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BALANCING ACT

How a faded **Brooklyn brownstone** became the ideal setting for life, work, and family

BY **MARIA RICAPITO**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **TRIA GIOVAN**

Family Matters
Fashion accessories designer Mariza Scotch and fitness trainer Dièry Prudent with their daughter, Gala, in the salon (THIS PAGE). The vintage steel chairs in the living room (OPPOSITE) are by Martin Visser; the silk saris hanging on the wall are a find from Handloom House in New Delhi. *See Resources.*

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Soaring Heights
The oiled walnut and oxidized bronze "Fin" table in the parlor-floor living room is by Brooklyn's Selch & Co. (ABOVE). The custom credenza in the adjacent salon is by Aris Paganakis (OPPOSITE). *See Resources.*

Faced with faulty hardware on **a built-in coat rack,** some homeowners might run to the local hardware store

to pick up a reasonable substitute, while others might troll the internet and architectural salvage houses for a good match. Not Mariza Scotch. To replace a broken hook on the ornate wood-and-marble coat rack in the entryway of her 1871 Brooklyn brownstone, she found a local jeweler who made a mold from one of the unbroken hooks and cast a perfect replica in metal.

Voilà—another item on her to-do list checked off, and the house inched one step closer to completion. "Everything you can see, we chose," says Scotch, a freelance designer of high-end handbags who shares the house with her husband, Dièry Prudent, a fitness trainer, and their 12-year-old daughter, Gala. Scotch is nothing if not detail-oriented: During renovation she handed over a "manual" to the couple's architect, specifying everything from light fixtures to sink hardware to wood finishes. That's a familiar m.o. for Scotch, whose luxe purses for brands including Mark Cross, Kate Spade, Ralph Lauren, Tod's, and Bally begin as sketches scribbled in Florentine taxis, wax models of hardware, and muslin prototypes before ending up on the arms of celebs on red carpets and movie sets.

> "Almost everything in the house was **made nearby** or by someone we know, or both," says Scotch, "which makes it feel that much more special."

Tween Dream
Norwegian Wood in Brooklyn restored the floors in Gala's bedroom, which is decorated with some of her drawings and a whimsically embroidered armchair. *See Resources.*

The entryway coat rack's original marble shelf was cracked as well, so Scotch sought out a stone yard to find a replacement piece from a slab used in the construction of the Empire State Building, a New York touch she appreciated. An etched-glass panel in a pair of parlor-floor pocket doors was broken; Scotch found an old-time glazier who could make a peerless reproduction. Throughout the house, all woodwork and plaster details were stripped of stain and paint and finished with eco-friendly wax or oil, the better to show off the true charms of the mid-Victorian-era stunner.

Perhaps the biggest undertaking was the professional-style ground-floor kitchen, now the heart of the house. The room originally suffered from "the three Ds: dingy, dark, and depressing," says Prudent. The oven was positioned in the fireplace, and a bathroom had been built in the middle of the room, leaving the rest of the appliances to form a U-shape around it. The small windows on the back wall were barred, letting in very little light, so the wall was knocked down and replaced with floor-to-ceiling windows and glass doors that open onto the revamped backyard. "We're prone to seasonal affective disorder, as are many people," Prudent says of the newly bright room. "Now you don't feel like you're closed in—there's hope!" Open shelving and glass cabinet doors line the walls of the airy space and are devised for easy access. "This is

Work In Progress
Scotch's home office (ABOVE AND THIS PICTURE) is located on the light-filled top floor; she designed the garden's ipé and Cor-Ten steel table, which was fabricated by Jeremy Seigle (BELOW RIGHT). Prudent works out and trains clients at the far end of the garden (ABOVE RIGHT). *See Resources.*

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meant to be a cook's kitchen," adds Prudent, "and I want to know where the martini glasses are at all times."

The deep backyard, with its floating cedar decking, European-style gravel beds, and sculptural ipé-and-steel table, doubles as party central and Prudent's training area. Here he works out with clients on a creation of his called the Fitnest, comprising cedar posts and metal bars for pull-ups, along with ropes for lunges. The best part: It can be taken down and tucked underneath the decking when the couple entertains.

During inclement weather, Prudent trains in a room on the brownstone's top floor opposite Scotch's light-filled atelier—perhaps one of the more unusual "home office" scenarios to be found. It helps that their hive of creativity is anchored by such inspiring examples of local talent throughout. "Almost everything in the house was made nearby or by someone we know, or both," says Scotch, "which makes it feel that much more special. But part of the balance we have here is that in many ways the house has been restored to its original beauty, the way it was intended to be all along."

Sweet Serenity
A custom black walnut bed made by Brooklyn-based furniture designer Tom Edmonds enhances the peaceful atmospherics in the master bedroom (ABOVE LEFT). A Duravit sink and bath fittings from Barber Wilsons & Co. Ltd. add polish to the streamlined master bath (NEAR LEFT). *See Resources.*

Positively Gleaming
Scotch and Prudent tackled the kitchen renovation first before moving on to other rooms in the house. Open shelves hold their collection of Elettrofiamma pots and pans; white Arne Jacobsen Ant chairs further underscore the room's simplicity. *See Resources.*