

Foundry KEEPERS

A BROOKLYN COUPLE FALL FOR a FORMER INDUSTRIAL BUILDING *and* TURN *it* INTO an ECLECTIC COUNTRY HOUSE.

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A black-and-white motif is warmed by wood furnishings in the master bedroom of Claire Benoist and Derek Kilner's weekend retreat in Somers, New York. A Shaker stove by Wittus faces a vintage Pierre Chapo table. The windows are by Pella and the fireplace tool set is from Terrain. An Akari ball pendant by Isamu Noguchi hangs overhead.



When Claire Benoist and Derek Kilner discovered the Clover Hill Foundry in the summer of 2017, they had no intention of buying a country home. The couple were already overwhelmed with planning their wedding and buying their first apartment, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. But they couldn't resist.

"We just knew it in our bones," says Claire, a professional photographer, who admits she was more ready for an escape from the city than she realized. "It felt so special. So perfect."

The former iron foundry, built in the 1890s, sits on a wooded hillside overlooking Somers, New York, at the northern edge of Westchester County. It had been converted into a living space in the 1940s and features a double-height great room on the second floor, exposed timber rafters, and enormous white-painted brick walls. Natural light pours in through large windows, and the forest can be seen on all

sides. Basically, it's the polar opposite of New York City living.

"It's only five minutes from the train, but it feels like it's in the middle of nowhere," says Ravi Raj, the project's architect and a longtime friend of Claire's.

Raj, who had just left his job at Adjaye Associates, set about transforming the aging, drafty property to better fit the couple. His goal was to create a comfortable home that embraced the past but didn't fetishize it. While he retained most of the existing materials and forms, they're balanced with contemporary furnishings, finishes, and art. He describes the effect as "worn yet warm."

The centerpiece is still the great room, which the prior owners had used as a very large master bedroom, with their kitchen and living/dining area on the floor below. Claire and Derek agreed with Raj on flipping this arrangement, converting the upper floor to an open-plan living, dining, >

Architect Ravi Raj inverted the home's former layout, placing the main living areas in a double-height great room on the upper floor, where the master bedroom had been. In the kitchen (above), the Grigio Trambiserra marble is from ABC Stone, the cabinets are Surface by Norm Architects for Reform, and the cooktop and oven are by Fisher & Paykel. The charred reclaimed oak on the ceiling continues onto the exterior of a loft space overlooking the dining area (opposite). Mod 265 wall lamps by Paolo Rizzatto for Flos illuminate a vintage trestle table that belonged to Claire's family. The original pine floor boards were stained a chocolate brown.



"THERE'S THIS GIGANTIC GREAT ROOM, AND the OTHER SPACES ARE the BACKDROP FOR the THINGS GOING ON THERE."

RAVI RAJ, ARCHITECT



The living room's showpiece is a Zircon stove by Malm; its flue snakes 25 feet to the ceiling. "We really wanted the fireplace to be the anchor within this large space," says Raj. A rust velvet Lenyx sofa from CB2 provides a punch of color within the minimalist palette. Nearby is a custom maple credenza by Croft House. The white-trimmed windows are from Loewen and the white paint throughout is Chantilly Lace by Benjamin Moore.

"WE WANTED CONTRAST BETWEEN WHAT WAS NEW *and* WHAT WAS EXISTING."
RAVI RAJ



“BECAUSE I HAVE NO FORMAL TRAINING, I WASN’T SHACKLED BY RULES of DESIGN and WHAT YOU SHOULD and SHOULDN’T MIX.”

CLAIRE BENOIST, RESIDENT



and kitchen space and installing guest quarters, a bathroom, and a family room downstairs. A lofted area overlooking the great room holds a screening room and additional guestroom. The couple’s new master bedroom occupies what had been an attached guesthouse. Both levels of the home open to a patio.

The foundry, with its gabled roof, brick walls, and timber supports, still seems tranquil and cozy, transporting you to a different time and place. But it also feels fresh and contemporary—not quaint—thanks to its modern insertions and boldly contrasting colors. Large insulated windows, unlike the previous small-paned ones, keep the couple comfortable and afford uninterrupted views of the scenery outside. Raj stained the great room’s pine floor boards a chocolate brown, offsetting the white brick, and painted the ceiling boards white to play off the dark timber.

Many of the aesthetic choices were directed by Claire, who grew up in a tradi-

tional country house outside Strasbourg, France, filled with art and furnishings that were also a mix of antique and modern. With Raj’s guidance and hundreds of hours perusing books, magazines, blogs, and Pinterest boards, she set about honing a boldly eclectic array of furniture and fixtures—old and new, rustic and luxurious, muted and bright—that goes well with Raj’s tonal asymmetry.

“It was a little revelatory,” says Claire of discovering that she had a keen eye for interiors, not just photographs. Equally revelatory has been the couple’s success hosting more friends than they ever could in Brooklyn and their love of escaping the city together, soaking in the bucolic surroundings inside and out. “In the winter,” she says, “it feels like being inside a snow globe. In the summer it’s like a treehouse.”

Claire is still surprised by how quickly she fell for the house. “The whole thing was a little crazy,” she says. But isn’t that true of all great love affairs? ■



On the home’s lower level, an open bedroom area includes a Vitra Pantone chair, a Sierra chair by Croft House and a Nelson Bubble Cigar pendant by George Nelson for Herman Miller (opposite, top); the family room across from it features a Nelson Bubble Globe pendant, IKEA Alseda floor stools, and an heirloom tapestry wall hanging (above). The master suite looks out on a gravel patio with Hee lounge chairs by Hay (above right). The loft bedroom over the kitchen includes a small reading loft of its own (opposite, bottom).

ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT

● Clover Hill Residence N

ARCHITECT Ravi Raj LOCATION Somers, New York

- A Family Room
- B Mechanical Room
- C Bathroom
- D Bedroom
- E Open Bedroom
- F Patio
- G Entrance
- H Master Bedroom
- I Master Bathroom
- J Powder Room
- K Kitchen
- L Living/Dining Area
- M Deck
- N Screening Room
- O Storage/Reading Loft

