

Livingetc



brooklyn revival

Drawing on traditional craftsmanship, creative duo Lyndsay Caleo and Fitzhugh Karol have brought a 19th-century brownstone into the 21st century without losing its inherent character



houses

DINING AREA
Handmade lights hover over a raw-edged willow table designed by Fitzhugh.
Pendant lights by Natalie Page; mirror both BDDW (represented by Blue Mountain School in London); Vintage rug, ABC Carpet & Home



It was quite literally a labour of love for designer Lyndsay Caleo and her sculptor husband Fitzhugh Karol to renovate this stunning five-bedroom brownstone in the heart of New York's fashionable Brooklyn Heights district. 'In the three years since we took it on, we got married and had two babies. I was pretty much pregnant or had a babe in arms the whole time,' says the former jewellery designer, who is mother to Charlotte, two, and seven-month-old Fitzhugh, and who spearheads The Brooklyn Home Company, a family-run development firm. It was for their company that they took this project on.

'Becoming a mother really shifted the way I approached the design and layout of this house,' explains Lyndsay. 'I daydreamed about how it would work for my own family. I wanted it to be a place where everyone could come together in the kitchen and living room, but then find peace and quiet elsewhere. It's a large house, so we had to add texture and warmth. We didn't want it to feel as if you were jingling around in it.'

Brooklyn is synonymous with charming tree-lined streets and rows of historic brownstones. Former residents include Truman Capote and Walt Whitman, while these days you are more likely to run into Sarah Jessica Parker and her husband Matthew Broderick, or Daniel Craig and his wife Rachel Weisz. 'It's a very chic area,' concurs Lyndsay. 'But most people are interested in these brownstones for their authentic features and there was nothing original left when we first saw this house. It was divided into eight apartments and there was a very cheap internal staircase, electric fireplaces and lots of shagpile carpeting.'

The couple set about trying to restore the 1845 Greek Revival townhouse, while bringing it into line with contemporary living. 'We had to recreate the bones, putting them in place and giving that sense that they had always been there. We lovingly put back

original details, such as mouldings, and redefined the space. Then we made our own version of the original classical staircase with carved handrail and slender balusters.

'Our vision was to bring in as much natural light as possible. We decided to open up the back of the house to let in the light and because there is a view of a gorgeous carriage house,' says Lyndsay. 'But we had to be sensitive to the original architecture, which is why we went with a paned window instead of a sheet of glass. It still feels in context with the building.'

Careful craftsmanship is at the heart of their work. Former students of Rhode Island School of Design - where they met and where Lyndsay studied jewellery and metalsmithing, while Fitzhugh studied sculpture - the couple were keen to honour the artistry of the craftsmen who built the house more than 150 years ago. 'We worked with a team of artisans - woodworkers, metalsmiths and ceramicists - many of them friends from college. We are on a mission to promote the makers of our time.'

Sustainable, reclaimed Douglas fir timbers, white oak floors and high ceilings reinstate the grandeur of former times, while the couple have referenced the colour and personality of the local Brooklyn art scene with custom-made furniture created by Fitzhugh and Philadelphia studio BDDW. 'Fitzhugh makes a unique signature piece for every home we do,' Lyndsay explains. 'Everything in this house is from artists or makers, whether it is the architecture or a painting. Nothing was ordered. It feels different when it is made by hand.'

Lyndsay gave free rein to her dreams in the renovation, installing a chef's range in the kitchen, 13ft-high ceilings in the upper ground floor and artwork throughout. 'Everything that I've ever wanted in my own home is here in this house,' she says.

See more of Lyndsay and Fitzhugh's work at thebrooklynhomecompany.com

home profile

THE DESIGNERS

Lyndsay Caleo, creative director of The Brooklyn Home Company, and her husband, sculptor Fitzhugh Karol. They had their own family, including two-year-old Charlotte and Fitzhugh, seven months, in mind when they renovated this historic home.

THE PROPERTY

A five-storey brownstone in Brooklyn Heights, New York. On the upper ground floor is an entrance hall and living room/kitchen-diner. On the lower ground floor is a mud room, an office, a games room and bar area. In the basement is a wine cellar and workout room. The first floor contains the master bedroom and bathroom, two walk-in wardrobes, an office and terrace area. On the second floor are two bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, plus there are two further bedrooms and a playroom/family room on the third floor, and a roof deck on the top floor.

LIVING ROOM

"There is a story behind everything in this house," says Lyndsay. "My husband went out and found this huge willow burl and transformed it into a coffee table."

Artwork by Tyler Hays. Armchair, BDDW. Sculpture by Fitzhugh Karol



"We thought about how it'll look in decades, not just now"

KITCHEN-DINER

"Having artisan furniture and artwork in a cook space brings so much character and warmth," says Lyndsay.

Artwork by Tyler Hays. Chairs, BDDW. Exposed brass shelving, The Brooklyn Home Company. Find a similar worktop at Caesarstone



MASTER BEDROOM

"To have a calm space where you can escape from the bustling city is such a luxury," says Lyndsay. The four-poster bed (right) - the height of luxury - was hand-carved from reclaimed oak.

Chairs and sofa, Cisco Brothers. **Artwork,** Clic gallery. **Floor lamp** by Lindsey Adelman; find similar at Abitart. **Cushions,** Pampa. **Log tables and bed** by Fitzhugh Karol



houses

PLANS



LOWER GROUND FLOOR

UPPER GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR



