

BY DESIGN

Have You Seen a U.F.O. in Brooklyn? It May Have Been the Roof of This House.

Two Greek-born architects transformed an 1899 building into a light-filled home designed for play.

By Gisela Williams Photographs by Blaine Davis

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U.F.O. SIGHTINGS ARE rare in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, but if you were to stand in the William Sheridan playground and glance across the street, you wouldn't be the first to mistake the silver rooftop structure atop one of the block's turn-of-the-20th-century townhouses for a spacecraft. The terrace addition to the four-story brick building is encased in aluminum panels that, from certain angles, so thoroughly reflect the surroundings that it virtually disappears — one of many illusions conjured up by the house's owners, the architects Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis, the founders of the architecture firm Lot and the design studio Objects of Common Interest.

Originally from Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city, the couple, both 43, bought the house in 2022, months after their second son was born. Having lived in Brooklyn since 2009, they had watched the borough transform dramatically, with small, family-owned businesses giving way to luxury residential towers. As they drew up plans for the rooftop addition to their newly acquired townhouse, which was built in 1899, they were determined to expand their living quarters — and

conceal a roof deck — while preserving the block's architectural landscape as best they could. They settled on reflective surfaces as an unlikely solution. “We wanted to add light to our neighborhood, not create another shadow,” says Petaloti.



For the third-floor living room, Petaloti and Trampoukis sourced the vinyl flooring from a rubber supply store. Three speakers from Oda hang over a modular sofa from Paulin, Paulin, Paulin, the company founded by the son of the French designer Pierre Paulin, and Diskoi resin tables, designed by the couple and made for Milan's Nilufar gallery. Blaine Davis



The rooftop addition on the 1899 townhouse is clad in aluminum panels. Blaine Davis

As you might expect from a pair of architects who grew up along the Aegean Sea, maximizing light inside their home was just as much a priority. Soon after closing on the 3,000-square-foot townhouse, they ripped out the interior walls to expose the home's original brick surfaces, later painting them white, and tore down all the

dropped ceilings to provide more uninterrupted space between floors. They wanted to recreate the feeling of living in an industrial loft, that quintessential New York space the couple had romanticized as graduate students at Columbia University.

The loftlike design let them fulfill another long-held ambition: to create a home that could function as a living organism, constantly adapting to different situations and moods. Flexibility is key, says Petaloti while sitting in the stairway on the ground floor of the townhouse one morning in March. The floor's caramel-hued carpet extends to the front room, which overlooks the street, where it also wraps around a built-in bench topped with flat pink gel cushions. In one corner of the room is an accordionlike floor-to-ceiling partition coated in vinyl in a color similar to that of the carpet. "We're with our boys [who are 7 and 3] all the time," says Trampoukis. "We designed spaces so everyone is able to have a little bit of privacy and a little bit of independence as well." On the other side of the partition is a small stainless steel desk embedded in a glass-brick wall. "This is our work area," she says. "We don't want our kids exposed to us working on a screen all the time, so we limit ourselves and try to only use our laptops in a specific time and space."



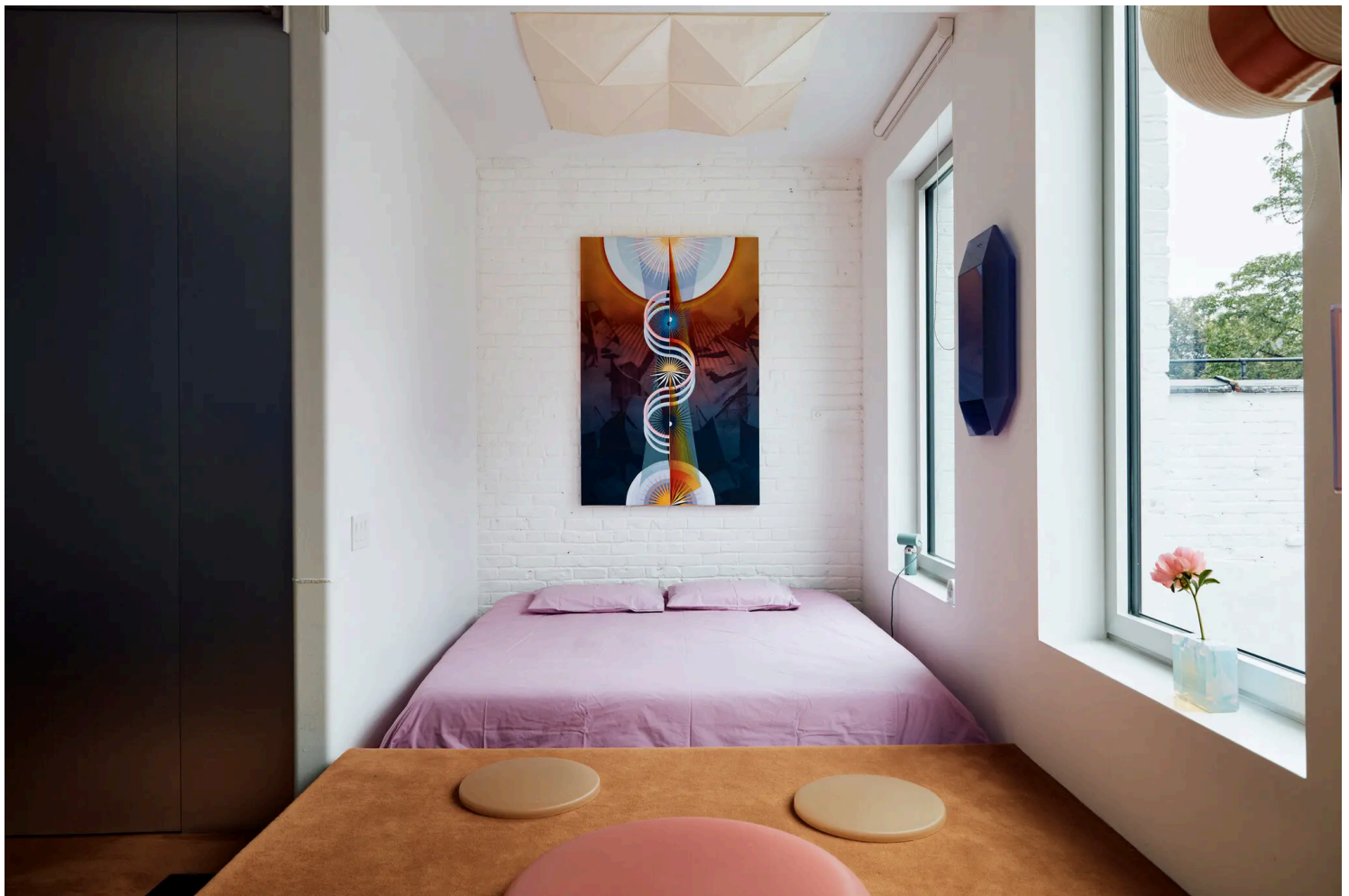
The couple's two young children have the run of the second floor. Above the craft table are a drawing by the Athens-based artist Aristeidis Lappas and a pendant lamp designed by Michael Anastassiades for Flos. Photograph by Blaine Davis. Artwork on wall: Aristeidis Lappas, "Snake Changing Skin," 2021, courtesy of the artist and the Breeder Gallery



