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Urban Renewal

A HISTORIC BROOKLYN GEM IS SENSITIVELY REINSPIRITED
TO SUIT ITS NEXT GENERATION OF STEWARDS.

WRITTEN BY TATE GUNNERSON / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOSHUA MCHUGH



ARCHITECTURE / BRYAN MIN,
BRYAN MIN ARCHITECT
INTERIOR DESIGN / ELENA FRAMPTON,
FRAMPTON CO
HOME BUILDER / BRIAN ARKISON,
OMEGA CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

Residents of Brooklyn’s leafy Fort Greene enclave for more than a decade, husbands Glenn Hill and Peter Rider enjoyed the sort of tight-knit community commonly associated with small-town life: greeting neighbors by first name, walking to the nearby park and arranging playdates for their three children. When one neighbor heard through the grapevine that they were looking to buy, he gave them first dibs on the wood-framed 1854 townhouse he had lovingly cared for and called home since the 1980s. “It had only been in two families for the past 100 years,” Peter shares, adding that the former owner bought it from a woman who had lived there since 1918.

While well-maintained, the landmark-status property would need quite a bit of modernizing to suit the family’s needs. So before purchasing, they asked close friend and interior designer Elena Frampton to walk through and imagine the prospects. Frampton was equally smitten: “We loved the old flavor of the house, but it needed updating,” she recalls. “That tightrope of what to keep and what to change was really key to the project.” A hypersensitive approach to balancing old with new would guide the renovation the trio embarked upon alongside architect Bryan Min and general contractor Brian Arkison.

Beyond old with new, the interior designer sought to balance warmth with coolness—a dichotomy achieved by employing a gray and blue base palette to temper the rich, exposed wood architectural elements throughout. Pale gray walls and a painterly cobalt stair runner establish the color story in the entry hall, which gives way to the grand living room. There, a tone-on-tone blue rug anchors neutral furnishings arranged in an informal, asymmetrical layout. Adding further interest to the scheme, Frampton

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designed a vibrant art concept, mingling new pieces—including a Jack Youngerman diptych and Andrew Moore photograph flanking the fireplace—with her clients’ collection of flea market finds, freshly framed. “The art is a lead character,” Frampton notes. “It’s a mix of mediums and comes together in a very interesting, personal way.

The pairing of cool hues and warm woods continues into the adjacent dining room and extends on to the renovated galley kitchen, where a blue-green glazed-brick floor tile arranged in a herringbone pattern plays off custom oak cabinetry. “The kitchen was really like a boat-building exercise,” Frampton adds, noting that the cabinetry reaches the ceiling to take advantage of every square inch of storage.

But while utility and kid-friendliness distinguish the family home, the second-floor master suite, which includes a bedroom, a bathroom accessed via a custom walnut dressing room and a “gentleman’s lounge,” is a dreamy retreat all for the grown-ups. “That’s the space where we said, ‘Let’s have some fun,’” Frampton says of the latter. A wallpaper depicting flowers and tropical birds and midcentury furnishings re-covered in menswear textiles suggest so much. “Peter is drawn to granny chic. Glenn is more Brooklyn nautical,” Frampton shares, to which Peter adds, “Elena knows what each of our aesthetics are, finds the overlap between them and pushes us to be bolder.”

And of course, enveloping the interiors are the historic bones Min and Arkison restored and celebrated. In addition to collaborating with the Landmarks Preservation Commission on architectural changes—the most prolific of which being a new skylight above the stairwell—Min took choice restorations into his own hands. For example, he conceived a missing railing balustrade by piecing together several salvaged ones from a lumber yard. And to make the original floors sing, he carefully replaced discolored filler between the planks with new fill, faux finishing it to match the wood. “It needed a more finessed touch rather than an off-the-shelf solution,” the architect notes.

Arkison’s role was equally dynamic. His millwork shop fabricated the bespoke cabinetry throughout the home, and among many discreet yet impactful updates, he replaced old radiators with streamlined ones, reappointed original doors, baseboards and trim and added central air conditioning with concealed ductwork as to not call attention to the renovation. “Being authentic is important in an old town house,” Arkison says.

Indeed, authenticity may be this home’s greatest qualifier. “There’s so much newness in New York, and that’s one of the great things about the city, but I also just love the specific sense of time and continuity that you get from living in an older house that you know the direct lineage of,” Peter says. “That’s rare in New York.” ■



Interior designer Elena Frampton helped the owners curate their eclectic art collection, which includes a colorful diptych by Jack Youngerman over a vintage credenza in the formal living room. The sculptural black-and-white stone side table is by Oeufice from Matter.



A showstopping brass chandelier by O'Lampia makes a big statement in the living room without interfering with sight lines. The wool-and-silk rug is from ABC Carpet & Home, the coffee tables are Arriau, the upholstered furnishings are a vintage mix and the floor pillows are Mexchic. "The parents can read the morning paper while the children lounge on fun pillows, all while embraced by the chandelier overhead that seems to hold it all together," Frampton says.



Left: In the kitchen, glazed brick flooring by Fireclay Tile, a concrete countertop and an antiqued mirror backsplash play off custom walnut cabinetry with bronze cabinet pulls by Rocky Mountain Hardware. The pendant is from The Urban Electric Co. "We're over the one-note white kitchen," Frampton says.

Opposite: Soft, cool grays characterize the dining room, which hosts a hand-knotted rug from Woven, a set of midcentury modern Klismos side chairs by Harold Schwartz for Romweber and the clients' own vintage wooden table. The large Garcia Cumini for Foscari pendant, Frampton explains, was intended to create a dynamic energy within the old-world space.

A tufted oxblood leather club chair by Ward Bennett via 1stdibs sets an appropriate tone in the gentleman's lounge, which also counts a whimsical bird-and-floral wallcovering by Timorous Beasties, a graphic artwork by Robert Moreland over the fireplace and a mix of furnishings re-covered in menswear-inspired fabrics, as highlights.



Below, left: After the design team added a central skylight, the original stairwell took on a new life. "It really changed the spirit of the home," notes Frampton. A hand-tufted, mill-spun wool runner by Tord Boontje for Christopher Farr celebrates the restored character feature.

Below, right: Pierre Frey's graphic Mauritius in Nuit wallpaper adds a jolt of drama to the diminutive powder room, which also features earthenware tile from Ann Sacks, a smoked oak vanity by Wetstyle, a vintage-inspired faucet by Waterworks and a mirror left by the previous owners.





Left: In the master bathroom, blue tiles by Heath Ceramics create a masculine backdrop for a custom walnut vanity with integrated brass pulls set atop Carrara marble flooring tiles from Stone Source. "The fresh wall tile patterning resulted after noticing alignment issues due to the home's original irregularities," Frampton shares. "Sometimes the conflict creates the solution."

Opposite: Mauve walls and metal details create "an unpredictable palette" in the master bedroom. The restful retreat boasts a mix of old and new, including a handsome wooden bed with a cane headboard from Anthropologie, a blackened steel chandelier by Workstead and a vintage side table and accent chair. The tasseled blanket is Mexchic.