

A LIVING LEGACY

Lindsey and Mike have brought a handsome and once downtrodden Brooklyn brownstone back to life and created a family home to last for generations to come

Photography/Matthew Williams * Styling/Vanessa Vazquez * Words/Serena Fokschaner



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DINING AREA

Lindsey preserved the 19th-century bones of the house while creating modern, functional spaces.

Get the look The dining table is by Room & Board. These chairs are by &tradition. This is the Dot Line wall light by Lambert & Fils. The Dune candelabra is by Vonnegut/Kraft.

EXTERIOR

The monochromatic façade of Lindsey and Mike's Brooklyn townhouse cuts a cool figure.



LIVING ROOM

Dark paint colours and sliding doors were jettisoned to create the light-filled ground floor.

Get the look The vintage pendant light is from Morentz. The coffee table was made bespoke by Year of None. These are mid-century chairs by Milo Baughman, reupholstered in Rebecca Atwood's Shibori linen. This is the Haynes mirror by Egg Collective.

HALL →

Working closely with Sheena and Tor of Nune interior design, Lindsey and Mike peeled back decades of gloss and textured wallpaper to uncover the original architecture, now offset by a bold, monochrome palette, which sets the urbane tone of this home.

Get the look The rug is by West Elm. The black door paint is by Benjamin Moore & Co.



Property is encoded in Lindsey Branca's DNA. Her grandmother Inez, a feisty, far-sighted Italian from the Bronx, founded the family's commercial property business in the late Forties. 'She'd read that construction was doing well so she made my grandfather quit his job as a lawyer to set up the company with her,' says Lindsey. 'As it wasn't acceptable for women to be in business, my Pop Pop went to the meetings, but she really ran the company until she was 90.' For Lindsey, whose father now heads up the business, school holidays were spent in hard hats on building sites or perched at an office desk annotating blueprints and eavesdropping on conversations about the importance of budgets – and damp-proofing.

The discovery of a neglected Brooklyn brownstone allowed Lindsey to put that learning into practice. 'We'd been looking for a property in the area for a year when I spotted this one online,' says Lindsey, who now runs a residential design business with her partner, Mike Grosshandler. 'It was a holiday weekend, everyone was away, so we seized the moment to visit.'

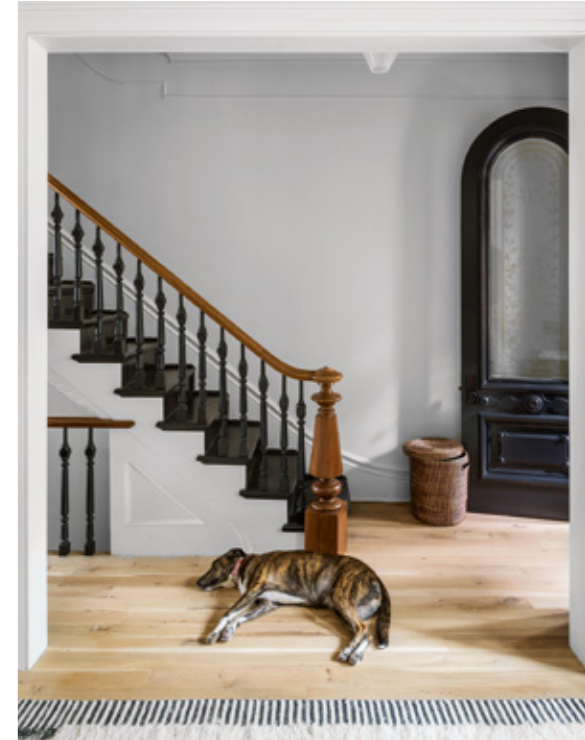
Built in 1890 for dockworkers, the 2,500 square foot property's greatest draw was its size. Gazing from the stoop up the typically deep flight of steps to the front door, you might think this house has three storeys. In fact, there are four. But when the brownstone was built, the top floor was hidden (there were no windows at the front) to conceal it from the prying gaze of the tax collector whose evaluation was based on the number of floors per property. 'Most houses in this neighbourhood are either too large or too small, but the extra floor of bedrooms makes this house perfect for a family,' says Lindsey.

