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Loft Cause

Two artists transform a 19th-century carriage house into a home where they can both live and create.

TEXT BY
Meghan Dwyer



Architect Jeff Jordan designed plywood millwork to divide the 2,700-square-foot space. The nook is decorated with a shibori textile made by resident Bev O'Mara. The concrete kitchen island and countertops were fabricated by Brooklyn-based firm Art in Construction.

Beverly O'Mara, an artist and teacher, and Mark Uriu, owner of a residential painting and finishing company, needed a place to work from home. So in 2014 the couple embarked on transforming a 2,700-square-foot loft located in an 1890 Wells Fargo horse-and-carriage facility in Jersey City, New Jersey, into a flexible art studio and residence.

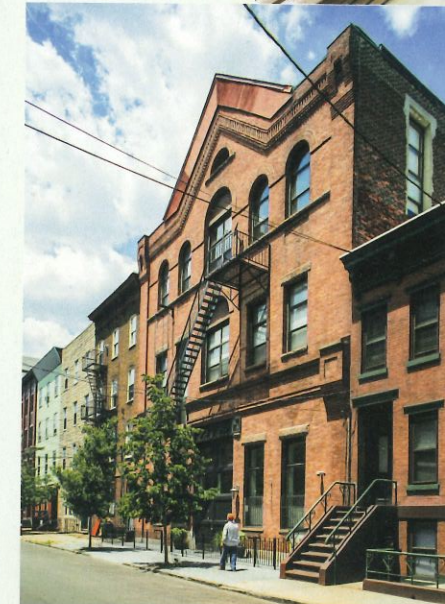
To make their redesign happen, the couple approached local architect Jeff Jordan. In deference to the building's most notable aspects—a historic facade, brick

walls, steel beams, and an 18-foot-high ceiling—Jordan opted for a no-frills palette of AC plywood and painted drywall, a simple yet aesthetically pleasing approach that fell within the couple's budget of \$250,000.

The cabinetry was built on-site, another cost-saving measure. "As artists who planned to work in the space, they weren't interested in a refined, shop-fabricated system," Jordan says. "Instead, we were able to work with a skilled carpenter who turned the space into a basic shop and built everything at a fraction of the cost." >

The new layout is split almost down the middle by a millwork spine that provides storage; the living and work areas are on either side of it. In the back, on the upper level, the bedrooms are enclosed by Japanese-style shoji screens, which allow diffused sunlight from the opposite end of the loft to enter. "The home's major shortcoming was that there were windows on only one facade, which limited natural light," says Mark.

Daylight and air now penetrate to the back of the loft, while the entire space is open and functional. "We were hesitant to buy the property because we didn't want to renovate a perfectly functional space," says Mark, "but we were persuaded. The potential was too hard to ignore." ■



"We all worked hard to come up with easily executed yet elegant solutions to space planning and detailing." Jeff Jordan, architect

COMMUNITY

The couple's bedroom (top) holds family treasures—a Scott Jordan rocker that Mark gave Bev when she was pregnant and a blanket from their honeymoon in Mexico. A collection of art and design resources are stored on bookshelves

(far right). The net seat uses an extension of the handrail as a frame and hangs above the studio, creating an unusual reading perch. Extra storage is built into the stairs (near right), where CDs, movies, and blankets are kept.



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PHOTOS: GREGORY MAKI