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# The Architect Is In: A Brooklyn Townhouse Grows Around a Roof Garden by Christine Chang Hanway (/about/christine-hanway)

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Issue 19 · Working It (/issue/8/19/working-it) · May 17, 2014

In need of architects to collaborate with her on the gut renovation of her family's Cobble Hill home, landscape designer Julie Farris hired Brooklyn firm Khanna Schultz, a member of the Remodelista Architect and Designer Directory (<http://www remodelista.com/architects-designers>). Occupying the two upper floors of a Brooklyn townhouse, the project has a rooftop garden as its crowning glory. Vrinda Khanna and Robert Schultz, founding partners of Khanna Schultz (<http://www remodelista.com/architects-designers/firms/khanna-schultz>), are available for the next 48 hours to answer any and all questions. Ask away!

Longtime admirers of Farris’s firm XS Space (<http://xsspace.com/>), Vrinda Khanna and Robert Schultz were delighted when she asked them to take on the renovation of the two floors, a total of 2,700 square feet. As one might suspect, the starting point was the elevated garden Farris was planning to build—and its location gave the architects an opportunity to "turn things upside down": “Placed on the top floor, the public living spaces became a natural extension of the rooftop landscape, while the private realm lives below on the second floor, which is the entry level into the apartment,” says Khanna. “We developed our ideas for the top floor as Julie was designing the rooftop, and we began to see the interior as a landscape as well.”

Photography by Antoine Bootz (<http://antoinebootz.com/>).



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Above: The clients wanted a contemporary, light-filled space that was as open as possible. On the top floor, the architects responded by visually lightening the structural stair wall by turning it into a floating art wall. They then removed all of the perpendicular walls because they weren't structural, allowing an unbroken vista from one end of the townhouse to the other. "Keeping the upper floor open from front to back without partitions was a critical early decision," Khanna says. "Even the stair is open and sculptural, bringing in light from above and allowing views to pass through."



Above: Situated at the back of the townhouse, the dining area is divided from the den by an oversized sliding barn door that, when open, allows the two rooms to flow into each other.



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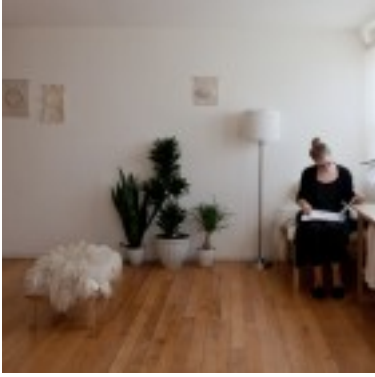
Above: The kitchen occupies the middle zone of the interior landscape, between the dining area and the living area. Blown glass Pistil Pendants (<http://www.alisonbergerglassworks.com/PendantsChandeliers.html#35>) by Alison Berger hang over the sink in the long island.

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Above: The kitchen cabinets were custom made by New Jersey Hardwoods (<http://www.newjerseyhardwoods.com/home.html>) (introduced to the architects by general contractor Showcase Construction), and are sprayed with an opaque catalyzed lacquer—a hardy finish. The island countertop is honed black Concordia, a type of schist stone (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schist>), and the perimeter countertops and backsplash are Olympian Danby marble.



Above: Throughout the project, the design employs a limited palette of materials, all of which were selected for their inherent beauty and texture. The same recycled wood used for the sliding barn door appears in the living area as a built-in bench (with storage) under the windows. Meanwhile, the Concordia hearth, which extends across the room on either side of the fireplace, harks back to the kitchen island countertop.





Above: Detailed as a floating object, the stair leads to the rooftop garden. The architects animated the stair wall by slotting a bookshelf into it.





Above: Julie Farris designed her rooftop to function as her family's backyard, a relaxed outdoor space that she and her husband can enjoy with their children. Keep an eye out: next month, Gardenista (<http://www.gardenista.com>) will be fully exploring Farris's urban landscape.





Above: The stairs between the second and third floors are more solid and built-in. In the private realm on the second floor, a sliding barn door closes off the rooms from visibility and noise. "The barn door slides with ease because of the heavy-duty hardware we selected," says Khanna.





