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Studio DB Gives New Life to a Classic Manhattan Loft

Updating the apartment for their young family, the husband and wife team honored the past while experimenting with bold ideas

By [Kate Guadagnino](#) Photography by [Matthew Williams](#) Styled by [Mieke ten Have](#)
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In the dining area, chairs by Studio Giancarlo Valle, a vintage Carlo Scarpa table, and artwork by Charlotte Hallberg.
Photo: Interior: Matthew Williams. Styling: Mieke Ten Have. Art: Charlotte Hallberg/HESSE FLATOW, New York. Meghan Wilbar/Michael Warren Contemporary, Denver CO.

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Damian and Britt Zunino, the husband-and-wife founders of the sought-after firm Studio DB, must regularly balance their respect for the history of a place with their larger aim of creating homes that reflect the people who live in them. This was especially true, and important to get right, when it came to the couple's own Manhattan loft, where even the past was personal.

Damian's father—F. Anthony Zunino, who like his son trained as an architect—first rented space in the Renaissance Revival building, just south of Union Square, in 1970, looking for room to build inflatable vinyl furniture and enclosures. He purchased one of the full-floor units, the site of a former stuffed-animal factory, that same year. It was there that Damian grew up, amid climbing structures leading to lofts within the loft. "I once fell out of bed and into the bathtub," he says with a laugh.

He moved back in, with Britt and their kids in tow, during the pandemic for what they all thought would be a temporary stay. Once his parents gave up the 2,900-square-foot space in favor of a smaller apartment nearby, however, it became permanent. The scope of the ensuing renovation also morphed. "Our original intent was just to redo the kitchen," says Damian. But then they replaced the floors and windows, installed central air-conditioning, reconfigured bedrooms, and overhauled a bathroom that had come dangerously close to leaking onto a downstairs neighbor's cabinetry painted by Robert Rauschenberg. "This is what we do," says Britt, "so it just snowballed."

When it came to other pieces, they followed their tastes, choosing what they liked and moving things around to achieve the pleasingly layered look that's one of their signatures. That meant hanging an Ed Ruscha poster against a floral wallpaper in a daughter's bedroom and placing a Verner Panton chair atop a Moroccan rug in the den. The living area, meanwhile, is anchored by a BDDW sectional, a wise impulse auction buy, that's covered in a hard-wearing blue wool. (Guests actually relax on it.) Then there were the extra touches. Britt especially loves her coffee nook. "It makes me happy every morning," she says. The kids have reading alcoves. Even the cat, George, has a dedicated hideaway.

Other elements the couple left alone. Columns remain exposed, and "plasterwork isn't perfect," says Damian, stressing that they didn't want to stamp

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out the feel of a downtown loft by making things too polished. They also kept the cherry library Damian's father built in 1998, though they covered its ceiling with a galactic print that Studio DB recently designed for Calico Wallpaper. Nevertheless, post-renovation, Britt and Damian were nervous about showing the palimpsest of an apartment to his father, but F. Anthony was delighted that the pair had only extended and enriched the life of the home—one that, as Damian puts it, "very much feels like ours."