



## HOME TOUR

# This Harlem Brownstone Takes Design Notes From Italy

Designer Margherita Menino drew on her shared heritage with her clients to craft their new family home

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Italian couple Nicolo and Miriam Vergani have lived in New York's uptown Harlem neighborhood for more than 20 years. It's always been their dream to own a brownstone there, so when one with great bones and a lot of potential came onto the market, they jumped at the opportunity for their family of five. However, before they could move in, it needed a major facelift.

"It had very significant structural issues and the basement was not finished," describes Miriam Vergani, an art collector, of the circa 1900 home she shares with her financier husband and their three children. When assembling a top-notch team for a gut renovation, the couple needed a designer who could infuse the historic space with a bit of "modern Milanese design" flair. Their structural engineer, Francesco Mo, a fellow Italian, introduced the Verganis to Margherita Menino, founder of AD PRO Directory firm Menino Design Studio.





The kitchen by [Snaidero](#) features [Miele appliances](#), Lilac marble countertops and backsplash, olive-green cabinet fronts, and [lighting by Flos](#).



A Lilac marble-wrapped portal visually connects the kitchen and new dining room extension, both painted in [Farrow & Ball's Borrowed Light](#). In the latter, the custom ash table is surrounded by side chairs by Carlos Motta from New York gallery [Espasso](#). Lighting by [Jonathan Adler](#); art by Norman Lewis.

With heritage in mind, Italian-born Menino drew up an interior scheme that integrates craftsmanship from their shared homeland into every room of the 3,800-square-foot brownstone, while maintaining its historical details. Marble sourced directly from Italy builds bespoke furnishings throughout the house. The living room's Tiger Onyx bar is framed by a matching backlit wall. The designer selected a lilac-veined stone for the kitchen's countertops, backsplash, and dramatic portal that connects it to the dining room, a new extension with direct access to garden and uninterrupted views through large, windowed doors. The baths feature statement examples like the bespoke Azul Cielo sink, which extends from the wall to give a floating effect in the skylit primary, or the Musk green polished marble tiles that clad a guest shower.





The floating staircase has reclaimed wood treads and a quartzite landing, which also forms a bench. The brick wall is painted in [Farrow & Ball's Ammonite](#) while the accent wall wears [Hopper Head](#). Artworks by Jean-Philippe Lagouarde and Nathalie Sann Regnault.

“Though this is a building in Harlem, they wanted a downtown loft feel,” explains Menino. Its original fireplaces and brick interior walls were restored, but her new interventions lend the family’s desired airy sensation. A cantilevered staircase is the standout example, designed with treads of reclaimed Brooklyn wood and a quartzite landing that extends into a bench for extra seating, and at the front and back of the house, new custom floor-to-ceiling windows help create an indoor-outdoor connection and pull sunlight deep into the interior.



Farrow & Ball's [Sloe Blue](#) paint colors the powder room with a mirror and sink by Antonio Lupi with Hotbath fixtures.

Because the Verganis love color, Menino used a lot of it, carefully, so as never to overwhelm the Harlem-meets-Milan aesthetic. A deep orange paints an accent wall in the primary bedroom, color-matched by a painterly wallcovering opposite it. The sleek muted green-and-blue kitchen is Menino's homage to Carlo Scarpa, while the jewel box guest bedroom-cum-library sports a more verdant forest hue on its bespoke [Murphy bed](#) with a desk and built-in bookcases. An ombré teal powder room with a sculptural sink is another moment of joyful experiment but the living room—decorated with a custom sectional and vintage seating around a tiered marble cocktail table by Menino—is largely neutral.





A vintage kilim rug is underfoot in the serene living room where the custom Italian-made sofa gathers with a custom marble cocktail table and vintage chairs by [Jorge Zalsupin](#) and [Carlos Motta](#) in front of new bespoke steel-framed doors to the terraced garden.

The living room's relaxed and sun-filled vibe makes it one of the most-used rooms in the house as well as the perfect space for a striking tree branch sculpture by local artist Jannette Jwahir Hawkins, says Miriam, who worked with art advisor Aurore Vullierme to source such contemporary pieces. With Miriam's plans to grow the family's collection over time, Menino left a few walls blank here and chose their subtle gray hue specifically to be an optimal background to future artwork.

Though the brownstone is certainly a family abode, it is also a natural venue for the Verganis' love of entertaining, whether a soiree that extends indoors and out across the garden level or an intimate gathering at the dining table with Miriam's "unbelievable tiramisu," as Menino describes it. Flowing, relaxing, and luxurious rooms facilitate daily life and such occasions with equal ease. "We were excited to work with someone who would understand our design vision and had a deep knowledge of our culture," says Miriam of Menino. "But we also wanted this house to reflect our story: how we moved here at a young age and made our life in New York."





A sculpture by Jannette Jwahir Hawkins stands adjacent the existing fireplace mantel, decorated with an artwork by Faustine Badrichani and a ceramic vase by Marion Naufal.

