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curiosities  
of  
life

SPIRITED CHOICES  
THAT MAKE A HOUSE  
A HOME





# Brooklyn Calling

TEXT THOMAS CONNORS PHOTOGRAPHY RIKKI SNYDER INTERIOR DESIGN DAN RAK

The simple façade of the 1880s brownstone.



“In Brooklyn,” pitcher Don Drysdale once said, “it was as though you were in your own little bubble. You were all part of one big but very close family, and the Dodgers were the main topic of everybody’s conversations, and you could sense the affection people had for you. I don’t know that such a thing exists anymore.” The Dodgers, of course, left decades ago, and like the rest of New York, the borough has changed dramatically. Certain quarters now sport swanky new residential towers, but the low-rise charm of the place remains.

Designer Dan Rak  
fashions a  
family-friendly  
home in  
Carroll Gardens

There’s a charming, utilitarian character to the entry foyer, where a simple bench sits atop the warm brick floor.





Rak carved out a little entryway on the parlor floor, defined by a muted floral rug from Loloi.



The sunlit dining area, set with a concrete table from **Four Hands** and walnut-stained chairs from **Nuevo**.



The architect-designed kitchen opens to a relaxed living room graced with a bay window.

This Carroll Street brownstone, sensitively appointed by Chicago interior designer Dan Rak, puts one in mind of poet Marianne Moore’s Brooklyn, when “An atmosphere of privacy, with a touch of diffidence prevailed, as when a neighbor in a furred jacket, veil and gloves would emerge from a four-story house to shop at grocer’s or meat-market.” Not that Rak has taken a stroll down memory lane or opted for a retro vibe. But with a light touch and a respect for period detail, he has fashioned a home that Brooklyn citizens of past might well feel at ease within.

Rak’s clients, a Manhattan couple, bought the two-unit house with their daughter and son-in-law to create a multigenerational home. “They had seen our work in their son’s Chicago and Michigan homes and liked that while our work leans more contemporary, it retains a sense of approachability and warmth,” describes Rak. “They recognized that the new home called for a more contemporary aesthetic but still wanted to incorporate some of their traditional-leaning possessions, mostly artwork and small items, such as a bench we used in the lower-level landing.”

An architect who had planned to live in the house had renovated the 19th-century property before Rak’s clients purchased it. **“The architectural elements that were preserved in this home were incredible,”** relates Rak. **“We knew that we needed to take a restrained approach in furnishing it so that those details retained center stage, and thus selected a neutral palette with contrasting textures that created visual interest and a sense of refined comfort. The decision to use white as a foundational color in the walls was driven by the desire for strong contrast with the historic millwork in the doors and floors, and with the warmth of the newer cabinets.”**





A hallway bathroom, adorned with a few of the clients' cherished botanicals.



The vertical alignment of sink, mirror and lighting fixture creates a greater feeling of space in this compact powder room.

# ZIP CODE 11213

High ceilings, tall windows, rich millwork and handsome fireplaces give the owner's unit a sense-pleasing solidity. Rak's choices reflect and complement these enviable details, creating an understated environment tailored to everyday life. The dining area – set with a concrete table from Four Hands and walnut-stained, rubber wood chairs from Nuevo – is perfect for a solo lunch or convivial dinner party. Rak fashioned a foyer area on the parlor floor, outfitting the space with a round, floral rug from Loloi and diminutive occasional tables and a reeded pouf from Four Hands. Responding to the existing walnut cabinets and gray quartzite countertops in the kitchen, he populated the adjacent living room with casual, earth-toned pieces. Trendy and buoyed by tech, Brooklyn is giving Manhattan a run for its money as a place to live. But sitting here, “hip” seems far away, and home is what it's all about.