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# Tired of Waiting to Buy, They Redesigned Their Brooklyn Rental

In the process, a family discovered the joy of living in the present — and how much you can do to personalize a home that you may not be in forever.

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Reinventing a Crown Heights Rental

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By **Tim McKeough**

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Cristina Casañas-Judd and General Judd thought they would live in the same home in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, for the rest of their lives.

After renting the brownstone apartment for more than a decade and raising their two daughters, Najal, now 22, and Rafia, 13, there, the couple had started talking to their landlord about buying the building, and had even begun drawing up renovation plans. But after their landlord died in 2015, the remaining owner had a change of heart and the deal evaporated.

“It was devastating,” said Ms. Casañas-Judd, 52, who runs the interiors firm [Me and General Design](#) with Mr. Judd, 60. “My dreams were shattered, and I was just like, ‘I’ve got to go.’”



A bar niche is lined in wallpaper the couple designed for Wolf-Gordon. The shelves hold personal objects, including a vintage camera that belonged Ms. Casañas-Judd’s father, Chilean pottery and a signed copy of Sidney Poitier’s book “The Measure of a Man.”

So they found a new rental in Crown Heights, Brooklyn — an 1,100-square-foot, three-bedroom apartment that had recently been renovated. They moved in at the beginning of 2017, still searching for a home to buy.

In the living room, they covered one wall with the Echo wallpaper they designed for the manufacturer Wolf-Gordon, then created a faux fireplace with a mantel from the 2006 movie “Beautiful Ohio.” Above it, they mounted a portrait their artist friend Voodoo Fé had painted for them, along with a Swick Board — a wireless speaker system built with a recycled surfboard, which the couple designed and manufactures with Leon Speakers. On a pedestal, they added a cast of Mr. Judd’s head that was used in the making of the 1997 TV movie “Buffalo Soldiers.”



They added storage space to Rafia’s bedroom with furniture. The toadstools were previously decorations in a children’s clothing store.

Throughout the home, Mr. Judd said, “we layered special objects that are very personal.” To one side of the dining room, they lined a niche in charcoal Perch wallpaper, which the couple also designed for Wolf-Gordon, to create a bar area. Above it, they mounted shelves to display cherished objects, including a vintage camera that belonged Ms. Casañas-Judd’s father, pottery made near her family’s beach house in Chile and a signed copy of Sidney Poitier’s book “The Measure of a Man,” which the actor personalized for Mr. Judd after they spent a day together.