

HOME FRONT

Buy it/Style it/Live it



Edited by Jessica Doyle



Clockwise from above Julie and her husband, Josh, often use the dining area as an impromptu office space. The table is a sample piece from Belgium, and the Thonet

chairs are from eBay. In the living room, the mirror above the mantel is by Ochre (ochre.net). Artwork by the Cape Cod artist Rob DuToit (robdutoit.com) is hung at eye level

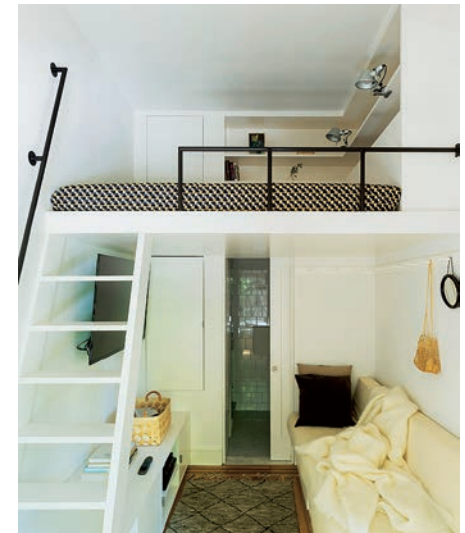
Home Swede home

Nifty storage, soft hues and Scandinavian chic characterise the serene Brooklyn apartment of Remodelista founder Julie Carlson.

By *Emma J Page*

PHOTOGRAPHY: MATTHEW WILLIAMS

‘What seems fresh now may date in a couple of years... Instagram has accelerated the trend cycle’



Clockwise from above
This shelving system by Atlas Industries (atleaseast.com) combines open and concealed storage to striking effect. The guest room was transformed by architect Malachi Connolly (malachiconnollydesign.com). Two large windows let plenty of light into the master bedroom, enhanced by walls in Benjamin Moore's Atrium White. Texture is added with washed cottons and putty-coloured linens

Renovating a home is rarely straightforward. At some point, most of us find ourselves deliberating over endless design options, from paint colours and door handles to light switches and towel rails. If this strikes a chord, then Julie Carlson, founder of the US renovation website Remodelista, has good news to share. ‘I don’t think there are ever more than 10 truly viable choices on the table,’ she says. ‘That’s why we launched our weekly 10 Easy Pieces column.’

Julie’s online sourcebook, set up in 2007 around her kitchen table in California, shook up the interiors world by becoming a one-stop reference tool for frazzled renovators. ‘I was in the middle of remodelling my own home, as were several friends, and we were faced with limitless choices over this door pull or that cupboard hinge,’ she explains. ‘But we soon found that if you can consult a short, definitive list, the experience becomes much less painful.’

Two years ago, once both their children (Will, 23, and Darcy, 21) had left for college, Julie and her husband, Josh Groves (Remodelista’s CEO), decided to relocate to New York, and took on a new decorating challenge in the form of this compact brownstone apartment in Brooklyn Heights.

It occupies the raised ground floor, and what the place lacks in square footage, it makes up for in grand proportions, elegant period features and large windows. Surprisingly, given Julie’s extensive remodelling knowledge, she decided not to make any radical changes to the layout, which comprises a living and dining room, a kitchen and two en-suite bedrooms. ‘I’ve always been of the mind that generous living spaces win out over bedroom size,’ she says.

Once the dark-green walls had been painted off-white, Julie could focus on the small but transformative details. Doorways were raised to maximise the effect of the high ceilings, and the kitchen was reworked to utilise every inch of space – incorporating

deep drawers and sleek, handleless cupboards. Storage was a must. ‘I imagined how we would live there from the moment we walked through the door,’ says Julie, ‘so, next to the entrance, we installed an oak wall-mounted shelving unit with drawers for keys and concealed charging stations for tech.’

In the simple dressing room off the master bedroom, Julie kept the existing floor-to-ceiling cabinets, and created a utility closet for the vacuum cleaner and other necessities. But the most ingenious use of space is the spare bedroom, which, thanks to a mezzanine platform and a practical daybed, has become a guest room, den and office. ‘It reminds me of a Japanese capsule hotel room,’ she says. ‘It sleeps both our kids when they are home and is great for watching TV.’

Clean lines prevail throughout this home, but it is not without touches of colour and pattern. ‘I like to add character with cushions, throws, artwork and ceramics,’ Julie says. ‘But I don’t follow trends when it comes to fixtures and fittings. What seems fresh

‘Research. The more you know before you begin, the better you’ll feel about the results’

and of-the-moment may look dated in a couple of years, especially now that Instagram has accelerated the trend cycle. I like basic white tiles, classic taps and discreet handles.’

An appreciation for a simple aesthetic perhaps stems from Julie’s Scandinavian heritage. ‘I’m three-quarters Swedish and I’ve always gravitated towards sleek lines,’ she says. ‘I like white walls and I wouldn’t want to come home to shoes and coats all over the place.’ It was that love of order and compiling lists that translated into the hundreds of blog posts that have made Remodelista one of the most-read interior-design sites.

As for future projects, Julie insists she’s found her natural habitat in this Brooklyn brownstone. But for those in the throes of a renovation, she offers some sage advice: ‘Research. The more you know before you begin, the better you’ll feel about the results. And shop your friends’ houses; if you know someone with style you admire, prowl the premises for inspiration.’ ◇

Remodelista: The Organized Home by Julie Carlson and Margot Guralnick is published by Artisan (£20)



Left The cannily designed guest room-cum-office incorporates a sleek desk space by the window



Kitchen-towel rod

Hide your kitchen roll in a drawer or a cupboard, on a simple tension rod (commonly used for curtains). I love this simple hack because there are no tools involved and it costs next to nothing to achieve.

An orderly pantry cupboard

Store flour, grains, etc, in clear glass jars, and don’t layer them more than two deep or items at the back will get overlooked. Fill the biggest jars with the ingredients you use most often, such as flour or sugar, and the small ones with spices.

Label each clearly and include the storage date (I use coloured washi tape for this).

Plastic-free fridge

Nothing is more satisfying than a well-organised fridge. I decant food into glass jars, and store berries in colanders and vegetables in reusable mesh bags. My new best friends are eco-friendly food wrap (Bee’s Wrap, amazon.co.uk) and cloth dish covers (ambatalia.com) – great alternatives to cling film.

Smart uses for bulldog clips

The humble bulldog clip is a brilliant tool, and not just in the office. I hook vintage clips on to nails in the wall. It’s an appealing way of hanging prints,

JULIE’S HOME HACKS



photographs and children’s art. They’re also good for securing laptop cords and phone chargers to a shelf or desk.

Desk tidy

A clutter-free desk is essential for me. I use wooden drawer organisers to separate small items like paper clips and staples. A wire letter rack is good for filing papers, and a wooden peg board hanging above your desk is practical and visually appealing – use it for everyday tools such as scissors, as well as postcards and artwork.

The miscellaneous drawer

We all have a ‘junk’ drawer, but the key is to banish all paper from it. Use a drawer organiser or a

collection of boxes and dishes to neatly contain essentials such as measuring tape, string, scissors, batteries, matches and candles. File papers away separately.

No-drill bathroom storage

I love using a coat stand in the bathroom, where tiled walls make mounting hooks difficult. Try hanging baskets from it. The Tra coat stand from Twentytwentyone (£127, twentytwentyone.com) is a favourite.

