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## We profile five young developers that are shaking up the UK property industry

by Laura Latham

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The Den, a flexible co-working space curated by The Collective

The free-thinking 'millennial generation' could be our most entrepreneurial age group. Having pushed the boundaries of communications and technology, many are now challenging traditional businesses, including property development, and are making a significant mark.

They may be young, but the self confidence and business sense of the five developers profiled here has helped them deliver hundreds of millions of pounds' worth of high-specification residences in London and overseas. They could be exactly what the stuffy world of property needs.

**Gal and Tania Adir, 27 and 28**

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Proza Interiors, founder and CEO of The Collective. New buildings often don't suit young people.

His firm is revolutionising the market for young professionals and offers a sustainable model that works as a business and lifestyle product. Only five years old, it has development worth £242m across six multi-unit buildings in well-connected locations, such as Bayswater, Camden and Old Oak Common. The units are let at affordable rates and the managed, streamlined spaces, with communal kitchens and entertainment areas, also act as a safeguard against loneliness and rogue landlords.

Merchant came up with the concept in 2010, while studying at the LSE. "I saw first-hand the struggle to find affordable accommodation," he explains. "But also that commitment isn't something our generation likes, we want to travel and experience life."

He was never daunted by the prospect of seeking backing or bringing his first project to market because he was so certain of its success. "There is massive need for what we do, so there was never any concern about whether it would work." Merchant also thinks having a young team is his biggest advantage. "We are creating a product for ourselves, we can fine tune it to our target market because we are the target market."

### Gary Linton, 30



The Linton Group

Few people would have the confidence to launch a property company during a global crash but Gary Linton was keen to go out on his own, despite being only 23 at the time. "Things were pretty miserable in 2009 but I saw it as a period of opportunity," he says. "I needed to do my own thing."

He "dabbled" in residential lets and refurbishments prior to gaining backing for his first successful multi-unit development in Fulham. "The fact that I was managing other people's money did get quite scary but sometimes you just have to go for it," he laughs. "I saw it as a challenge and that made me very determined."

Linton's portfolio is now worth £300m. His projects include sites in Hampstead and Paddington, and the conversion of a Victorian furniture factory, in Kentish Town, into 57 apartments. As with many young entrepreneurs, he is keen to separate himself from more established firms. "We're a boutique developer not a house builder. Each project needs to have a sense of place and community, a connection with people who work and live in London."

Linton admits to being a bit of a control freak, preferring to oversee every aspect of a design, though it's becoming more difficult as his firm expands. "We're building homes not just investments, which takes careful planning and design." Linton also firmly believes that age doesn't have to be a handicap in business. "I don't see why it should be a factor as long as you're professional and deliver results."

### Edo Mapelli Mozzi, 32



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