Above: In the master bedroom, a minimalist and discrete slot diffuser houses the HVAC system.



Above: A bright palette is introduced in the children's room.





Above: The architects detailed the cabinetry in the bathroom to be similar to the kitchen millwork. "We try to use a design language that continues throughout the various spaces, tying them together," says Khanna. "Our feeling is that this unifies the design and creates a tranquil space." The vanity top is made from Corian and the floors are green cleft slate.





Above: The apartment's entry vestibule is at street level.





Above: The corner townhouse has two entrances on separate sides of the building. The entry to the project is at the front of the building.

Before





Above: A view of the entry stairs before construction.





Above: The area on the third floor where the kitchen now sits.





Above: A view toward what is now the dining room. "The building was in poor condition and all the original details had been stripped," says Khanna. "This gave us the freedom to start over."

**Floorplans**





Above: The third floor (top level) of the project is oriented to the roof garden and devoted to the public rooms.



Above: The bedrooms and bathrooms are on the second floor (lower level).

For more design insight from members of the Remodelista Architect/Designer Directory (<http://www remodelista.com/architects-designers>), have a look at all our Architect Is In (<http://www remodelista.com.orion.stage.saymedia.com/list/architect-is-in>) posts. Want to delve into roof gardens? Go to Gardenista to learn about green roofs in Hardscaping 101 (<http://www.gardenista.com/posts/hardscaping-101-green-roofs>) (and have a look at A Green Roof with Wildflowers (<http://www.gardenista.com/posts/architects-visit-a-green-roof-with-wildflowers>)). Also don't miss How to Make the Most of Your Urban Garden (Hint: Use the Roof Too) (<http://www.gardenista.com/posts/how-to-make-the-most-of-your-urban-garden-hint-you-have-a-roof-too>).

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42 Comments

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Phil · 12 days ago

Beautiful apartment - great job to all involved! I was curious as to the source of the dining table? Much thanks in advance

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Khanna Schultz → Phil · 12 days ago

Thanks very much Phil! The dining table was fabricated by a millworker in Chatham, NY that our clients dealt with directly. We recently heard about a place called the Lorimar Workshop <http://www.lorimerworkshop.com>... that makes tables out of solid wood. We have not used them yet. You can also try Samuel Moyer Furniture who was recommended highly to us.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Phil → Khanna Schultz · 12 days ago

Thanks you very much - I will check them both out!





**Susan** · 13 days ago

I would love to know more about the roof deck - in particular::  
how did you do the rocks... is there an additional lining?, how did you get them up there, do you have a weight load maximum up there?  
The containers look to be steel? Did you have them custom made and how did you go about that?  
How do you have the plants to the left / across from the door planted?  
... our roof deck slants to one corner to drain and trying to think of something to do on the base as we have built a deck that is level/straight but there are some exposed areas that are driving me crazy and I would like to do something like the rock, grass etc... not sure how to go about that part

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → Susan · 12 days ago

Hello Susan, as mentioned in the piece, the roof deck was designed by our client so unfortunately we are not able to answer your questions above. You can definitely get linear planters in a variety of materials including synthetics that look like metal but are light. Sorry we are not able to be of greater help.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Susan** → Khanna Schultz · 12 days ago

Omg - thanks so much for your reply. I wasn't expecting that as I saw after I sent that the discussion had closed. Very nice of you.  
I looked up her site - very cool designer too!  
Since you are here I wanted to mention that I really love the window seat and the way it connects with the fireplace surround. We have a similar large open floor plan and I have been ruminating on this idea since last week so it was quite the synchronicity to find your design. It's so well done.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → Susan · 12 days ago

Thanks so much Susan!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Christine Chang Hanway** **Remodelista** · 14 days ago

Dear Remodelistas  
Thank you all for your great interest in Khanna Schultz's skillful renovation of this Brooklyn apartment. A big thanks to Vrinda and Robert for being so generous in sharing their expertise as well as their sources! The architects are no longer available for questions but will be delighted to anymore questions at info(at)khanna-schultz(dot)com.  
Best.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** · 15 days ago

