

**ENTRANCE**

An original arched doorway is outlined in crisp black for extra definition, with the vintage wooden furniture adding warmth.

Artwork by Sam Messenger.  
Flooring, reSAWN Timber Co

# the attraction of opposites

Interior designer Athena Calderone's Brooklyn home is a triumph of cool contrasts – a place where curves meet sharp angles, dark balances light and solidity finds its sense of flow

PHOTOGRAPHY Matthew Williams

STYLING Colin Samuel King/Edge Reps

WORDS Jo Leever

## LIVING ROOM

The bulbous sofa is contrasted with an angular coffee table; the floridity of an antique mirror with the simplicity of a contemporary chandelier.

Vintage **armchairs**, Theo Ruth. Portal **coffee table**, Apparatus. Flora Ottilia **chandelier** by Atelier Démiurge. **Rug**, Soufiane Zarib. **Sofa**, vintage Mario Bellini for B&B Italia. **Stools**, vintage Charlotte Perriand at Dobrinka Salzman Gallery



**KITCHEN**

Athena decided against a pendant over the island. Instead, she fills a vintage vase with seasonal branches to create a focal point. Steel-framed doors open onto the terrace.

**Kitchen**, bespoke by Hetman; painted in Railings by Farrow & Ball. **Taps**, Waterworks. **Range cooker**, Fisher & Paykel. Rolled seat **stools**, Thomas Hayes Studio



Dotted throughout Athena Calderone's Brooklyn townhouse are a myriad of sculptural shapes, from classical busts and organic carvings to pieces of furniture that radiate a similar sense of balance. But for Athena, the interplay of forms is more than ornamental. It reflects her approach to designing her family home. 'Form and scale are everything – I am always thinking about how items play against each other and create a kind of magic,' she says.

Athena relishes a challenge: she is the woman behind the lifestyle site *eye-swoon.com*, a stylist, a cook and a writer (her latest book is *Live Beautiful*) and the opportunity to push herself as an interior designer came in the shape of this brownstone townhouse. 'I was itching to work on a home that scared me a bit, where I had the scope to juxtapose traditional architecture with my kind of modernity,' she explains.

She moved here from a contemporary condo in New York (*Livingetc* visited in March 2014) with her husband Victor Calderone, a music producer and DJ, and their son Jivan, 17. Athena was drawn to the house's combination of 'grandeur and grit' and she couldn't wait to meld together her favourite architectural influences – plus a good dose of Brooklyn attitude.

But first, to manage the architectural side of the house's renovation, Athena called upon Elizabeth Roberts Architects – dubbed 'the townhouse queen' by New Yorkers in the know. Athena wanted to open up the entire upper ground floor, also removing the wall between the staircase and the living room.

Now, the house's architectural elements – fireplaces, the staircase, window frames and an arched doorway – stand out in crisp, uncompromising black against walls in palest grey



## home profile

### THE OWNERS

**Interior designer and writer Athena Calderone, her husband Victor Calderone, a music producer and DJ, their son Jivan, 17, and rescue puppy Tuco.**

### THE PROPERTY

**A 1900s brownstone in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn. The upper ground floor has an open-plan living room with dining area, the kitchen and a work nook, plus a WC. The first floor has the master suite and Victor's recording studio. The top floor has Jivan's bedroom and bathroom, a family room, Athena's office, a guest bedroom and a laundry.**

(Wet by Farrow & Ball). But for Athena, such architectural features are less a centrepiece and more a starting point for her own arrangements. 'When I think about composition, I always try to break symmetry,' she says. Yes, seating is drawn together loosely around the fireplace, but the more powerful dynamic comes from the way in which furniture shapes interact – the curves of the Bellini sofa set against the sharp angles of the Apparatus coffee table, for example. 'When you juxtapose something feminine, soft and curvaceous against something more masculine, hard-lined and bold, you create a certain voltage. Put together, the opposition ends in harmony,' she says.

Athena's near-monochrome palette also helps bring out the quiet drama of her interiors. 'The contrast of whites and creams against harsher blacks always engages the eye,' she says. 'If there's too much colour or pattern, your eye doesn't know where to land.'

When Athena and Victor left their previous home, they sold all their furniture: 'Yes, everything – I wanted to start afresh,' she laughs. But her version of starting anew involved the best of vintage and antique furniture. 'I was like an animal on the hunt for the right pieces – voracious, calculating and precise,' she jokes.

This is a serene, balanced home, but the ultimate test of how practical it is recently arrived in the shape of Tuco the rescue puppy. So far, he has a healthy respect for his surroundings. 'Much as I love him, if Tuco started gnawing on the Adnet sideboard, it would not be OK,' Athena says with a smile.

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Athena is the creator of lifestyle site *eye-swoon.com*. Her latest book, *Live Beautiful* (Abrams), is out now

### WORK NOOK

**A built-in soapstone desk sits neatly in one corner of the kitchen – and has a classic Brooklyn view to boot.**

**Chair**, vintage Jean Prouvé. Upholstered **stool**, Green River Project LLC

### STAIRCASE

**The hallway wall was removed to maximise the feeling of space. A bonus is that it makes a feature of the original staircase. The chair and table are vintage finds.**



## OFFICE

Athena is drawn to furniture forms that feel rooted and sturdy. 'I look at how something connects to the floor and how chunkier pieces can ground a grouping,' she says.

**Table**, vintage Angelo Mangiarotti. **Chair**, Perspective Studio



## MASTER BEDROOM

Markets and auctions were Athena's first port of call to find pieces that struck a chord. She loves the voltage that's created when you juxtapose curves with hard lines.

**Chandelier**, vintage Angelo Lelli. **Bed** and **curtains**, all Restoration Hardware. Wrought-iron **bench**, vintage 1950s French. **Artwork** by Struan Teague



**MASTER EN SUITE**  
Sculptural outlines are set against hand-finished Venetian plaster walls.

**Walls**, Kamp Studios.  
Similar **bath**, York at Victoria + Albert



home truths

**DESIGN OBJECT ON YOUR WISH LIST?**

A Rogan Gregory light sculpture.

**GO-TO SUPPER AT THE END OF A BUSY DAY?**

I will always make a whole roasted chicken with a ton of veggies.

**LIPSTICK YOU SWEAR BY?**

Dragon Girl by NARS.

**OUTFIT FOR WALKING THE DOG?**

Jeans and a tee.

**AND FOR A NIGHT OUT?**

A silky slip dress.

**WHAT'S ON YOUR PLAYLIST AT HOME?**

Cigarettes After Sex's *Radio* on Spotify.

**PLANS**

