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The property

TYPE A loft in an 1890 watch-manufacturing building.

SPACE Open-plan area, including kitchen, dining and living areas, bedroom, two bathrooms, an office, plus a raised guest bed platform.

LOCATION NoHo, New York.

COST The renovations set them back US\$150,000.



ABOVE Exposed brick walls give Billy and April's loft a welcoming feel. For an oversized lamp like this, try Ecco Trading. **BELOW** Billy

got the cement face stones, used round the fireplace, from a friend who had some left over after renovating his flat. The vintage tub

chairs were bought in Virginia. For geometric cushions, try Jonathan Adler, and find dupion silk curtains at John Lewis.

STYLE in the city

Take a hip young couple in need of a home, find a trendy loft in New York's East Village and fill it with stacks of quirky possessions and clever design solutions. Then add a cat, a dog and lots of personality. The result: super-cool city living...

Words and styling: Amanda Talbot
Photography: Richard Powers



A vintage trunk covered with pictures, originally from Billy's father, helps divide up the roomy open-plan living space. Try

Baileys for something similar. The wire chair was picked up in a vintage store in L.A. For a lookalike rug, head to Ikea.

Kitchen/diner

The 1,000 sq ft loft allows for ample-sized living zones, but had to be carefully thought out. 'What I love about the kitchen is that it's bright in the middle of the space,' says Billy. However, the warm wooden units were arranged around the edge to keep the floor area free for the benches and table. On the wall cabinets, a photo by April adds colour: she had it altered to be more abstract and then laminated.



A kitchen bar, made of walnut, runs along one wall. For similar, try Crabtree & Evelyn. The cabinets are covered in a laminated picture

that April took in Georgia. For a long table and bench, try The Conran Shop. LSA does coloured glassware and Ikea sells paper lanterns.

Living area

The living room is where Billy and April get to show off their eclectic tastes. It's also a fun room where the pair can have friends over to watch movies. They didn't want a big all-consuming TV in the room, so the solution was to install a projector and a screen that slides down. 'In NYC, every time you try to go to the movies it's crammed or sold out, so it's so nice to have a cinema in your own home,' says Billy.



Funny how things change, isn't it? One minute you're enjoying the single lifestyle, not really thinking about the future. Then, when you least expect it, you meet someone and fall in love. That's what happened to 33-year-old Billy Gabor and 27-year-old April Tillman. 'We were both home for Thanksgiving, and on the Saturday night wanted a little rest from our families, so we ended up in the same bar, and both felt equally out of place,' explains Billy. 'We talked for hours, and the rest is history.'

Before long they were looking for their first real home together: a loft in NoHo, the trendy Manhattan neighbourhood so-called as it's north of Houston Street. 'We'd only rented before,' explains Billy, who works in post-production for TV commercials while April has an internship with revered *National Geographic* photographer Steve McCurry. 'This was the first home we bought together, and our first renovation project.'

Billy had been transferred from Los Angeles to New York for work, and the pair looked at 30 apartments in three days >



What they did

- Hired New York architect James Slade to design and manage renovations.
- Put translucent fibreglass panels onto a wooden frame to make walls for the bedroom and bathrooms.
- Relocated and installed a new kitchen.
- Installed the large bookcase with ladder that they bought locally in the East Village.
- Created a hallway by building a

narrow corridor that opens into the main space, with a laundry room on one side, by the kitchen. On the other side is an office with a built-in desk and platform sleeping area above it.

- Turned one bathroom into two smaller ones, so they could include one for guests with a small shower.
- Formed a cosy fireplace, using cement stones, as a focal point.



ABOVE The metal filing drawers contain April's photographic contact sheets, and were found in a thrift store. Try the Helmer

drawer units from Ikea for a similar design. BELOW Bits and pieces picked up on April and Billy's travels line the shelves and add

personality. The bookshelf, with ladder and rail, was found in the East Village; head to LASSCO for something like this.

"We have all the books and records we've collected in the bookcase, but it's also a place where we showcase things we constantly find, from old cameras and projectors to little wood carvings."

before deciding on 'the one.' They ended up with the dilemma of falling in love with two apartments, going back and forth between them. With cutting-edge clothing stores, markets, and an amazing selection of cafés and restaurants, Billy and April were eventually won over by the vibrant, cosmopolitan East Village location of the NoHo loft. The historical features of the red-brick building, such as its high, cast-iron ceilings and columns, added to its charm.

"It was pretty much a dry-walled box when we moved in," says Billy. "It had a nice big bathroom, but the craftsmanship wasn't good. When we bought it, we thought we would do something different to it, but we weren't sure what. Once we'd lived here for a year, trying to work out how to best utilise the space, we hired architect James Slade to start the renovations."

Now this NYC loft is a fabulous showcase for their eclectic possessions – both April and Billy share a love for rescuing and collecting old objects. They've gathered vintage furniture, old cameras, photos, projectors, architecture and travel books. Even their pets were rescued – their dog, Lucas, was found on holiday in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, and their cat, Baxter, was found on Baxter Street, around the corner.

It was important for the flat to be functional in a number of ways. Billy and April naturally wanted it to be somewhere to house their >



Library

Billy and April found the bookcase with rail and ladder on the lower east side. "I told James [the architect] we needed to find a space to use it in the design of the apartment. Now it's situated next to the office area. The rails to the bookcase were extended so the ladder can also be used on the diagonal wall that April uses for book-up photographs she's editing. Behind the translucent wall that backs the bookcase are internal fluorescent lights."



