

AMANDA BROOKS NEW YORK NEST



Photography by Jesper D. Lund

Words by Anne Hardy



Bespoke cabinetry by Plain English frames the kitchen. The ceramic tray on the left is by Freyja Lee.



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manda Brooks is one of those people who just seems to be good at things. Her husband, the artist Christopher Brooks, strikes me the same. They don't shy from tackling things, even things they haven't necessarily done before and as a couple there is an atmosphere of "*anything is possible*". It's inspiring to be around them; Amanda's can-do American style mixed with Christopher's quiet British assurance gets one thinking - is a rural farm life in England for any of us too? But that's a leap ahead.



In 1992, a thirty two year old Christopher arrived in Manhattan to do a graduate program at The School of Visual Arts, but “*then I stayed, stayed and stayed. I was married to Miranda Brooks, who's a landscape designer but we split up.*” In 1997, Amanda came into his life. At that time she had just left a position at photographer Patrick Demarchelier's studio and was working at Gagosian Gallery as an exhibition producer. In 2012 they decamped from NYC for Christopher's family farm in the Cotswolds with their two children, Coco and Brooks, aged 8 and 10 respectively. It was a return to the very place and style in which Christopher had grown up. By then, Amanda was leaving behind a plum job as Fashion Director of New York's most fashion forward department store Barneys. In her multi-hyphenate way, she'd also been the Creative Director at ready-to-wear line Tuleh, had her own fashion consulting company and was Fashion Director at WME. Looking back, Amanda describes that time as “*bugely fun and creative, a massive learning curve that spanned from when I was 19 to 38 years old. By then I felt like I'd gotten everything out of the industry that I was looking for and was ready to move on to the next adventure.*”

When she got to England and settled in she “*got really into driving the kids to and from school, cooking three meals a day and all that stuff*”. By 2016, she was writing for Architectural Digest and Conde Nast Traveller, and along the way there was a book called Farm From Home. But in 2018, her hunter/gatherer energy kicked in and she opened Cutter Brooks, a unique shop in the heart of the Cotswolds. It was, in many ways, a defining mood of the time, a zeitgeist. She'd hit on something, creating a small but succinct emporium to her Cotswoldian life and the people loved it. She brought many brands to the UK as their first retail destination — Doen, Atelier Vime, La Tuile a Loup and B Sides Denim. And a visit to Cutter Brooks became a pilgrimage, perhaps because she shared it all so cleverly, it was sometimes hard to distinguish between her home life on the farm and the life at Cutter Books. It all seemed one delightful whirl of dogs, farm animals, fashion, colorful tablescapes and the rhythm of the English seasons. The years passed, the kids grew, university in America beckoned. And a new tug called — the apartment building they'd left behind on NYC's Lower East Side.



Top: A series of Lucio Fontana prints sit atop a coatrack and bench by Plain English. The large basket was woven by Amanda during a summer retreat in upstate New York. Below: Brooks lays in the guest bedroom on a The Elder Statesman blanket and a patchwork pillow by Pierre Frey.





Left: In the living room, Christopher's paintings take center stage. Right: In the bedroom a chair by James Shaw.



