

Haute Property

NEWS, STARS, AND TRENDS IN REAL ESTATE

Tony and Claire Florence (BELOW) own a four-story brownstone that features classic furnishings and a designer's atelier.



Happy House Chic

A GEORGETOWN FASHIONISTA CREATES A STYLISH AND GRACEFUL FAMILY ABODE. BY JAMES SERVIN

Fabulousness for designer Claire Florence begins at home. “I love the world of the Parisian ateliers—the House of Givenchy, the House of Pucci,” she explains while walking through her four-story brownstone on the east side of Georgetown. “This has become the House of Florence.”

Indeed, she knows style. Just after graduating from Bennington College with a fine arts degree, Florence moved to New York City in 1990 and immersed herself in the fashion industry. In 2000, Florence, née Claire Blaydon, opened a boutique in the Nolita neighborhood, her handmade, one-of-a-kind cashmere sweaters and knits attracting the likes of Julia Roberts and Gwyneth Paltrow.

Today, her creative impulses find expression both at work (her online

luxury accessories boutique is claireflorence.com) and at home. With the residence built in 1845, the eating and living areas occupy the first floor, and bedrooms are tucked away on the upper floors. In the living room, club chairs are upholstered in a silver lacy pattern that the designer silk-screened herself. Wall sconces are fashioned out of her grandmother's silver turkey platter, sliced in half. (“I just didn't know what to do with all the silver my family had given me,” Florence laughs.) Oversize black and white photographs of the Florence children—Meriwether, 11, Anthony, 10, Campbell, 7 and Ilari, 4—by portraitist Jay Ackerman find places of honor on



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY BROWN/IMJINATION.COM



The dining space (ABOVE) boasts oversized photographs of the Florence children; Anthony, Ilari, Meriwether, and Campbell (RIGHT) gather in the family's bright, kid-friendly living room.



dining room walls and throughout the home. "My greatest masterpieces are my four children," Florence says.

Along the eastern wall of her front parlor, she displays her bohemian chic handiwork in a mini design studio and showroom. "I have been taking appointments to make custom capelets and scarves for the local Georgetown clientele," Florence says. "A lot of my creative inspiration comes while working with my clients in my home, over coffee and macaroons."

Mannequin busts draped in Florence's signature shawls and scarves, embellished with beading, lace, and brocade, are lined up in front of a grand gold-leaf mirror that dates back to the days of George Washington. Directly opposite the atelier, in the living room, Chinese vase lamps mix with a Lucite coffee table stacked with favorite fashionable tomes such as *Lulu* by Lulu de Kwiatkowski, *Happy Times* by Lee Radziwill, and Allegra Hicks's *An Eye for Design*. An Ikea sofa, slip-covered in white denim, is both kid- and budget-friendly. Above it hangs a framed photograph of a gouache painting by her daughter Meriwether.

Living on a cozy scale was a deliberate choice for the designer and her husband, Tony Florence, whose last residence—a 10,000-square-foot plantation home on four acres in Long Island's Locust Valley in New York—hosted more than 200 party guests comfortably and was rented out for Lands' End catalogue shoots and films. (A scene in *Eat, Pray, Love* was filmed in the Florences' master bedroom.) When Tony left his position as head of technology at Morgan Stanley to head up venture growth for New Enterprise Associates in DC, the couple chose the Georgetown area for its townhouses and European flair.

"We wanted to be in the 31st block," Claire says. "Between 31st and P is the epicenter of the east side of Georgetown. It's

where the residential feeling is."

While the Florences are adamant about instilling good habits in their brood (all of whom, Claire proudly notes, do their own laundry), theirs is far from a spartan life. Fashionista Claire craves luxury, and so embellishes the home with Leontine linens, Molton Brown soaps, and bouquets of roses and hydrangeas from Ultra Violet Flowers nearby.

"I didn't create this home to showcase something decorative; I created it to be a home," Claire explains. "Simple and chic is my motto." **CF**

EXPERT SELECTIONS

To create a home with an aesthetic similar to Claire Florence's, consult the design maven's interior décor checklist.

Claire Florence Designs for metallic hand-printed upholstery on English club chairs and original silk-screen fabric, pillows, and throws with metallic studs. claireflorence.com

Dodge-Chrome Photo for painting blow-ups (4885 MacArthur Blvd., 202-333-3270; dodgechrome.com) and framing at **Framers Workshop** (6101 W. Mequon Road, Mequon, Wisconsin, 262-242-5883; framers-workshop-wi.com).

Johnathan Adler for pillows, rugs, side tables, velvet X benches, and white fur poufs. 1267 Wisconsin Ave. NW, 202-965-1416; jonathanadler.com

Kelly Wearstler House of KWID for Schumacher trellis wallpaper. 800-523-1200 fschumacher.com

Lars Bolander for coral needlepoint pillows. 212-924-1000; larsbolander.com

Serena and Lily for metallic poufs. serenaandlily.com

West Elm for lucite coffee tables. 333 M St. NW, 202-333-2928; westelm.com

The east-side residence was built in 1845.

