

Creative director Shannon Maldonado's (below) interiors started with artwork. Rather than a moodboard of fabrics, flooring samples, and paint chips, she showed Everett Abitbol a quirky piece of art to help him grasp her vision.



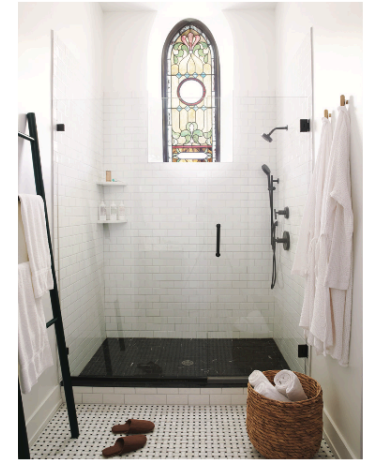
Call it baptism by fire, renovation-style. On paper, Everett Abitbol and Shannon Maldonado would seem to have no business turning a vacant—and crumbling—church near downtown Philadelphia into a boutique hotel and event space. He's a spreadsheet kind of guy who owned a fleet of taxicabs. As Abitbol puts it, "I'm a Jew from Brooklyn, so owning a church was never on my radar." Maldonado cut her teeth in fashion in New York City before returning home to Philly to figure out her post-corporate life, which ended up being a pop-up home goods shop that has morphed into her fledgling creative and design brand, YOWIE.

But what the two acquaintances initially lacked in renovation and interior design cred they made up for in vision and drive. Their crash course in adaptive reuse kept the doors open—and shored up a collapsing exterior wall—at the historic First African Baptist Church. Renamed the ▶



“
We took a leap of faith
without even putting
together that this concept
would work in the church.”

—EVERETT ABITBOL



LEFT A stained-glass window creates a kaleidoscopic backdrop for a sitting nook in a guest room. “My style in general is minimal, and to me the stained glass is the feature,” Shannon says. The vintage print is *Working Proof* by Jean Sariano.

TOP With a stained-glass window, even the spa shower has a church vibe. Shannon chose classic subway tile and patterned floor tile to complement, not compete with, the window.

ABOVE An old-school room key shares space with nighttime amenities on a modern bedside table from Hem.