

# HOUSE ON THE HILL

Jessica Warren gave a Clinton Hill mansion a fresh start. Then the old Brooklyn brownstone graciously returned the favor.

**COMFORTABLE** with the **PAST** Jessica and Doug Warren restored the parlor floor of their 1887 home, from onyx-tiled fireplace surround to plaster ceiling. Layers of linoleum and carpet were lifted to reveal the room's original maple-parquet floor; its marquetry border came as a welcome surprise. The Empire-style chandelier previously hung in the couple's former Park Slope condo. "It never 'fit in' there, but it seemed made for this room," says Jessica. Italian sofas, from ABC Carpet & Home, offer comfort and an antidote to fligree overload.





**IN CLINTON HILL, FOLKS REFER TO THIS FIVE-STORY BROWNSTONE ON** Washington Avenue as the Pfizer Mansion, “but no one named Pfizer ever lived here,” says current owner Jessica Warren. She and her husband, Doug, purchased the 10,000-square-foot Queen Anne in 2007 (“about three weeks before the recession hit”). A devoted student of Brooklyn history, cultural anthropology, and architectural design, Jessica had a vision for the Gilded Age grande dame, which had begun life, in 1887, as one of a pair of town houses built by Pfizer co-founder Charles Erhart (hence, the lingering pharmaceutical association). This one became the home of Erhart’s daughter Fanny Erbsloeh. In later incarnations, the dwelling served as offices and storage space for the Brooklyn Public

Library; as a Catholic-girls boarding school; and as a private residence replete with a Moroccan-style “man cave” in the basement.

The Warrens entered the picture—after having lived in a Park Slope condo for 15 years—in search of a place to spread their wings. “Its greatest luxury is space,” says Jessica. So, with her two teenage children and “usually conservative” husband, Jessica dove into an extensive three-year-long renovation, aided by Kimberly Neuhaus, of Neuhaus Design Architecture, and the contracting team from Brooklyn’s Interior Alterations. Together, they repaired leaks; restored skylights; repointed stonework; built a new, copper-domed kitchen addition where the home’s original, circular-based glass conservatory had once stood; replaced derelict