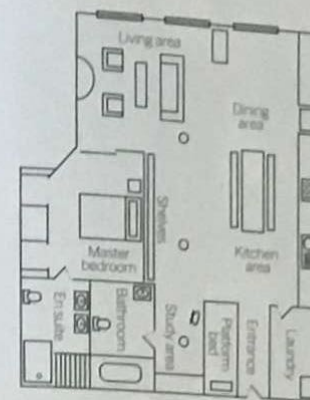
Original details, like the plaster pillars and high ornate ceilings, add a sense of grandeur. The Pier sells dark pieces in a similar style to this wooden cupboard.

Bedroom

Solid walls in a loft can make a room feel like a dark cave so, to overcome this, the bedroom doors and walls are translucent fibreglass panels on a wooden frame, which allow daylight to filter through. Billy and April opted for a smaller bedroom to allow more space for the open-plan living area. 'We're still able to fit two full closets in here,' says Billy. 'Instead of doors, we used drapes, which look cool and don't take up any room, so it's really efficient space-wise, and quite dramatic looking. Our bedroom is a little oasis tucked away from it all.'

Walls made of a fibreglass material called Lumasite divide the bedroom from the main living area. SpaceSlide can make floor-to-ceiling room dividers for you.

The timber behind the bed is Baltic birch. The picture was bought on holiday in Rome. Neutral bedding helps keep the look tranquil and relaxed.



Bathroom

The couple wanted a spa feel in the bathroom, going for a big ceiling shower rose and a wooden duckboard tray. It's great to have a calm haven from the bustle of the city, says Billy. They've invested in a poured-resin basin and surround that stretches the length of the vanity unit. The smart design means the translucent glass wall also becomes part of the shower enclosure.

things, but they also wanted to be able to transform it into a photographic studio for April, for use for shoots or parties.

And a big hit at these gatherings is the Evel Knievel pinball machine. 'I've always had a fascination with Evel Knievel!' laughs Billy. 'When I was living in LA, eBay was starting to become big and I thought I might find a pinball machine on there. Lo and behold, I found one in California, about 30 miles from where I lived. So I rented a truck to pick it up, and now here it lives. Everyone loves playing the pinball machine.'

It's clear that this young couple have captured the essence of the city and expressed it in their own home. 'What we love about NYC is the diversity,' says Billy. 'People here want to be their best and it's celebrated. I wake up and feel so lucky that we live in this house.'
www.sladearch.com;
www.aprilbillman.com.



Home truths

Where's your favourite travel destination?

We'd have to say Costa Rica rates the best overall – the people, the landscape, all the adventure it has to offer and, of course, the animals. We like the 'casada', too, which is their typical meal, consisting of rice, beans, plantain, salad, and some sort of meat. Yum!

Any tips for eating out in NoHo?

Quartino, an organic Italian restaurant, is a great neighbourhood spot. It has an intimate atmosphere, plus a fireplace and outdoor garden seating. What advice would you give a first-timer visiting New York? When you arrive, only take official (yellow) cabs or call a car service in advance. Explore the more intimate neighbourhoods downtown. For a tour of the harbour and Statue of Liberty, opt for 'the beast' (a speedboat that blasts classic rock) rather than the slow-moving, wake-me-up-when-it's-over circular cruise.

ABOVE Contact Durat for a basin that looks like this poured-resin model. For frosted glass, try Chelsea Glass, and for a fixed ceiling rose shower

head, visit Aston Matthews. Head to Wickes for slatted wooden flooring, and John Lewis for a plain white shower curtain. BELOW Computer

and audio-visual equipment is tucked away in the office. A guest bed is built-in above the desk, and accessed using the bookshelf ladder.



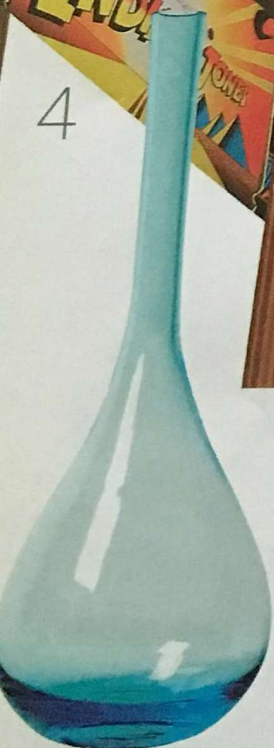
Soft option

To emphasise clean lines and maximise light in a bathroom, consider using clear or translucent materials, such as **frosted glass**. Think beyond the shower screen and go for a clear resin surface with an inset basin to create a minimalist linear effect. Mix with **wood** to introduce an element of warmth. Try teak, from £13 per sq m, SL Hardwoods.



ideas to steal

FROM BILLY AND APRIL'S LOFT



House coat

An exposed brick interior wall gives beautiful colour and texture to a room. However, dust can prove to be a bit of a problem. To resolve this, try sealing the wall yourself. Mix up a solution of one-part PVA glue and five-parts water and paint it on. Test the mixture on an unseen area first and, if you're happy with the finish, carefully apply three thin layers.