In lieu of doors, metallic vinyl curtains conceal and divide spaces on the second floor. Blaine Davis

Beyond the small office, another vinyl partition conceals a bathroom, also lined in glass bricks. Scattered through the house are pink, purple and sand-colored wheeled stools made out of a polyurethane gel: shapeless lumps that resemble cartoon ghosts. Called Metamorphic Rocks, they were designed by Petaloti and Trampoukis in 2021. Petaloti sees them as metaphors. "Things often look one way and, once you interact with them, you get a different sense," she says. Normally a rock like this "would be hard and uncomfortable. But it comes as a surprise that it's soft and welcoming."

TOWARD THE BACK of the ground floor is the primary bedroom — essentially a nook just big enough for an oversize mattress — and, beside it, an alcove with a raised platform covered in pastel-colored gel cushions that resemble giant hard candies. “We sometimes play board games here or even eat tacos with the kids, using the cushions as tables and chairs,” Petaloti says. The three windows along the back wall overlook a square yard lined with a white wall and bamboo trees. Six crystal-like sculptures the size of boulders — made of recycled resin in white, purple and red — double as outdoor seating.



Petaloti and Trampoukis turned an alcove on the first floor into their primary bedroom. The ceiling lighting is an Akari PL2 by Isamu Noguchi, and the artwork, titled “Stay With Me Until My Shadow Transforms Into Light” (2024), is by the Greek artist Panos Tsagaris, a friend of the couple’s. Photograph by Blaine Davis. Artwork above bed: © Panos Tsagaris, courtesy of the artist; ceiling light: © 2025 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

These touches of practical whimsy are everywhere. The second floor is the children's domain, with a translucent inflatable chair and polished white floors made from vinyl sourced at a rubber supply store on Canal Street in Manhattan. A red project table in the center of the room — made by Lehni, a Swiss company that fabricated Donald Judd's metal furniture — is set atop a purple rug with serrated edges. There are vinyl curtains here as well, but in metallic silver and white, that can be pulled across the room to create separate private spaces.

Instead of railings or a support wall, the staircases linking all the floors are flanked by stainless steel mesh netting. When they were quoted a price of \$30,000 to buy the material and install it, the couple found similar netting through the e-commerce site Alibaba and had the accessories fabricated in their studio in Athens. "Some workers and I installed it on our own, so everything in the end cost about \$2,000," says Trampoukis.

The small office on the ground floor disappears when the vinyl partition from the Italian company Dooor is fully extended. The

The third-floor living room shares space with an open, modular kitchen from Reform. Blaine Davis

pink stool is one of the Metamorphic Rocks — stools on wheels designed by Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis — scattered throughout the townhouse. Blaine Davis

The third floor, with its 15-foot-high ceilings, holds the kitchen and a large living room anchored by a low-slung white modular sofa made by the family-run furniture company Paulin, Paulin, Paulin, modeled after a never-produced 1970s design by Pierre Paulin. The couch's nine modules are often assembled as a monolith (seven feet wide and deep), but have been reconfigured in innumerable ways. Above it, beside a three-foot-tall Isamu Noguchi pendant lamp, hang a trio of disc-shaped speakers in purple, pink and brown, each 40 to 45 inches in diameter: bespoke creations by the New York audio company Oda.

From the dining room, which appears to float above the kitchen in the small mezzanine, another short flight of stairs leads to the 665-square-foot terrace — a moonscape with futuristic white chairs by Verner Panton and those aluminum-clad walls that mirror the surrounding sky and city. Here the only reminders of earth are two potted olive trees, a homage to the family's roots in Greece.

“I grew up in a house that was the center of my universe,” says Petaloti. “It’s a place where I can still go and rest psychologically. This is what we wanted to create here too — a place of calm and delight.”

Photo assistant: Paul Fittipaldi

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