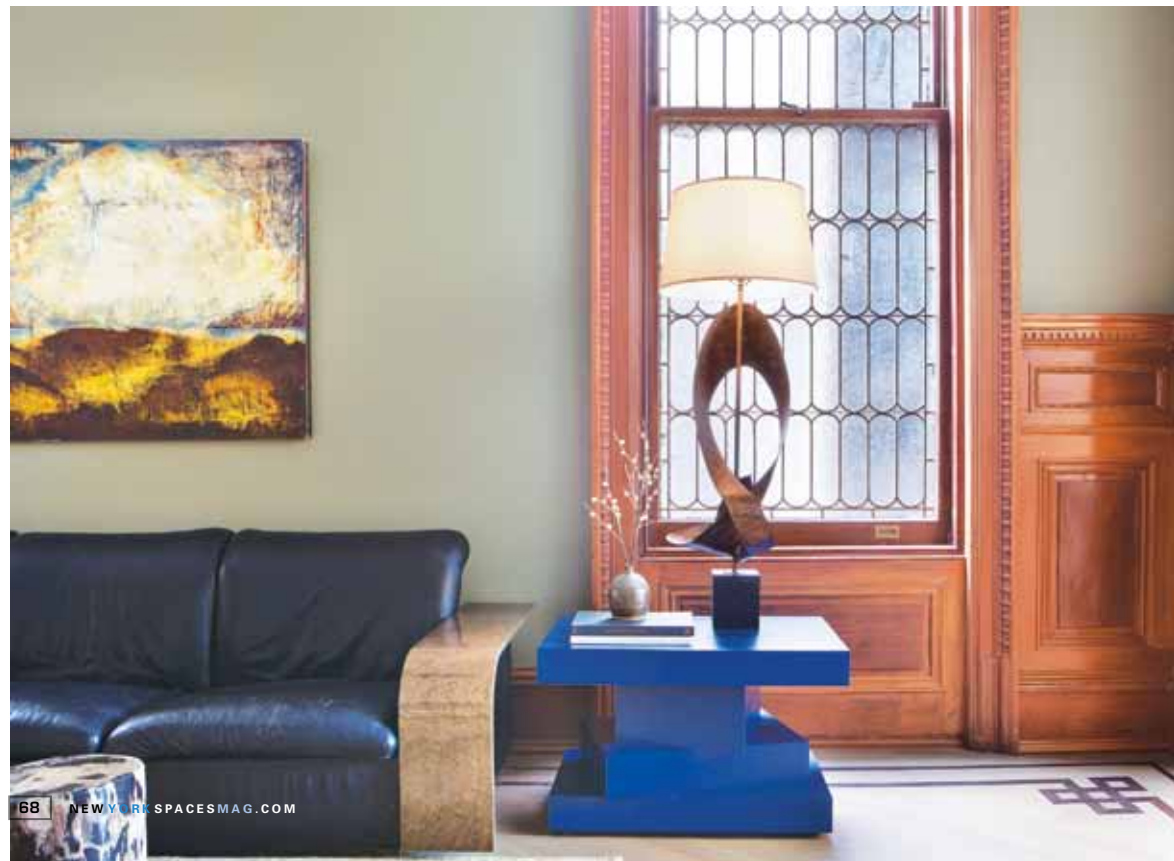


**RESTORED in style**

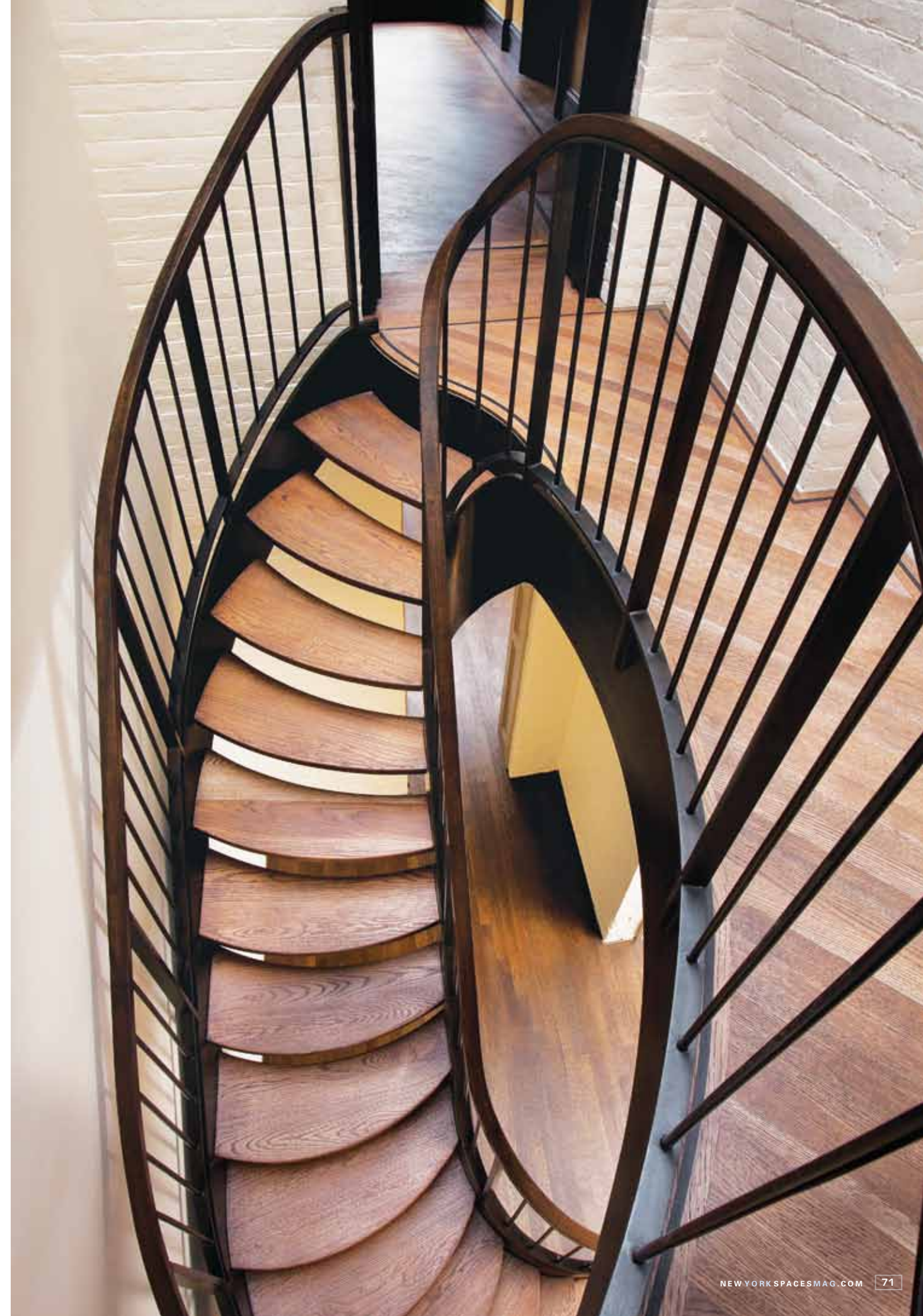
*Opposite page:* Removing a wall between two rooms on the second story created a light-filled master bedroom with sitting area.

