

A LIGHT IN THE QUARTER

IN NEW ORLEANS'S STORIED FRENCH QUARTER, DESIGNER BILL BROCKSCHMIDT AND RICHARD DRAGISIC TURNED A MODEST CREOLE COTTAGE INTO AN EVER-CHANGING MIX OF COLOR, HISTORY, AND WELCOMING WARMTH.

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The loggia—a traditional feature of Creole architecture—on Bill Brockschmidt and Richard Dragisic's New Orleans cottage can be flung open to the garden, and is much used for dinner parties, card games, or just afternoon naps. The Ceramiche Antonino Piscitello lamp (left) is from Sud, the couple's Garden District boutique that specializes in Sicilian decorative arts and antiques. The custom settee (in a Fermoie fabric with Samuel & Sons trim), Louis XVI-style bergères (in a Rose Tarlow fabric), and painting (by Edward Schmidt) were brought from the couple's former New York apartment. Vintage papier-mâché coffee table, Neal Auction.



Every evening at dusk, Bill Brockschmidt and his husband, Richard Dragisic, light candles on the tables inside their French Quarter cottage, perfectly positioning the flames to catch the eye of anyone strolling down the narrow street outside. Through two sets of French doors framed by citron-green shutters flung open to the evening air, their tiny house becomes a beacon, its interior aglow. “It’s like a jewel on display,” says Brockschmidt, an architect and interior designer who, with his business partner, Courtney Coleman, opened a New Orleans studio and antiques shop in 2019 to complement their New York firm.

Drawn by the seductive glow, people often knock at the front door, asking to peek in. They’re always welcome. Once inside, they’re enveloped in joyful color—buttery yellows, earthy pinks, a spectrum of greens. An antique recamier covered in a reproduction 19th-century printed linen shares the floor with Gustavian chairs once owned by decorator Robert Couturier and bought at auction, their original horsehair upholstery still intact. The black-painted center table gets used for lunch, cards, drinks—whatever the moment requires. “It gives us flexibility that a cocktail table doesn’t have,” says Brockschmidt. That’s the aesthetic in a nutshell: elevated but never stuffy, collected over time rather than installed in one go,

and a modularity that values ease of living above all else.

The house practically begged for this treatment. Built in the early 19th century, it’s a classic Creole with a typical floor plan: four squarish rooms with thick brick walls and a loggia stretching across the back. “It was still sectioned and felt authentic,” says Brockschmidt. “We liked that it had its four rooms.” When they stripped it back, they found treasure: original plaster clinging to the brick walls, painted in a silvery blue that had aged more than a century. The ceilings revealed hand-planed boards, each slightly curved from the tool that shaped it. Rather than drill into these artifacts, Brockschmidt and Dragisic preserved the original plaster behind new drywall with an air gap. Any partition that wasn’t original—the hallway, the bathroom—was rendered in beadboard.

Nothing here stays stuck in amber. In New Orleans, where trawling estate sales and auction rooms is something of a contact sport, the interiors are perpetually in flux. A needlepoint rug from

ABOVE: Brockschmidt and Dragisic in front of the cottage’s façade, which has two sets of French doors and double-hung windows framed by shutters painted a custom “Paris Green” color inspired by those at New Orleans’s historic Pitot House, the residence of the city’s first mayor. OPPOSITE: The library table in the loggia is set for dinner with 19th-century Wedgwood china and a Carolina Irving & Daughters tablecloth. Trim painted in Tilleul by Emery & Cie punctuates white walls in Domingue’s limewash. Nineteenth-century Italian chandelier, Karla Katz Antiques. Papier-mâché busts, from Sud, on brackets from Irwin and Lane.



In the kitchen, which was gutted except for the original mantel (which is now painted in Farrow & Ball's India Yellow), acres of custom millwork and cabinetry were installed and cloaked in Vert Kasbouri from Emerie & Cie—a hue that recurs throughout the house. A set of vintage Sicilian china—the couple has more than 140 pieces total—fills the shelves. Sconce, Authentic Designs. OPPOSITE: A custom-painted rhombille floorcloth from Black Dog Gallery in Williamsburg, Virginia, contrasts with the room's preponderance of green.





In the primary bedroom, uneven seams in the ceiling board betray centuries-old carpentry planned by hand; Brockschmidt and Dragisic designed the built-in closets flanking the vintage Federal-style bed. Pillow in Theodora Embroidery by Cabana for Schumacher; coverlet, Leontine Linens; quilt, Nickey Kehoe. Curtains in Décors Barbares floral. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Brockschmidt fell in love with the bucolic scenes depicted on wall panels he saw in a museum and had them reproduced for his living room; the early-19th-century settee was re-covered in a Raoul Textiles linen and accented with red Samuel & Sons tassels, while the 18th-century Gustavian Klismos chair still has its original horsehair upholstery. The bathroom was completely gutted and redesigned with beadboard walls and antique encaustic tiles from L'Antiquario. The cottage's small parcel of private outdoor space was one of its main selling points.



the couple’s New York apartment now anchors the living room. “It’s a little too small,” Brockschmidt admits. “But I’m never worried about small rugs when you have pretty wood floors—and we loved it with the wallpaper.” Chairs migrate from Sud, the Garden District shop he runs with Dragisic, when they can’t bear to sell them. “There’s a big secondhand culture here,” Brockschmidt adds. “Nothing is permanent. We might always find something better.”

This approach extends to how he and Dragisic use the space. Accessed through a hallway or the bedroom—with its louvered Gothic armoires in a deep green—you reach the loggia, a glorious covered porch where the pair spends much of their time. Ample bergères are covered in a cushy quilted floral, a deep settee is perfect for a drink, and the bibelot-dotted table easily clears for meals—because sometimes friends spot the open shutters and just pop in. “In New

York, everything is planned,” says Brockschmidt. “Here, someone stops by and we’ll say, ‘We’re making dinner, would you like to join?’” They’ll set a table with linens and silver; often Brockschmidt cooks, but sometimes less rarefied fare is served on the china. “We’ll order cheeseburgers from the Quartermaster Deli a block away,” says Brockschmidt. “And we always keep a few bottles of champagne in the fridge,” adds Dragisic.

In other words, Brockschmidt and Dragisic really know how to live—and so does their house.

ABOVE: In the guest room, which is in a small outbuilding reached via the garden, Brockschmidt stands near a vintage harpsichord that he had adorned with classical motifs by a decorative painter—and which he can actually play. Wallpaper, Adelphi Paper Hangings; trim in Red Earth by Farrow & Ball. OPPOSITE: The custom headboard (designed to mimic the shape of the rococo woodwork above) and Chippendale chair are upholstered in a Jasper Textiles fabric.

