

Spinster ate frozen meals surrounded by \$7.9-million in art

From the outside, it's an ordinary red-brick house in a terraced row, not unlike thousands of others scattered across Britain. But on the inside, Jean Preston's spartan Oxford home contained works of art of international significance, carefully acquired over a lifetime and haphazardly displayed. Ms. Preston, a thrifty 77-year-old spinster who rode the bus and ate frozen meals, died in 2006. But art

TALK OF THE TOWN

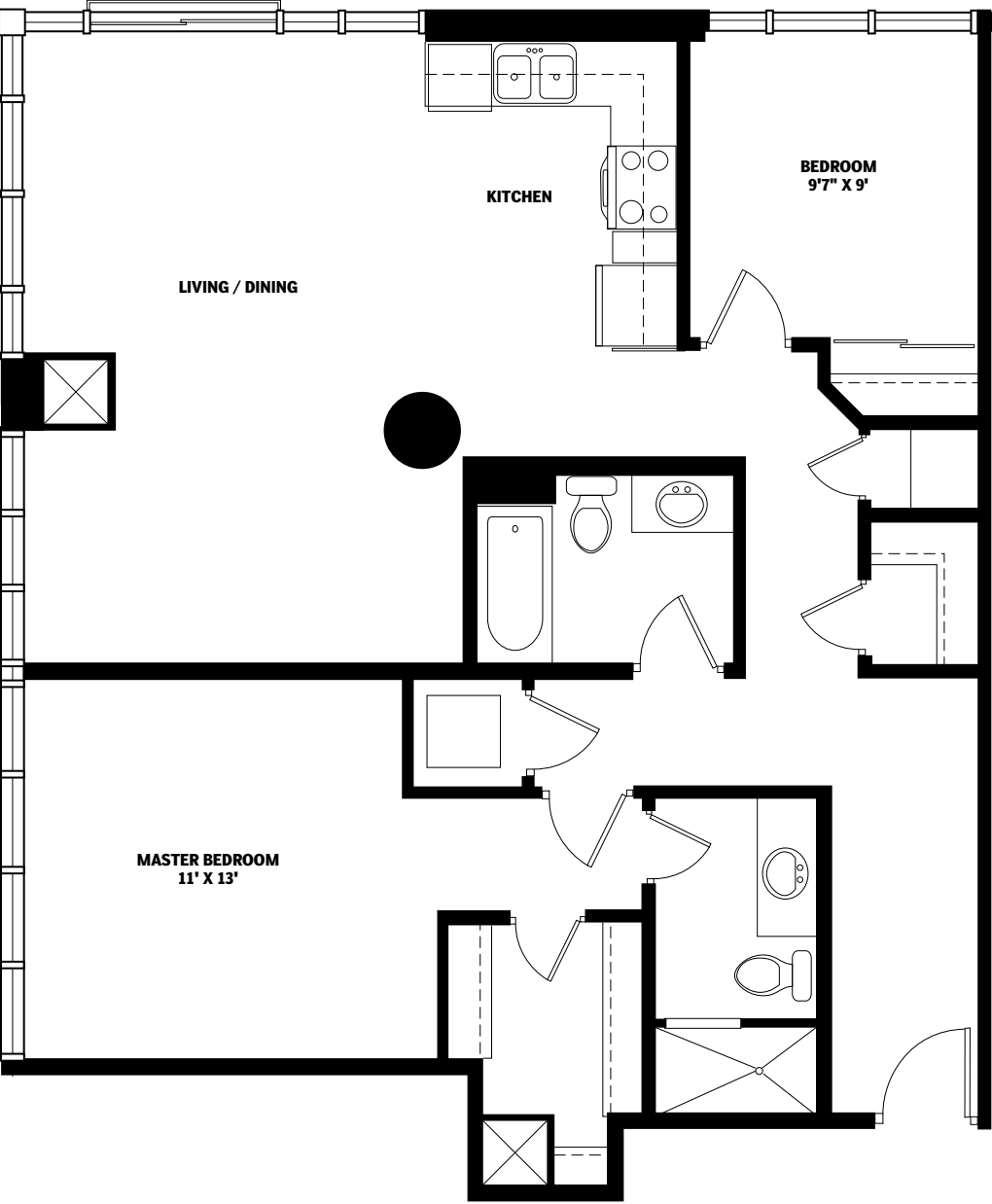
experts and auctioneers have now completed the sale of the exceptional works hoarded in her modest home. The auctions have raised an estimated £4-million (\$7.9-million), according to valuers, about 20 times the price of the house they were kept in, stunning experts and Ms. Pres-

ton's relatives alike. Among the treasures were two paintings by Fra Angelico, the 15th-century Italian Renaissance master, that were the missing pieces of an eight-part altar decoration. Reuters



CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Three design experts analyze a layout for a 1,451-square-foot condo



DEE DEE TAYLOR HANNAH
Architect, interior designer



If only it were the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles, where some order exists, because this hallway is a

windy road to a column. The corner of a unit is a fabulous experience but if you are exhausted by the time you arrive, what is the point? To enter a home into a bedroom wing provides little to no privacy, especially if it is the master bedroom. Martini time: Shake it up with the living/dining at the entrance of the unit and the master bedroom in the corner. At least give the best to the king of the castle. Stretching the imagination, combine the walk-in closet with the master ensuite so that you are surrounded by mahogany doors as you bathe. The opulence you will feel as you brush your teeth with full-length mirrors and Trevor+Chase clothing will be grand. You could even line the nickel inlaid drawers with orange cashmere to match your sweater set. Not to be outdone in the main living space, incorporate a chair rail with Dongia linen fabric below and linen wallpaper above. Spread out a fur carpet on your vintage wood flooring and recline avec wine. ■ Dee Dee Taylor Hannah operates Taylor Hannah Architect and is a partner in Montclair Construction.

