

HOW A RAMSHACKLE BARN WAS REBORN AS A CHIC GUESTHOUSE

Hendricks Churchill gives new meaning to a barn raising.

By CATHERINE HONG MAR 16, 2022



Chris Mottalini

For plenty of homeowners, this 100-year-old barn in the Hudson River Valley might not have been deemed worth saving. With its soft walls and partly rotted foundation, the structure was in such poor shape it was barely suitable for storage. “The ground floor was mud, and the upper level was infested with bats,” says the owner.

The barn is just a stone’s throw from the property’s main house, an 1815 farmhouse the homeowner had previously renovated with the help of [Heide Hendricks and Rafe Churchill](#), the wife and husband team behind the Connecticut-based architecture and design firm [Hendricks Churchill](#). If anyone could rescue this ramshackle barn—the owner’s hope was to use it as an entertaining space and guest quarters—it would be them. “Heide and

Rafe respect the historic nature of these old structures while also bringing in a bit of modernity,” the client says. “It’s a perfect combination.”



The barn is more than a century old and was essentially falling down by the time the designers got their hands on it. They brought the structure back from the brink and painted it in Farrow & Ball’s Inchyra Blue, a color inspired by a historic Scottish manor.

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Churchill, the firm's lead architectural designer, immediately saw that a down-to-the-studs overhaul was the only path forward. He fixed the foundation, stripped the house to its timber frame, and proceeded from scratch, incorporating insulation, plaster walls, radiant floors, more than a dozen windows, and a raised sleeping loft. However, he kept the barn's most charming original elements—those timber posts and beams, some still studded with ancient hooks and nails, and the rough weathered ceiling—intact. "There's no way to re-create the beauty of this type of old ceiling," explains Churchill. "So we built a brand-new roof structure over it." (The couple did much the same with the roof of the 1871 home they share in Sharon, Connecticut.) To round out the barn's creature comforts, he also added a full bathroom, kitchenette, and, on the basement level, a garage and sauna.



Michel Ducaroy's classic 1970s Togo sofa was the jumping-off point for this impressive double-height living area.

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Hendricks, the firm's lead interior designer, notes that the barn's warm, rustic 1970s-inflected decor is a collaboration between herself and the homeowner, who has "a great eye for furniture, art, and textiles" and

brought many pieces to the project. In fact, the vintage [Togo sectional](#) in dark brown leather, which dominates the space and sets its retro-relaxed vibe, was something the homeowner purchased before the barn's demolition even began. ("I had wanted a Togo for years but never had a space large enough for one," he confesses.) The barn's earthy palette of caramel browns, charcoal, and pink highlights the interior's many tactile elements, from the reclaimed oak floors and plaster walls to the wicker dining chairs and Japanese boro textile displayed on the wall. The walls, Hendricks points out, are not pure white, which would have felt too stark. "We tinted the plaster for the effect of an aged patina," she says. The kitchenette's cabinetry, meanwhile, she painted a muddy pink ([Farrow & Ball's Dead Salmon](#)), adding an unexpected blush to the dining area.



The dining area features a vintage dining table and chairs and a charming kitchenette painted in Farrow & Ball's Dead Salmon. The artwork above the sink is a framed Calvin Klein scarf depicting Andy Warhol's *Electric Chair*.

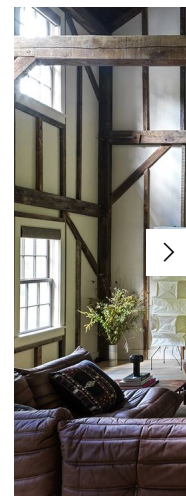
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Accessed by a zigzag staircase constructed of oak, the raised bedroom loft overlooks the living room through a clear glass railing. Beside the window at one end, Hendricks placed a vintage table and stools to offer guests a cozy, secluded work space—in effect, a getaway from their getaway.

As the designers explain, they deliberately pulled back on extras such as window treatments, built-ins, and other accessories. To wit: Instead of [drapery](#), they installed motorized shades. In lieu of a traditional bookcase, they added a compact vertical one. Even rugs were employed sparingly, allowing the plain oak floors to take precedence. “As with many of our projects, I think the success here lies in what is left out,” says Hendricks. After all, it’s still a barn at heart.

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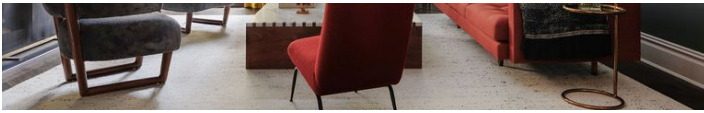
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