Hi Lynn, We received an email notification with a question from you about the bathroom light fixture but at the moment, the question is not showing up here as a post. The fixture is from Bega - Surface Wall Luminaire with shielded light.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Melanie** · 15 days ago

Very nice use of the narrow space. Love the green cleft slate floor in the bath- where did you source that and did it require sealing?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → Melanie · 15 days ago

Hi Melanie - thanks for the comment. The slate was sourced from Stone Source in Manhattan. It did require sealing but has been quite hardy once sealed. They also carry a nice line of porcelain tile called Studio by Atlas Concorde which we have used on another project that looks like slate or bluestone and is very durable being porcelain.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**JS** · 15 days ago


The light fixture over the dining table and the master bedroom sconces are really lovely - clean lines. Where are they from? Congratulations on a beautiful job.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›






**Khanna Schultz** → JS · 15 days ago







Both fixtures were from Holly Hunt designed by Christian Liagre. They do not represent Liagre any longer (although they do have other beautiful lighting) but you could try the Liagre showroom or perhaps the website. So glad you enjoyed looking at the project! Thanks for writing.


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**Andree-Anne** · 15 days ago



Hi! This project is amazingl. I was wondering what is the source-fabric of the window treatment. These roman blinds roman blinds you used for each window add a beautiful touch of warmth. Did you mounted them inside each window? thank you


 |  · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) ›



**Khanna Schultz** ➔ [Andree-Anne](#) · 15 days ago



Hello and thanks so much for your nice comment! The shades are mounted within each window. Our clients sourced these directly. I will try and get the information for you and if I have it before we sign out this evening I will add a post.

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**Andree-Anne** ➔ [Khanna Schultz](#) · 15 days ago

Thank you!


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**Khanna Schultz** ➔ [Andree-Anne](#) · 15 days ago



Here is the contact info for the place that did the shades for our clients  
<http://beatriceupholsterynyc.c...>  
Thanks for writing.


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**Monica** · 15 days ago



tremendous job! looks very nice...


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**Khanna Schultz** ➔ [Monica](#) · 15 days ago



Thank you for your feedback Monica! We are glad you like the project.


 |  · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) ›



**steveb** · 15 days ago

I assume with these pristine spaces that there is abundant storage...how did you solve that? It looks like they have kid/s...

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**Khanna Schultz** ➔ [steveb](#) · 15 days ago

Hello Steve - balancing a clean, open look while still providing storage is definitely a challenge. Each of the bedrooms was provided with a good sized closet and built in shelving with the master having a generous walk-in. There are additional cabinets on each floor including a large coat closet at the entry that is not visible in the shot of the entry vestibule. There are several large scale shelves that act as both a design feature and a place where a lot of books and objects can be housed. The floor to ceiling bookshelves next to the open stair to the roof, the cubbies under the window at the living room and the floor to ceiling bookshelves in the family room (not visible in the photos but you can see this in the plan) all work this way.



see more

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**Amy Giancesello-Violette** · 15 days ago

Wow ! Clean lines and organic textures - great combo, right ?  
On subject of garden installs in the city, let me just say-TOUGH STUFF

 |  · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) ›



**Khanna Schultz** ➔ [Amy Giancesello-Violette](#) · 15 days ago

We like the combination of the clean and crisp with some moments that are more



We like the combination of the clean and crisp with some moments that are more organic. The former makes a great backdrop for the latter and it creates a visual warmth in the space that makes it feel more livable. The rooftop garden designed by our client turned out beautifully - you can read about it in Gardenista next month. Thanks very much for your comments.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**hope brown** · 15 days ago

Gorgeous. The barn door is a great touch. Is that reclaimed wood? The same as the banquet?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → hope brown · 15 days ago

The reclaimed wood on the barn doors is the same as what we used on the top of the long shelf under the windows in the living space. We thought this created an effective visual tie between the front and back of the space. Our client has since added a floating reclaimed wood mantle at the fireplace volume which looks great and continues that idea. Thanks for the nice comment!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**TEC** · 16 days ago

