

NYC & G

New York Cottages and Gardens

COTTAGES-GARDENS.COM | MARCH 2014

THE
BOWERY
**GREENWICH
VILLAGE**
MILLBROOK
SOHO



Artful Style

BAIRN RAISING

A Millbrook farmhouse gets brand-new guest quarters, tricked out for 21st-century living

BY RAUL BARRENECHE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICK HALES





Lay Of The Land

Inspired by American barn vernacular, the guesthouse (OPPOSITE) is modern to the core; landscape design is by Doyle Herman Design Associates. A piece by Alex Amlin hangs in the combined living/dining area (THIS PAGE). See Resources.



The relaxing Millbrook, New York, retreat where Manhattanites Andrea Van Beuren, founder and artistic director of the

cinematic festival newportFILM; her husband, Roger Kass, an entertainment lawyer and film producer; and their three children spend weekends is a bona fide 19th-century farmhouse. Renovated and expanded with whitewashed perfection by designer Farnaz Mansuri and her Manhattan-based firm, De-Spec, the place is high on charm and original details, but saddled with the drawbacks typically found in historic homes: low ceilings and cramped rooms that are too small for big holiday gatherings. The Kasses found themselves craving additional space, but they didn't want to alter the farmhouse's pristine proportions or encroach on the 30-acre property's open fields and sweeping vistas. So they focused their attention on a dilapidated barn and chicken coop behind the main house, and made a call to Mansuri.

The Kasses dreamed of converting the structure not only into a place for entertaining, but also a generously sized

"playroom" that would encourage their children to bring friends up for the weekend. "They realized that as their kids get older, they're going to want to stay with their friends in the city instead of going upstate with their parents," Mansuri says. Because the existing barn was beyond repair, she and Rhode Island-based architect-of-record Franklin & Company tore it down and completely rebuilt on the original footprint, erecting a lofty, sunlit, 3,700-square-foot space that's tailor-made for kid-centric activities. Now the Kasses' guests, young and old, have their choice of indoor basketball, Ping-Pong and foosball tables, an old-fashioned wooden swing, and a colorful hand-knotted rope hammock suspended from the rafters, as well as a low-slung sectional for hanging out and watching television.

The lower, western wing of the L-shaped structure (originally the chicken coop) provides ample room for family feasts in the airy, open kitchen, living, and dining area.

Simply Dazzling

The blackened bamboo coffee table in the living area (ABOVE) is from Room. E27 pendants from Design Within Reach hang above a custom concrete island in the kitchen (OPPOSITE); the hood is from Viking, the range from Wolf, and the refrigerator from Liebherr. See *Resources*.





Farm To Table
In the dining area, chairs covered in an Italian linen surround a salvaged-pine trestle table from Restoration Hardware. See Resources.

Playful Air

The playroom incorporates several sitting areas furnished with Paola Lenti sofas, poufs, and purple Float chairs, B&B Italia coffee tables, and silk soumak rugs designed by De-Spec. A handmade Chilean hammock from Comerford Collection adds more whimsy to the space. See Resources.





A generously sized “playroom” encourages the kids to bring friends up for the weekend

“We can have as few as ten and as many as 50 people for parties in the guesthouse,” says Van Beuren. “And when the weather is warm, we all just flow out to the porch and hang around the pool.” Rounding out the program is an upstairs bedroom loft for accommodating overflow guests, with an inviting window seat and daybed. It overlooks the pool and sits above an attached pool house with boys’ and girls’ changing and shower rooms below.

In contrast to the all-white main house, Mansuri chose a deep charcoal gray for the new barn’s exterior. “I wanted it to disappear into the landscape, and not be like a big white prairie house,” she says. A subtle, sophisticated tension between traditional, rustic elements and more contemporary details prevails, from wood-paneled walls and barn doors to clean-lined square windows inspired by artist Donald Judd’s minimalist compound in Marfa, Texas. (“I wanted the rooms to feel warm,” says Van Beuren.) A number of kitchen and bathroom surfaces are made of prefabricated concrete, including the shower enclosures and three-inch-thick countertops. Even the kitchen cabinets are concrete, not wood. “We’re modernists; it’s a barn,” says Mansuri. “We wanted to give it some order, but to feel like it had always been there. We wanted to be authentic, but I wasn’t going to fake farmhouse details.” (Not surprisingly, the designer bristles at any attempt to categorize her work: “I’m anti-style—any label is up for grabs.”)

Mansuri also aspired to make the new structure as “green” as possible. She salvaged the beams and ceiling boards in the living and dining area from an old New England barn and elsewhere used sustainably sourced cedar that’s painted instead of varnished. (“We never use polyurethane in our projects,” she notes.) Floors throughout are made from engineered wood, with a driftwood-like finish that matches the weathered look of the salvaged ceiling timbers. Solar panels, lined discreetly along one slope of the standing-seam metal roof, power the pool heater.

“It’s a mix of modern and old, but everything feels relatively rustic throughout”



The interiors are characterized by the same chic-but-humble sensibility that describes the architecture. In the playroom, inexpensive paper globe lanterns hang above slouchy, brightly hued chairs by Italian designer Paola Lenti; in the living and dining area, they enliven a suite of simple wicker and linen-covered chairs, some from the Kassés’ existing home. Mansuri designed most of the accessories, including the raw silk rugs, boldly patterned kilims, and rugged lighting fixtures. “It’s a mix of modern and old,” she says, “but everything feels relatively rustic throughout.” The family even enjoys the former chicken coop at night, “when we have groups over for dinner during the winter,” adds Van Beuren. “We have a roaring fire at one end of the living area, and candles lit and the lights dimmed low everywhere else. It feels magical, super cozy, and fun. And it helps knowing your kids are all in the next room, having fun together too.”

Graphic Punch

In the entry (ABOVE), a three-arm light fixture by De-Spec hangs above two boldly striped custom kilims from Double Knot. The guest bedroom in the loft (RIGHT) includes a built-in bed covered in stonewashed Belgian linen from Restoration Hardware. The striped wool throw and linen floor pillows are from Ochre. See Resources.



