



AT DESIGNER MARKHAM ROBERTS'S CARRIAGE HOUSE TURNED STUDIO IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, HARRIET, A POODLE-SCHNAUZER MIX, STANDS ON A SWEDISH-MOTIF RUG BY TIBETANO. A VINTAGE MILO BAUGHMAN CHAIR WEARS A YELLOW CLARENCE HOUSE LINEN; THE PILLOW IS OF A RAOUL TEXTILES FLORAL PRINT. PENDANT LIGHT BY COUP STUDIO. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.

# lofty ideal

Designer Markham Roberts transforms an old carriage house into the perfect studio-retreat

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**LEFT** THE GROUND-FLOOR MUDROOM, LIKE THE REST OF THE SPACE, IS paneled in rough knotty pine. **VINTAGE MURANO-GLASS LIGHT; CIRCA-1969 SWEDISH BENCH, CIRCA-1830 ENGLISH TABLE, AND ANTIQUE CHINESE BRONZE VESSEL; MOROCCAN RUG.** **RIGHT** THE CARRIAGE HOUSE RETAINS ITS ORIGINAL WOOD ON THREE SIDES. THE WEST FAÇADE RECEIVED A NEW WINDOW AND SIDING PAINTED IN BENJAMIN MOORE'S BARN RED. **LOWER RIGHT** ROBERTS AT HIS WORK TABLE.



**D**esigner Markham Roberts's neighbors were *very* curious when he started renovating the carriage house that sits across the road from his weekend retreat in upstate New York. "It's a small town," says the ebullient AD100 talent of his Dutchess County hamlet. "So, you know, when you start something, everyone wants to know what you're doing."

Even so, this level of interest was greater than anything Roberts had experienced in the seven years since the Manhattan-based designer and his partner, art-and-antiques dealer James Sansum, had purchased the six-acre property. Basically, everybody wanted to know if the rumors they had heard from parents or grandparents were true: Had the carriage house's hayloft really been used as a speakeasy in the 1920s? Sure enough, there was a 10-foot-long bar right in the middle of the space. That Prohibition-era relic now sits in a nearby barn where Roberts and Sansum often host parties. As for the hayloft, it has become an at-home studio, a place where Roberts can spread out samples and dream up schemes for clients.

Though the nearly 150-year-old carriage house had long sat all but completely neglected, it was actually in good shape. After shoring up the structural sags, putting in new windows, and installing insulation, heat, and water, Roberts finished the reno by paneling the rooms in unfinished knotty pine.

"Our house on Lake Michigan when I was little had it, and it was beautiful," the Indiana native recalls of his family's summer place overlooking Grand Traverse Bay. "It's the cheapest thing, but I've always loved it. And it was just right for here."

Shell in place, Roberts set about decorating. The enormous 45-by-27-foot studio has become a repository for objects he has owned and loved but never had space for: Scandinavian Modern furniture, a Victorian chaise longue covered in muslin, an heirloom Arts and Crafts cabinet, and a large circular worktable set atop a giant piece of burl wood that he picked up one year at Nashville's annual antiques-and-garden show. Furniture designed by Roberts is part of the mix, as are beloved art, old toys displayed like sculpture, and a sophisticated blend of fabrics. "I just buy what I like," he says, "and when I put it together it always seems to end up working."

His talent for mixing—and his abiding love of fabrics—is exemplified by the curtain panels hanging at either end of the studio. Composed of bands of textiles by Lisa Fine, Kathryn M. Ireland, and Schumacher, custom-dyed vintage crewelwork, and several trims on a muslin ground, the hangings are a tour de force. Still, he admits, "my curtain-maker was *not* happy."

In addition to a room in which Roberts could satisfy his whims, the studio also happens to be an ideal spot to show off his aesthetic vision. Indeed, a few clients have come to meet him there. "But it's mostly just for me—which probably sounds very selfish," the interior designer says, without a hint of self-reproach in his voice. "I had always wanted to do something like this, and this was my chance." ▲