What a beautiful space. The amount of light you achieved in the upper floor is incredible and not easy in a brownstone. Well done! I'll look forward to seeing the details of the roof garden in Gardenista.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → TEC · 15 days ago

Thanks so much - this is one of our favorite aspects of the townhouse. It is a corner house so gets light from three sides. The fact that there are few walls interrupting the space combined with the skylights allows this level to be filled with light. Many of the walls are pure white which enhaces reflectivity.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Poput** · 16 days ago

Very elegant and sophisticated! Where are the kitchen bar stools from?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → Poput · 16 days ago

The bar stools are from BDDW in Soho. They have a small but beautiful range of furniture. Thanks very much for the compliment.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**GBannis** · 16 days ago

Love the clean lines.

In the bathroom, are those sliding mirrors above the sinks, with storage behind them?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → GBannis · 16 days ago

Thanks so much for the comment. The mirror is fixed but to its left in the photo, under the wall mounted light fixture, there is a built in medicine cabinet flush with the wall surface. There is one of these at either end of the vanity aligning with the top and bottom of the mirror.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**LDH** · 16 days ago

Hi - We are remodeling our kitchen and considering Concordia or Absolute Black for the countertops. How durable is the Concordia? In certain light does it read more blue than black? Thank you!

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



**Khanna Schultz** → LDH · 16 days ago

Hello. The Concordia in the honed finish has generally been quite durable - you do have to be a little careful with oil and wipe up any spills before too long. If durability is your main concern, It is tough to beat the stain resistance of Absolute Black granite. If you don't mind being a little careful in terms of upkeep, the Concordia is aesthetically a lovely choice. It has a subtle linear veining that is really beautiful giving it a visual interest that the granite does not quite have. In terms of color, the Concordia definitely has a grey/blue cast to it as opposed to reading as straight black. Our client has found a cleaning product that works really well and their counter looks pretty impecable. If you decide to go this route and need the name of the



looks pretty impressive. If you decide to go this route and need the name of the product, feel free to get in touch at our office. We can get you this information.

see more

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



mops188 · 16 days ago

Beautiful project. I wondered whether you considered leaving the areas of exposed brick their natural color?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Khanna Schultz → mops188 · 16 days ago

Thank you for your comment. In this case, we thought that the natural color of the brick would be too dominant in the space, but that the texture would be a good contrast to all the planar surfaces. On a practical level, exposed brick can shed grit unless it is painted or sealed.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Jane · 16 days ago

Beautiful work. What are the size and type of downlights that you used throughout?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Khanna Schultz → Jane · 16 days ago

Thanks Jane. The recessed lights are manufactured by Contrast Lighting - they are adjustable so can be used as downlights or wallwashers. The overall diameter is 3-1/2" with a 2-5/8" aperture so the fixture is quite discrete. The bulb in this case is an MR16, The trim code is T3450D.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Khanna Schultz · 16 days ago

Thanks for your comment - we are glad you like the stairs. In this instance the stair passed its final inspection without issues. In jurisdictions where the "4-inch" rule for maximum openings in a stair is an absolute, you could thicken the edges of the floating treads, or add a set back flange below to comply with the code. We have found that it is always prudent to check a design with a local code official when in doubt.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Chris · 16 days ago

I love the open stairs. I'm afraid they'd be rejected by our inspectors here. What did you do to get them to pass code?

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Khanna Schultz → Chris · 16 days ago

Thanks for your comment - we are glad you like the stairs. In this instance the stair passed its final inspection without issues. In jurisdictions where the "4-inch" rule for maximum openings in a stair is an absolute, you could thicken the edges of the floating treads, or add a set back flange below to comply with the code. We have found that it is always prudent to check a design with a local code official when in doubt.

Sorry if this is coming through twice - we are not sure if the first response made it through as a reply.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Khanna Schultz · 16 days ago

Hello we are here this weekend and look forward to answering any questions you have about the townhouse project above.

^ | v · Reply · Share ›



Lynn Diaz → Khanna Schultz · 15 days ago

Hello -


Can you share the manufacture and the source for the clean retangular light in the bathroom please. It looks like there is a natural brass or bronze detail. Very nice!



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