There was a great deal to do. The interior was a time warp of textured wallpapers, frosted doors and Marmite-brown panelling – think *The Godfather* meets *Goodfellas* – shoehorned into a topsy-turvy layout for two families. Lindsey turned to architectural duo Brian Papa and Lauren Maccaig, of Frances Mildred, to remodel the space. For the interiors, she enlisted the equally empathetic designers Sheena Murphy and Tor Sauder, of NY- and UK-based firm Nune. 'We'd all worked together on previous projects and share a similar aesthetic,' says Lindsey. 'We wanted to restore the house while updating the floor plan to turn it into a modern home.'

Lindsey shares the house with Mike (and two usually energetic dogs), but with the pragmatism of someone reared on floor plans and the importance of long-term values, she designed the interior so that it can eventually be rented out to a family. 'Although I grew up looking at commercial property, I'm fascinated by the more personal side of residential; the way people use spaces,' she says. 'We spent lots of time working on the layout, to try and understand how the house would function in reality versus a floor plan.'

On the ground floor, widening the opening between the hall and the living room brought light to the latter, where a creamy marble fireplace was unearthed behind decades of gloss. From here, chic black stairs lead to the lower-ground. Once a dingy huddle of rooms, it is now an inviting guest suite, complete with a whimsical pink bathroom. Original features, such as the stair rail, cornicing and shutters, have been revived and cast-iron radiators were made to match the previous models. Underfoot, Lindsey chose the new matt oak flooring for its 'raw, authentic feel', while grim Seventies gloss paint was replaced by a palette of luminous greys and whites on the walls.

True to Branca tradition, everything was done to a tidy budget. 'We went for a high-low combination of pieces that sit well with the restored details,' says Lindsey. The furnishings comprise a mix of items from the high street and thriving local businesses, including Allied Maker, Egg Collective and Vonnegut/Kraft. In the kitchen, the carcasses are Ikea but the cabinetry is bespoke, painted dove grey and offset by handles sanded for an antique effect. 'One of the most important things I learned from my parents was that it's often those small details – so easy to overlook – which give a home its personality.' See Lindsey's work at brancaand.co. See more from Sheena and Tor at nunene.com



HOME PROFILE

THE OWNERS
Lindsey Branca and her partner Mike Grosshandler, who co-run a residential design and development company in New York. Plus two rescue dogs, Luke and Layla (pictured).

THE PROPERTY
A late Victorian brownstone in Brooklyn with a small back garden. On the ground floor is a large kitchen-diner which flows in to the sitting room. The lower-ground floor has a bedroom, bathroom and TV room. The first floor comprises the master suite with a dressing room and office. There are two bedrooms and a bathroom on the top floor.

↙ **KITCHEN**

High-street carcasses are masked by bespoke cabinetry and a calming paint palette, which amplifies the sense of light in this space. Reinventing the house meant unmuddling the floor plan, which had been divided in to bedsits, to create this kitchen at the back, which flows through an open-plan dining area to the living room at the front. **Get the look** The Arc Globe pendant lights are by Allied Maker.



‘New York City is a really stimulating place, so it’s nice to come home to a tranquil space where your eyes can relax’



‘I prefer to keep rooms pale and subdued, then I add contrast by layering fabrics and furnishings with tactile qualities’



HOME TRUTHS

Lindsey, where do you dream of spending spring break? Amangiri in Utah. Can we make that happen, please?

What are you listening to at the moment? I walk to all my meetings so I listen to hours of podcasts, such as *The Daily*, *Real Time with Bill Maher*, *The Rachel Maddow Show*, *Embedded*, *Couples Therapy with Candice and Casey* and *Second Life*, a great podcast about female entrepreneurs.

The best meal you've had recently? I had the most amazing sushi at the Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo. Locally, I was impressed by Oxomoco, a Mexican restaurant on Greenpoint Avenue.

Where do you go to find vintage pieces? For furniture, I love visiting MDFG in Williamsburg, where the owners Jeffrey and Ashley have the most amazing vintage Pierre Jeanneret pieces.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given? My father told me: 'Everything you do moves you along a path, but it's only with hindsight that you can see how the dots connect.'

← **MASTER EN SUITE**
The bath was positioned next to the shower for practicality and views of the garden.
Get the look The floor tiles are by Home Depot.

MASTER BEDROOM
This pared-back space leads to a dressing room and an en-suite bathroom.
Get the look This is the Modernica pendant light by George Nelson. The rug was made bespoke by Studio Four NYC. The bedside table is by Room & Board.