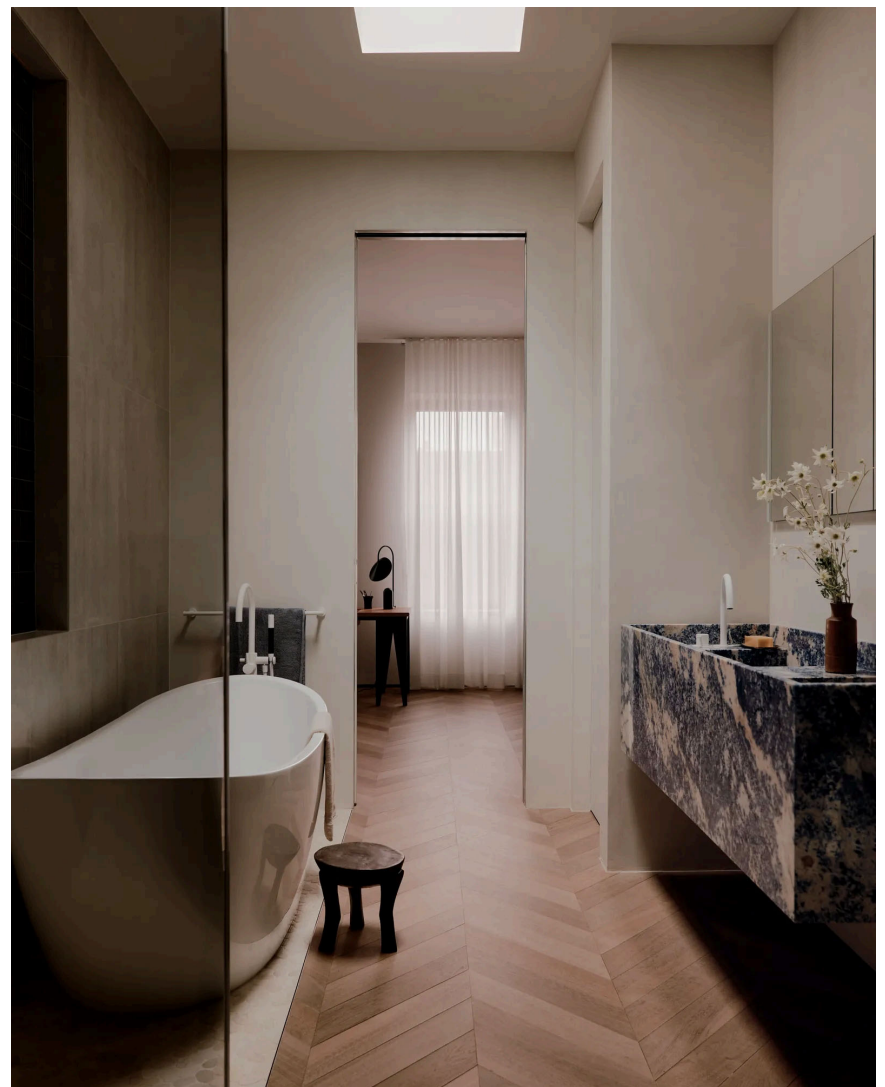
Menino Design Studio specified Tiger Onyx for the home's statement-making custom bar and matching wall cladding behind it.



A custom [Affreschi & Affreschi wallcovering](#) adds color and texture to the primary bedroom, where the bespoke bed wears [Parachute linens](#). Vintage [Giuseppe Scapinelli armchair](#).



A painting by Ernest Crichtlow hangs on a [Benjamin Moore orange](#)-painted brick wall in the primary bedroom, which features an existing fireplace mantel with vases by [Marion Naufal](#). Sculpture (on side table) by [Victoire d'Harcourt](#). Vintage [Giuseppe Scapinelli armchair](#).



Menino Design Studio created a floating [Azul Cielo marble](#) sink for the Roman clay-clad primary bath, where the tub is by [Produits Neptune](#) with [Hotbath fixtures](#).





The office is decorated with a desk by [Hugo Besnier](#), chair by [Cultivation Objects](#), pendant by [Pablo Designs](#), and a vintage Gregori Warchavchik magazine rack. The mural-like wallpaper is by [Affreschi & Affreschi](#), made with a custom blue. Photograph by Coreen Simpson.





The library has a custom Italy-made Murphy bed to transform it into a guest bedroom. The chandelier is by Ferm Living and the chair is vintage.



Musk green polished marble tiles clad the shower in the guest bath, with a mirror and sink by Antonio Lupi with Hotbath fixtures. On the walls is Roman Clay by Portola Paints.



Statement Striato Olimpico marble tiles cover the walls and floor, as well as the custom sink with a bespoke, wall-mounted drawer beneath it. The chrome fixtures are by Hotbath and the recessed mirror cabinet is by Robern, featuring integrated lighting.







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