

Hendricks Churchill

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**PENTA**

## Worldwise: Interior Designer Heide Hendricks' Favorite Things

*Heide Hendricks and her husband, Rafe Churchill, are the duo behind the Connecticut-based architecture and interior design firm Hendricks Churchill.*

By Alia Akkam  
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Well before the high-end boutiques arrived and the condos sprouted on the waterfront, Williamsburg flaunted scruffy, industrial charm. In the 1990s, the burgeoning Brooklyn, New York, neighborhood was filled with creative types buoyed by the affordability and bohemian vibes. Heide Hendricks and Rafe Churchill, the husband-and-wife duo behind the Connecticut-based architecture and interior design firm Hendricks Churchill, were among them.

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“We secured an amazing loft that stretched across half the block that was pennies per square foot,” recalls Hendricks, 53, of the couple’s initial foray into Williamsburg. “We divided it into a large living area and studio for us and three other people, and then we added a few other apartments. It was exciting because so many others were doing the same thing, taking advantage of super low rents but at the same time we were all handy and not scared of a DIY project.”

Early on, Hendricks alternated these no-frills, Home Depot-fueled renovations with her day job as a “glorified doorman” at the National Arts Club in Manhattan. Later, she spent years as an arts publicist, all the while poring over shelter magazines, stocking up at estate and tag sales, and designing and flipping Connecticut residences with Churchill. “Wherever we lived, I was obsessed with making it home. I loved the challenge of a limited budget and making use of what was around us, but it never occurred to me that I was a latent interior designer,” she explains.

That mindset shifted when Churchill, an architect and builder, was tasked with crafting a contemporary solar- and geothermal-powered farmhouse for baker and cookbook author Jessie Sheehan’s family in Litchfield County, in northwest Connecticut. As the Sheehans spent more time in Hendricks and Churchill’s own house nearby, they became smitten with the interiors pieced together by Hendricks and hired her to design their home. More projects followed, and soon Hendricks was a full-fledged designer, officially forming a synergistic practice with Churchill in 2017.

Whether it’s a Greenwich Village apartment, a nostalgic shingle-style abode in Massachusetts, or a grand Connecticut Greek Revival, a sense of purity and well-worn elegance permeates Hendricks’s interiors, which meld serene hues, colorful patterns, and heirloom finds..

Some of the partners’ most personal work, however, continues to unfold right in Sharon, the rural town where they live with their two children in a late-18<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse they resuscitated. Eager to invigorate the scenic town green and West Main Street, Hendricks and Churchill bought a series of historic yet dilapidated buildings that they rehabbed to now house their office as well as community hangouts like a barber shop and wine bar.

In June, they plan to bolster this spirit of community with the textiles- and antiques- laden shop Reservoir, and on July 4, they hope to host a block party to unveil the four public murals they commissioned by Shantell Martin, Jean-Paul Philippe, Kirby Crone, and their 17-year-old budding artist daughter, Hollis.

*Penta* recently caught up with Hendricks to hear about some of her favorite things.

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**The designer I admire most is...**Ilse Crawford. I noticed her early on because she articulated the emotional response that a room can elicit. From her I felt like emotion should be a driving force in how a room is put together.

**One of my earliest memories of design is...**my childhood home in Connecticut. My father built it and incorporated a lot of unconventional materials. The hand of his work is evident in the surfaces throughout. The way my mother brought in layers of treasures and things that don't necessarily go together worked, and definitely influences my own design philosophy.

**I find inspiration in...**art museums because they are such a visual experience, and I love seeing how paintings and their colors are put together in unexpected combinations. When working on a paint schedule for a project, I turn to art books more than interior design magazines. For moody spaces, I may refer to a Vermeer.

**My favorite museum is...**The Broad in Los Angeles. The architecture alone is worth the trip. They've done an amazing job of representing contemporary art across genres. I love integrating progressive art into traditional interiors in my own projects.

**What I love most about New England...**how a home feels different in each of the seasons so you never get tired of the scenery. In the winter I enjoy living inside much more, getting cozy by the fire; in the summertime I don't want to come inside until it's dark.

**As soon as I can travel internationally, I want to go to...**Copenhagen. I've never been and there's exciting design coming out of the city that I admire as well as furniture fairs I'd like to attend.

**My favorite hotel brand is...**Palihouse is a chain of boutique hotels in wonderful old buildings that have been deftly modernized while still honoring the architecture in the details. My favorite is the Santa Monica location, in a Moorish-influenced Mediterranean-revival building that includes a lush courtyard and expansive, homey rooms.

**A book that recently left an imprint on me...***An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones, about a Southern couple persecuted for the color of their skin.

**I find serenity by...**waking up early and taking a cup of coffee onto the porch or walking my dog in the woods.

**One of my favorite things to cook is...**a recipe my friend Theo Coulombe of the local gallery Standard Space taught me, which is basically marinated steak served on a bed of arugula and tomatoes. The ingredients are simple, but it's delicious.

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**My furniture essentials include...** antique rugs made before the 1920s. They have beautiful colors from vegetable dyes and they're handwoven, so the touch of the artisan can be seen, especially in how imperfect some of the weaving is. They have a beautiful, aged look that can only come from time, which brings a lot of character into a room without overwhelming it because the colors are muted and soft.