

# A PLACE OF ONE'S OWN

In a quiet corner of upstate New York, interior designer Markham Roberts called upon his consummate creative vision to turn an old carriage house into a dreamy bolthole

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**EXTERIOR**  
Markham painted only one wall of the exterior, leaving the original distressed paint work to strike a note of authenticity. Wall in Barn Red by Benjamin Moore





**SEATING AREA**  
The swathes of pine cladding are enriched by bright pops of colour, allowing the scheme to be both modern and classic. Swedish-motif rug by Tibetano. Source the Sirocco Safari chair by Arne Norell at Vinterior. Mandala prints by Julia Condon





**MUDROOM**  
Too fragile for use on a bed, an antique patchwork quilt has been stretched across a canvas, adding a traditional American flavour. Bench and wooden lamp bought at auction; source similar on 1stDibs

Once abandoned and open to the elements, the upstate New York carriage house that is now owned by interior designer Markham Roberts was found to be full of intriguing details when he started stripping back its layers. 'We discovered a tonne of old whisky bottles in the walls, but sadly they were empty and the mice had moved into them,' he says. The explanation, he found out from older people in the town, was that the building had once been used as a gangsters' hideout in the prohibition era.

Having renovated the main house alongside his partner, the art and antiques dealer James Sansum, the barn-style carriage house awaited with all its spacious potential. 'We had restored the main house when we bought it about 15 years ago, but the barn was like a little wildlife preserve until we took it back. It was full of countless bats, squirrels and a raccoon.'

While Markham spent a few days a week working in the city, he wished to carve out a workspace at home in the country that would be entirely his. 'It was important to me to have a place where I could do my creative work and be alone and not bothered. I have all my fabric library and samples there and it's where I do my plans,' Markham explains.

Much of the carriage house's appeal lay in its vast hayloft above three carriage bays. Turning one bay into a mudroom, the others were utilised for storage. 'The barn had a beautiful stone foundation, but we had to pour concrete in to make it structurally sound. At that point, we added radiant heating. We had to rebuild the walls from inside, insulating and lining them in raw pine. We also added a new roof and windows,' Markham says. The knotted pine-clad walls have a particularly nostalgic effect on him. 'The

smell reminds me of my childhood and the house where we would spend our summers in Michigan. It's a rough and very inexpensive choice but it brings me so much pleasure.'

The loft space incorporates a bed and bathroom, small kitchen run and plenty of seating, and while it was intended as an overflow guest space for the main house it has rarely been used as such. 'James and I have only spent the night here once when the main generator in the house went out, but it was fun,' Markham recalls. Markham was able to exercise his love of strong colour and print. 'With all the wood, I felt the interior needed something bright and cheery. I was also emboldened by the fact that I wouldn't have a disgruntled client on my hands if it turned out badly.' Influences range in spectrum from the Arts and Crafts Movement to a McDonald's advertising campaign in the 1970s. 'I bought the chandelier because it reminded me of the Fry Guys, these fuzzy characters with feet,' Markham says. 'The curtains are inspired by the fabric bands on Ukrainian peasant blouses,' he adds.

Markham's large round worktable has been placed in front of the new windows, where he has spent months over lockdown watching the garden change. 'It's wonderful to have a place where I can focus without interruption. Having this space also helps me compare fabrics and visually assess things when I'm creating schemes for clients,' he explains. While a few fortunate clients may be invited to meetings at Markham's retreat, his most regular guest is his miniature poodle-schnauzer cross, Harriet. 'My world revolves around her,' Markham laughs. And what a stylish and richly imagined world it is. 🐾

■ Markham Roberts, [markhamroberts.com](http://markhamroberts.com)

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**KITCHEN**  
Pine-fronted units enhance the naturalistic look and the roughness of the wood and hand-knotted rug strike an informal note.  
Rug, Penny Morrison. Wall light, Barn Light Electric Co



**MUDROOM**  
The play between rough and refined materials has resulted in a delightful eclecticism.  
Pendant light, Carlo Nason.  
English 1830s games table.  
Chinese bronze vessel;  
Moroccan rug, try 1stDibs





**BEDROOM**  
Markham was inspired by his friend Nathalie Farman-Farma's Russian fabrics to create curtains reminiscent of peasant blouses. Source an American quilt at Etsy. Try Made for a similar table lamp base



**SEATING AREA**  
One corner is a dedicated lounging space. Vintage Milo Baughman chair in Clarence House linen. Blue daybed, custom design, Markham Roberts



**BEDROOM**  
Artwork at a low level feels more intimate here. Arts and Crafts cabinet; Gerrit Rietveld Zig-Zag chair, source both at 1stDibs

## MEET THE DESIGNER-OWNER

Markham Roberts shares his style vision and loves **SECRET ADDRESS** Décors Barbares – my friend Nathalie Farman-Farma's textiles company.

**GREATEST INDULGENCE** Putting in radiant heating under the floors. It's so nice underfoot. It was definitely worth it.

**BIGGEST SUCCESS** The pine wall planking makes me so happy and it was our cheapest choice.

**SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT** Making the three previously shuttered openings into windows. They let in lots of light.

**INDULGENCE YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT** My dog, Harriet.

**LAST PODCAST YOU DOWNLOADED** *The Daily*, from *The New York Times*. *The New Yorker* podcast is great, too.

**LAST PIECE OF ART YOU BOUGHT** Another patchwork quilt to stretch on a canvas. I bought it from an antiques show.

**FAVOURITE BUILDING** My house.



**BATHROOM**  
The shower area is clad in riveted aluminium sheets, which stand out amongst the wood panelling. Source a similar lampshade at Ferm Living