ANTHONY PROVENZANO
Intern architect



If a good friend of mine created this floor plan, and I wanted to spare him the brunt of my criticism,

I'd only say he has created a plan that is somewhere between a rabbit warren and a maze. And if he took that as a compliment, our friendship would be in jeopardy. Seriously. The best part of this unit is that the kitchen/living/dining areas all occupy the glass corner and that's where the public zone wants to be. The worst part is that you're asked to make two lefts and a right turn to get there. Outside of that, the rest of this unit is tantamount to the square peg jammed into the round hole. I would lay out the space so that there's a more directed flow to the public zone. First, flip the two bedrooms; second, change the circulation. Instead of walking straight in, occupants should go left off entry, toward a smaller bedroom, make one right turn and be in the public zone. The kitchen can slide over to make a proper master suite and the rest of the rooms can get redistributed in the remaining area. To me, this is reminiscent of that *Seinfeld* episode in which George gained success by doing the opposite of what he would normally do. Aside from the public zone's placement (in the glass corner), to make this a success, I would do the opposite of what is here now. ■ Anthony Provenzano is an intern architect and furniture designer.

ZAC RIDGELY
Lighting designer

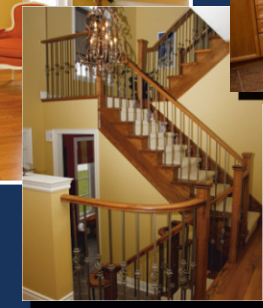
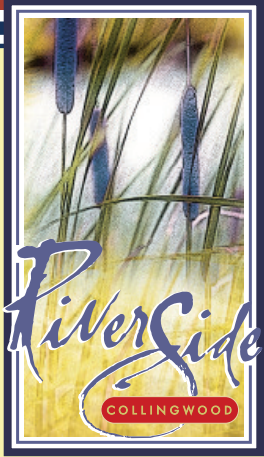


Where to start? I like to call this plan the "house of doors" and who knows what they will find

behind any of the eight in it. There are many areas to tackle. The traffic pattern is convoluted: You enter, turn one corner, turn another and just when you finally make it to the living/dining area you collide with the round column. And the occupant of the second bedroom has to walk practically to the front door to reach the washroom: Move that bedroom adjacent to the master. The bedrooms' new outer wall encases the awkward column. Entry to this bedroom and the master would be where the laundry is now. The kitchen can then be moved to the corner and defined by adding an island between the now larger living/dining area. By relocating the laundry, you not only create the new access to the bedrooms but this affords more privacy to the master bathroom/dressing area and eliminates some of the many doors. I would also reduce and move the closets in the hall to the adjacent wall, straightening the entry and improving the flow. ■ Zac Ridgely is the principal of Ridgely Studio Works, an interdisciplinary firm focusing on custom lighting, sculpture and design.

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A look at the latest carpets, plus a wine-stain secret

From Persian carpets and shag rugs to skins



LYNDA REEVES
Style for Living

Buying area rugs can be stressful. Mistakes are expensive and patterns go in and out of style long before a carpet is worn out. Even if you aren't concerned about home fashion trends, you still need a change from time to time.

A recent afternoon spent at Elte uncovered some of the best current looks in area rugs. Shaved rugs from Pakistan called the Vintage Rug Collection are just arriving in store. These are handmade patterned rugs in subtle colours that have been shaved of their pile so the look is flat and fine.

I had to laugh. I remember when *House & Home* with *Lynda Reeves* was a studio show, and we wanted this look so we just turned over a strongly coloured Persian carpet to reveal the back, which was more tonal and softly patterned.

Patchwork has moved from quilts to rugs. Squares of vintage Turkish rugs are sewn together to form wonderful mosaics of pattern and colour. If you want fun and funk, this could be the rug for you.

For the environmentally conscious, there are surprisingly luxurious rugs woven from hemp, bamboo and linen fibres using only natural dyes.



RUG COURTESY OF ELTE; PHOTO BY TRISH SNYDER

The latest must-have for the fifth wall: handmade patterned rugs that have been shaved of their pile so the front looks much like the back.

Elte owner Ken Metric showed me antique Moroccan shag rugs for the truly fashion forward. They dot the lobby of the Shore Club in one of Miami's most luxurious hotels. Très chic.

Skins are still big, laid over flat woven matting or hardwood floors. I have a shaggy dog with muddy paws and I wondered how a white skin rug would survive the winter in my front hall. It's amazing. It doesn't absorb the dirt. You just wait for it to dry and brush it off.

Low-pile area rugs made of wool, in neutral colours like cream and taupe, are still my first choice for a living room. I find them calm and easy to live with. Visitors often ask how I keep them clean.

Here is my favourite tip for removing the dreaded red wine spills from a cream wool rug: Blot the wine with paper towels. Then pour a bottle of inexpensive white wine right over the spill. Like magic, the white wine removes the stain.

I don't know how it works but I promise it does.

At W Studio in Toronto, the news in area rugs is luxury yarns like mohair and cashmere, woven into gorgeous soft rugs that would be heaven in a bedroom.

If you have kids and dogs and a busy household, a patterned rug is still the most practical choice. You may choose something modern like a hand-knotted Himalayan rug in a stylized ikat pattern. You can view examples of these rugs at elsoncompany.com.

Or you may opt for the classic Caucasian woven rug in deep rich colors. Bohemian is back, and even if it weren't, nothing hides stains better than a beloved Persian carpet with its bald spots and knotted fringe. I have some old ones from Kilim Crafts in Toronto that I bring out every winter for the back door, where nothing else will withstand the slush and snow. A rug that is truly forgiving is a rug to love.

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