experienced the benefits.

Rebecca Wakefield, the creative director of Banda Design Studio, says that the primary function of modern technology in the home is to be "seamless; to blend into its surroundings with little room for error. Smart heating and lighting systems make all the difference, but we avoid the likes of automated blinds unless it's a huge space. Sometimes you just want to draw your own curtains."

A smart thermostat is the place to start. The Nest Learning Thermostat is now on its third-generation model, which sports a thinner profile and a higher-resolution screen (£249; nest.com). The temperature can be adjusted with a simple spin of the dial and after a few days the thermostat will learn your preferences, automatically creating a heating programme to suit. A green leaf on the screen indicates when

you are saving energy and you can check your consumption on your smartphone. You can even control it remotely should you wish to turn the heating off due to an impromptu evening out. The Apple-owned company also offers Nest Protect (£89), a carbon monoxide and smoke detector, and the Nest Cam (£159) surveillance system, which both integrate with



the thermostat.

The Hue smart light bulb from Philips also pairs with Nest units (Philips Hue starter kit, from £59.99; meethue.com). The Hue allows you to control the light from your phone, dimming it or changing its colour - choosing warm light for bedtime reading or energising cool light for the morning, for instance. Lights can

After dark: bedroom walls at Artisan in Fitzrovia turn from clear to opaque when touched

turn off automatically when you leave the room, or, when paired with the Nest Protect, turn on or flash red when smoke is detected.

Integrated appliances are key for seamless technology. Bang & Olufsen has just launched BeoLink Smart Home (starting from £1,095; bang-olufsen.com) which allows its products to be controlled remotely and connected with other tech in your home. Its main perk? "You can send a text message to turn off all your BeoLink products to make sure the kids are studying

'Sometimes you just want to draw your own curtains'

and not watching television," says Brian Ejorn Hansen from Bang & Olufsen.

For many new luxury property developments, these integrated technologies are par for the course. The BeoLink system has been installed at Chelsea Island, a scheme of 89 homes at Chelsea Harbour by the Hadley Property Group. At Artisan, Dukelease's new collection of boutique apartments in Fitzrovia, KNX provides integrated control for lighting, heating and cooling - and the bedrooms have been installed with smart glass that can change from clear to opaque by touch.

While it's easy to blend hi-tech

HOW TO STAY IN CONTROL SEAMLESS TECH, EASY LIVING



PetCube
Keep an eye on your pets from afar with this Wi-Fi camera and speaker, £159



Nest thermostat
Create a heating schedule based on your preferences and tweak via the app, £249



Philips Hue
Change the brightness or colour of your lighting using your phone, from £59.99



PetWalk
These door flaps can be programmed to open only for your pets, from £1,435.50



Arlo by Netgear
The security camera streams and records on your smartphone, from £189.99



HozeLock controller
Attach to your hose and water your garden at the touch of a button, £114.99

products seamlessly into modern properties, period homes are trickier. Halstock, the bespoke cabinetmaker, works with tech firm Ideaswork to offer hi-tech, yet discreet, solutions. Products from kitchen appliances to televisions can disappear into made-to-measure units or worktops, with controls on one smart device. "People say they want all the technology in their home to be 'reliable and really simple'. In fact, they usually want it to be reliable, incredibly clever and very tailored, while just appearing to be really simple," says Halstock's managing director, Richard Miller.

While smart sensors, cameras and alarms can help keep unwanted intruders out, they can also let friendly ones in. Mike Fisher, founder of Studio Indigo, has a lift in his home that operates by reading his dogs' microchips. The PetWalk door flap (from £1,435.50; petwalk.uk) works in a similar way. If you simply want to keep an eye on your furry companion, there's the PetCube (£159; petcube.com), a Wi-Fi-enabled camera that allows you to watch pets from your smartphone, talk to them through the two-way speaker, or entertain them with a laser light. Smart technology can smooth many parts of your life, from saving on your energy bills to keeping your pets happy.