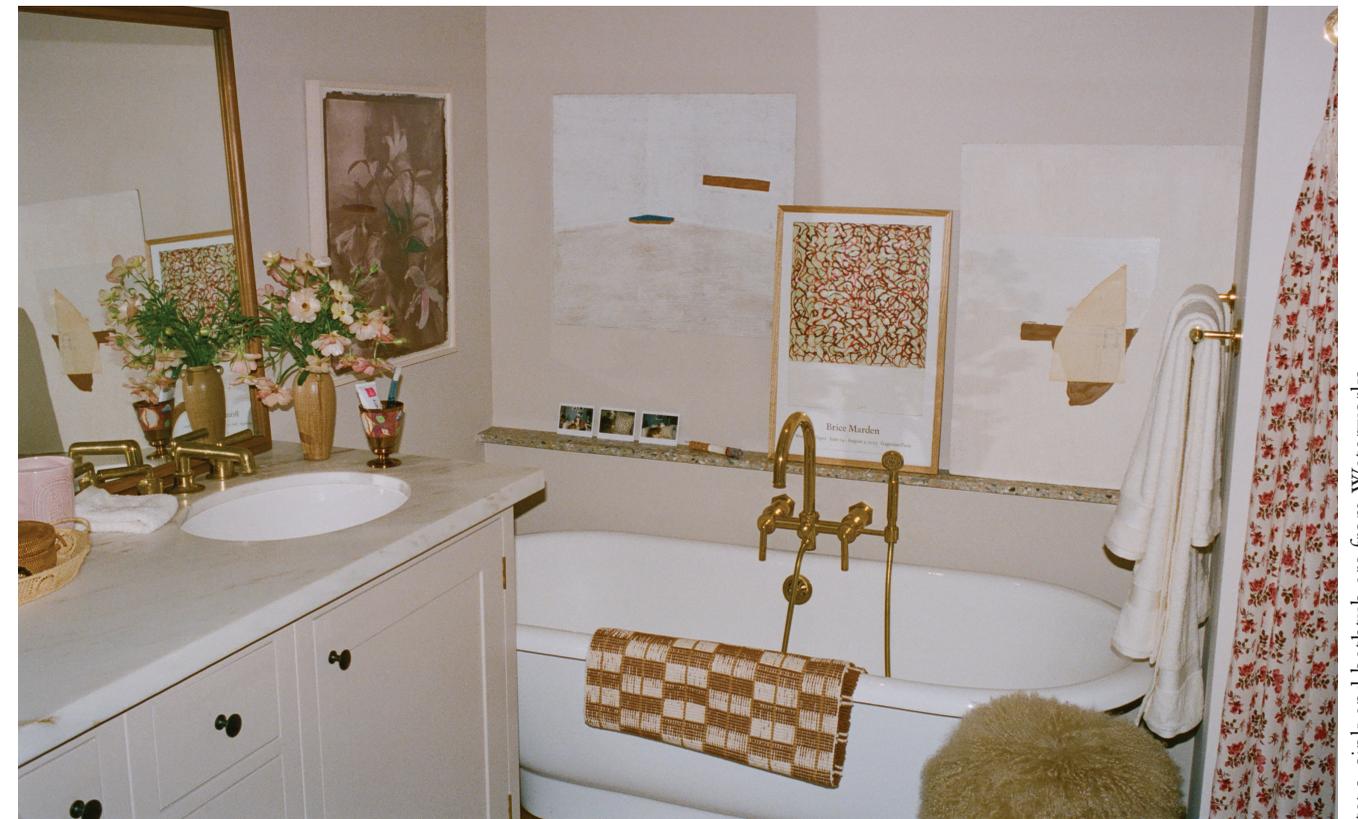
I'd actually met Amanda a couple of times visiting this very apartment. Big windows look out to the east from what, today, can only be described as the chicest railroad-style apartment I've seen. But it wasn't always such and in fact, it is the second apartment the couple have occupied in the building Christopher had bought with a partner in 2001. He reports painting for him as an endeavour undertaken more or less on British soil so he spends his time in NYC on a different creative craft - working on this building. Christopher's training as an architectural stone mason came in handy as there was a certain amount of restoration work he tackled in a building that was, as he indicates, still finding its footing when he bought it. *"The neighborhood was kind of windswept"*, he describes. *"There was no retail, it was industrial back then and there were complications with the building. Once a sewing factory, it had an un-orthodox standing with the city, neither residential nor commercial, so it needed constant management as all the tenants were fighting with each other. We had a glassmaker and a sheet metal guy, a sign painter who painted all the names on the firetrucks after 9/11. I'd say we were on the very edge of civilization. But now the Lower East Side has become so popular, we're almost in the heart of all of that — there's just a lot of life going on now."*



By 2025, following a slow pace to the bare bones renovation that started three years prior, there is now an organization of palette, space and object that makes the apartment just lovely to be in. Amanda decorates with ease, putting a plum colored horizontal Robert Kime stripe on the vintage Milo Baughman rosewood sofa they brought from their old flat-roofed mid-century house on Long Island's North Fork. "I commissioned a Lana Launay lamp and flew it in from Australia and the two wicker chairs are from my all-time favorite furniture shop, Beall & Bell in Greenport, New York." A large picture of Christopher's defines the dining space and one imagines stylish suppers beside it. The apartment is split almost right down the middle by large glazed screens to create a bedroom, dressing room and bath that would be separate from the living space letting shared light drift between the two spaces. A guest room is cleverly built in behind the kitchen

Perhaps like in fashion, the singular is celebrated here. Vintage Russell Wright pieces in spun aluminum populate the window ledge above the sink, adding their mid-century shape to a classic NYC brick wall view that somehow seems far less egregious than in other settings. Perhaps Amanda's palette resonates well with the multi tones of 19th and early 20th C brick? But the spirit of this apartment is unapologetically New York. As obvious it is that you are in Manhattan, England is never far. The touch of Plain English whose work, dividing the space creates this uncanny openness clearly says 'Georgian scullery'. And in a nod to the lifestyles that are important in the Cotswolds, a generous kitchen island to gather around, a bathtub to stretch out in, even a dressing room that acts as a hallway are all accounted for too.

For now, at least for part of the year, this is home for Amanda and Christopher Brooks. The rest on a farm in the English countryside. All those windows, all that looking in, from room to room and then out over the city's treetops. I expect Amanda and Christopher might be looking in and looking out too. Thinking, what's next? Amanda hints she is pondering, but she is also taking her time. It's OK. We'll wait.



In the master bathroom, the glass shelves, the glass, sink and bathtub are from Waterworks.