

BROADWAY+THRESHER

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On the Farm with Beekman 1802

Farmhouse Modern: Terry Woods

Cocktail Party at Skipping Rock Farm

Paul Redman's Journey to Longwood Gardens

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rescuer of furniture: grégoire abrial

Anne Sherwood Pundyk | images courtesy Gregoire Abrial

Artist Grégoire Abrial rescues discarded furniture like some people adopt lost puppies and kittens because he sympathizes with their plight as forgotten and unwanted. Using traditional woodworking techniques such as marquetry inlay he remakes the furniture and gives the found pieces a new life and value. Born in a small town in France, Abrial now lives in Williamsburg, Brooklyn in a loft overlooking the East River. He studied design in Paris, before coming to New York where he pursues his art, photography and bread-baking.

B+T - Where do you get your inspiration for art?

I am always looking for materials such as wood or furniture to reclaim. I try as much as possible to use what is available near-by because I think we already have enough stuff around us. I see a piece of wood on the street and I'm so sad because nobody sees its value. I consider it my duty to take it and give it a new life. By using my hands I transform it, giving it a new story and a new value. For my current projects I am focusing on marquetry. It's a very old technique of inlaying wood to create a mosaic. Traditionally it is expensive to use because it requires a lot of time, skill and the finest, most precious woods. I use this same technique, however, with wood with the lowest value. For example, the pieces might have come from IKEA and be made of melamine, or compressed wood. They are worth nothing. I made a piece using marquetry to create a map of Brooklyn inlaid in my dining table. I get my wood from all over the city, especially in Brooklyn. I was collecting fragments from different parts of Brooklyn and they each bring a part of their identity to the object. It became a patchwork map of Brooklyn made of all these fragments.

B+T - In terms of your aesthetic you combine rough and weathered salvaged materials, and yet the pieces you create are refined, clean and modern.

When I work with reclaimed materials I don't want to show them as I find them. I want them to feel new. I don't want to hide the patina and the story that they carry with them, but I want to give them a new life and a new look.





the pieces that someone will pick them up. I'm thinking about a poem that will start on the chair and go on the table and then go on the next piece.

B+T - What phrases are you thinking of using?

I may start with something direct such as "help me" or "pick me up." The phrases will be short and fun and give just enough information so that someone would get it right away. But I also like the idea of connecting the pieces all together with parts of the same sentence or a longer story.

B+T - We can't wait to see what happens with this project. In the meantime, tell us about your bread making. How does this fit with your other endeavors? Have you always been a baker?

I started five years ago. It's another process of making things that inspires me. Baking bread is a centuries old tradition. It's fascinating to me that bread is made of only four basic ingredients: flour, water, yeast, and salt—and yet there are hundreds of different kinds of breads you can make depending on the fermentation process, or the ratio, or how you bake it. When I make bread with my hands in my kitchen it's almost like a meditative process. It gives rhythm to my day. I start the bread in the morning so it can ferment while I am at work. When I come home at the end of the day there

is the joy of having warm bread in the house. I love having my neighbors come over to pick up their loaves and to share it with them. I love this idea of making the food with my hands, the connection with food and then sharing the food with people. I think it's magical.

Gregoire's works can be found at gregoire-abrial.net and broadwayandthresher.com/gregoire-abrial.



B+T - You are able to find that balance point. You work in interior design, and you are also a photographer and a baker. My impression is that in all of these undertakings you value quality craftsmanship.

I'm a designer, but also as much a thinker. I want to bring together both processes. I need to go back and forth, because it's the way I'm inspired to be creative. I have a job with Amy Lowe Studio, where we design interiors. When I come back home at night or during the weekend, I jump into my workshop. I enjoy doing my own work there because I'm working for myself. I don't have any clients or budgets. I'm free to tell whatever stories I want to tell. I'm not a very talkative person; I'm better at making things that will tell stories for me instead of telling the stories myself.

B+T - How did you come to make a house-within-a-house in your studio?

I wanted to find a way to divide my space and create a separate bedroom area. I wanted something that would feel cozy where I could hide myself at night in a very quiet setting. So I built this small house inside my loft. It has real apartment walls and sits on stilts so I can see

the view from my bed. It gives the feeling of a floating house; maybe it's more like a nest.

B+T - How did you create the look of patchwork quilt on the exterior of your "nest?"

In French there is the word "vernacular." I'm not sure if it's the right word in English, but it applies to someone who sustains himself, just by using what is available around him in the woods or the fields. I work the same way, but I am not in the wilderness. I am in Brooklyn, so my materials are not banana leaves and bamboo, I have other materials at hand to build my house and my projects, like discarded furniture and wood. This is what I used for the outside of my bedroom structure.

B+T - It reminds me of the Swiss Family Robinson or Tom Sawyer.

Yes, I feel like a version of the Swiss Family Robinson!

B+T - What are you working on now?

Since I am running out of room in my studio I have had this idea to put pieces I make back on the street. I am hoping that just because I have added inlaid words to