Mid-century chairs are paired with one segment of a vintage sectional near the bay window. Pale-blue paint and bleached, burl-maple mouldings enhance the room’s ethereal quality.

*This page:* An oversize vintage armchair and onyx coffee table furnish the library. The books reveal Jessica’s passion for history, design, and auction catalogues.



**ARTFUL intervention**  
 Above: The kitchen occupies a copper-roofed addition constructed at the rear of the parlor floor, where a glass conservatory stood in the last century. The countertops, backsplash, and island are fabricated of striated quartzite. Left: Leaded windows and paneled wainscoting define the quiet family room, separated from the opulent parlor by pocket doors. The fluid 1960s Ribbon Lamp was made by the Laurel Lamp Co. The landscape is by Brooklyn-based artist Shawn Dulaney. Right: Over the dining-room mantel, a mirror reflects a work by New York-based artist Kehinde Wiley. Chandelier, Robert Shapiro Studiolo.



#### a few steps AHEAD

This page, clockwise from above: A fragment of an installation created by the Brooklyn-based street artist who goes by the name SWOON is sandwiched between two pieces of Plexiglas and displayed against a wall at the top of the home's central staircase. Jessica designed the family room's silvery console, incorporating wooden panels she sourced on eBay. The derelict basement kitchen was transformed into an inviting entertaining area with the installation of a wet bar formed of a vintage nickel-plated sink backed by slabs of onyx. Opposite: Neuhaus Design Architecture conceptualized the elegant iron-and-oak staircase that leads from parlor floor to garden level, replacing the former servants' steps.



private **ESCAPES**

*Opposite:* Blue-tinted glass and wallpaper designed by Andrio Abero for Rollout's "Artist Series" makes a statement in a bath designed for the Warrens' teenage daughter. The cast-iron footed tub is from Waterworks. *This page, above:* A freestanding oval tub from Wetstyle stands at the center of Jessica's private bathing room, off the master bedroom. "It is my escape from the world—my sanctuary—and my favorite room in the house," says the designer, who papered the walls in a botanical pattern from de Gournay. The ceiling pendant is vintage Baccarat, unearthed in a thrift shop. *Right:* Vibrant blue walls, a handcrafted dresser, and a coverlet fashioned from a Serbian textile bring energy to a teenage girl's retreat. On the music stand: another piece by SWOON.

mechanicals; and ripped out sheetrock, crumbled linoleum, and carpet in an effort to reveal the home's original wood, bricks, and plasterwork. What could not be saved was re-created.

"We decided to keep the envelope true to character," says Jessica. Furnishings were another story: Here, the mix is fluid and personal, including thrift and eBay finds, auction treasures, custom upholstery, and fine art that gives the house a sense of place in the contemporary world. "We wanted the old house to be a real 'family home,' again, but it seemed vulgar to live in a 10,000-square-foot house without finding a way to share," says Jessica. She and her family frequently open up their home for nonprofit fundraisers and offer studio space to guest artists and musicians at neighboring Pratt Institute. "Restoring this house has brought us a whole new life," says Jessica, who recently founded her own design business: J.P. Warren Interiors. ~ See Resources.

