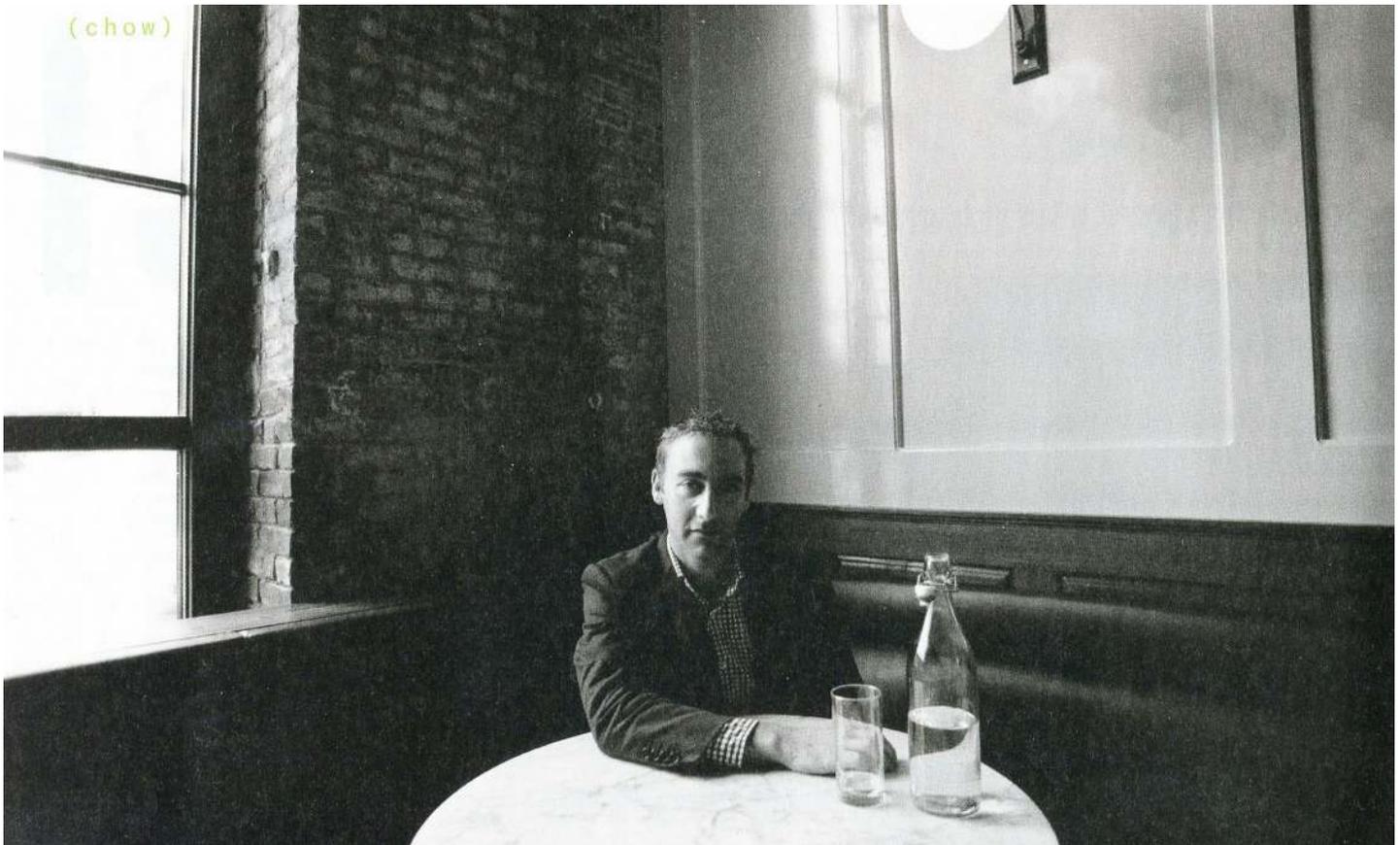


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neighborhood watch

ANDREW TARLOW'S RESTAURANTS HAVE ENHANCED BROOKLYN'S IMAGE, AND NOW HE'S GIVEN THE BOROUGH ITS BEST HOTEL BY A LONG SHOT. BY PAUL CAINE. PHOTOGRAPHED BY BY CAMERON PRIESTLEY

ANDREW TARLOW sits at a corner table in the Wythe Hotel in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, quietly surveying his empire. Around him, in his artfully rustic restaurant, Reynard, bartenders pour perfect cocktails, and diners put away plates of house-made sausage and local produce. Outside, pretty young things walk past low-slung warehouses and truck depots. Tarlow, who co-owns the seven-month-old hotel and restaurant, is probably Williamsburg's best known restaurateur. His spots were among the first in the neighborhood to buy whole animals and use every part, develop relationships with local farmers, and change menus every day based on the produce available. But it's one thing to run restaurants, quite another to operate a 72-room luxury hotel. For Tarlow, the stakes are as high as they've ever been. Luckily for him, the Wythe has been booked solid every night.

"I was an early believer in Williamsburg," says Tarlow, dapper in a crisp blue blazer. He's smiling wryly, but he's not kidding. In 1998, he was an artist in the neighborhood - painting by day and bartending by night - when he and a partner opened a restaurant in a dilapidated former diner. He was young, rent was cheap, Williamsburg was still mostly industrial, and he couldn't resist. "I figured if it failed, I'd have lost a few months, maybe a year," says Tarlow. "It didn't seem like a risk." That restaurant, simply called Diner, was an immediate hit, in part because it wasn't just

another place to get a nice meal. Rather, it told a story through food - locally sourced, sustainably raised, cooked by people who cared - in a space that clearly stated, "These guys are for real."

Over time, Tarlow opened other restaurants; he now owns or co-owns four of them, all in Brooklyn. He married and had children; he's got four of those, too. Eventually, Tarlow figured Williamsburg was ready for a hotel. "When we opened Diner, going to Williamsburg was a trek," he explains. "It became a destination." Tens of thousands of new residents moved to the area, started families and laid down roots. People living in Manhattan began coming over to Brooklyn for dining and nightlife, not just the other way around. And yet, for all the bars and restaurants, there wasn't one decent boutique hotel.

Tarlow partnered with the Walentas family, a well-known Brooklyn real estate clan that had recently purchased a loft building on Wythe Street, a couple of blocks from the East River. Their goal: a hotel that exemplified everything about Williamsburg. "I wanted the hotel to have a rusticity, an industrial feel," says Tarlow. "But I also wanted a sense of comfort." It was clear that the building had unique advantages. "The first thing is the view," Tarlow says, referring to the wide swath of Manhattan skyline visible from its interior. "And then you're in this building that has history, that has character."

The Wythe is more than a place for visitors to rest their weary heads. It's a social club for the neighborhood, circa 2012, where skateboarders and stroller-pushing parents share the sidewalks. In addition to Reynard, there's a rooftop bar called The Ides, where guests and locals sip cocktails and take in the commanding views. The crowd is a motley crew of corporate types and artists, musicians and wannabe musicians, baby boomers and Generation Yers. It's no wonder The New York Observer called the Wythe Hotel "the Platonic ideal of modern Brooklyn." Guests seem to have it all, except for room service - Tarlow does not approve. "We really have this notion that people should come together when they're having a meal," he says. "We try to fill the room with great staff. People having dinner with their TV rather than the bartender doesn't really make sense."