

Manhattan's Most-Celebrated Architects and Interior Designers Go Large-Scale



Puck Penthouses, \$22M to \$60M: Respecting the history of the iconic downtown Puck Building, architect Jose Ramirez kept the brick-vaulted ceilings in its six penthouse units, and referenced European stylings in the bistro-inspired kitchens. Photo: Adrian Gaut; Ronald J Abbate

The latest crop of luxury residential developments is breaking ground in a whole new way: by hiring interior designers and architects better known for their work in hotels, restaurants and product design — along with swanky private homes.

Previously lauded for their smaller-scale commissions, these talents bring a fine eye for architectural and design detail to their first-ever large-scale residential developments. Along the way, they're imbuing these projects with bespoke features that come from very personal visions.

"Who knows how to better craft homes than interior architects?" says Barbara van Beuren, managing director of Anbau Enterprises, which hired Andrew Sheinman of Pembroke & Ives for a new Upper East Side development. "They have a deeper understanding of lifestyles and needs, and that translates into the design."

"People want beautiful design rather than a brand name just for the sake of the name," says Shaun Osher, CEO of CORE, which marketed 141 Fifth Ave., one of the city's first bespoke developments, in 2008. "Something that feels customized to the buyer and feels unique is what they'll put the value on."

Citing the high stakes and high costs of today's market, Jonathan Miller, president and CEO of real estate appraisal firm Miller Samuel, sees this new trend driven by economics.

"There's an extra cost associated with a brand that might not translate into additional returns," he says. Bringing in "people who have been successful in their own right [versus a 'starchitect'] but that don't have the brand recognition [is] a cost-effective alternative."

On the Upper East Side, developers are placing a value on reinterpreting history, selecting interior designers who can straddle tradition and trends, and respect the neighborhood context.



155 E. 79th St., from \$8.95M: Interior designer Andrew Sheinman mixed modern and traditional design elements at this 14-story building on the UES. Photo: Anbau

Such is the case at 155 E. 79th St., a 14-story building of seven duplexes that broke ground last October. Units range from \$8.95 million for a 3,291-square-foot maisonette to \$12 million for the remaining duplex. Developer Anbau Enterprises chose Andrew Sheinman, founder of Pembroke & Ives, an interior design firm known for its private residential work. The choice was driven by Anbau managing director Barbara van Beuren, who grew up a couple of doors down at No. 151, and who envisioned homes that would be as equally personal to buyers.

“There’s a client you’re designing for and ... they wouldn’t go to Philippe Starck. They’d go to an interior designer who would invest the time to understand who they are and design a residence that’s very personal and specific,” van Beuren says. “We wanted someone who was going to produce something new and fresh, but not trendy and gimmicky.”

For 155 E. 79th St., Sheinman created a psychographic of who might live there and designed around that: “It was someone who understands high-quality materials and details looking to be in an environment that’s extremely comfortable ... [someone] who doesn’t have to prove anything.”

Envisioning they’d likely be collectors, he created spaces to serve as backdrops for art.

Other museum-like finishes echo throughout Sheinman’s design: stone moldings and archways, marble floors inlaid with brushed brass, an elegant procession of rooms. His design approach has worked; contracts are in or pending on four of the 4,292-square-foot duplexes.

Noting his firm’s “extremely low profile,” Sheinman — who’s completed projects such as the East Hampton Golf Club — says the development work was a way to enhance the brand. “It’s a business decision as well as a personal and intellectual one.”



*151 E. 78th St., up to \$29.5M: Architect Peter Pennoyer reinterpreted the interiors of a classic prewar building to have more open floor plans.
Photo: WILLIAMS NEW YORK; Jay Ackerman*

Another tony project tapped the expertise of native Upper East Sider Peter Pennoyer of Peter Pennoyer Architects for a 16-story building at 151 E. 78th St. Launched in March, 11 of the 14 units, ranging from 3,300 to 6,975 square feet, sold at prices between \$10 and \$27.5 million. Two penthouses remain.

Pennoyer — whose experience includes designing apartments, country houses and commercial work such as The Mark Hotel — says the project was an opportunity to reinterpret the classic prewar building. “We gave it a traditional character that could be a background for a more modern interior and design,” he says. “In a new building like this you don’t want to make the architecture too specific because you want each owner to have their own thing.”

Pennoyer utilized some visual tricks to create the perception of space: double-hung mullioned windows (“looking at the city through a grid makes the rooms seem much bigger,” he says) and moldings tailored to each room. He melded the old and new by featuring an open kitchen by Smallbone of Devizes along with traditional details like coffered ceilings and custom hardware.



*The Marquand, from \$14.5M: For the condo conversion of this landmarked building, Lee Mindel created custom touches to honor its history.
Photo: Lee Mindel*

Ten blocks south, Madeline Hult Elghanayan, the Douglas Elliman agent representing the Marquand condo conversion, says HFZ Capital Group chose Shelton, Mindel & Associates because the developer “wanted an architect who understands the time period.”

The project’s intentionally clubby atmosphere evokes old New York while “understanding ... the way people want to live now,” says Lee Mindel, co-founder of Shelton, Mindel & Associates, which has also designed Ralph Lauren’s New York headquarters and the London home of Sting and Trudie Styler. In the century-old landmarked Marquand, on East 68th Street between Madison and Fifth avenues, Mindel created custom touches such as window grating that echoed the building’s escutcheon (heraldic shield), wood-paneled doors and onyx bathrooms.

“We’re not slaves to tradition, but there is a history to that building ... we found things that gave clues of its character that brought the centuries forward,” he explains. “We didn’t want it to look like a building in drag.”

Buyers paid upwards of \$14 million for the four- to six-bedroom units, ranging from 3,800 to 4,600 square feet. A 6,758-square-foot triplex penthouse comes online at the end of the month for \$46.5 million.

Sometimes the choice of interior designer is all about whom you know.

Because of his prior work for the Kushner family, designing city and beach homes for Jared and his father, Charles, architect Jose Ramirez was chosen to reimagine the six Puck Penthouses in the landmarked building on Lafayette Street — his first such development project.

Ramirez respected the building’s historic envelope, keeping the brick-vaulted ceilings and using European references on the interiors, such as glazed, ceramic-tiled kitchens inspired by Parisian bistros. “It’s not what we do and we might not do one again, but this was so special. There are very few projects with this level of detail,” Ramirez says. The apartments, ranging from 4,895 to 7,000-plus square feet, start at \$22 million and include brushed nickel doors and full-slab marble bathrooms.



252 E. 57th St., \$4.5M to \$37.5M: Architect Daniel Romualdez brought classic proportions to this glassy, 65-story UES development, along with finishes of his own design. Photo: Piranha 3D; Patrick McMullan/PatrickMcMullan.com

Also a developer’s darling: Daniel Romualdez of Daniel Romualdez Architects, the interior architect for 252 E. 57th St., a 93-unit building designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Romualdez was picked by development firm World Wide Group for work he did on the home of the firm’s president, Jim Stanton.

“We thought his track record in private homes spoke for itself,” says Julia Hodgson, World Wide’s director of development. “We did open a wide net ... and we ended up with Daniel in large part because he had not worked for a development company, and we thought he could bring a direct and fresh approach.”

The 65-story Italian-glass tower features condo residences and amenities starting on the 34th floor; the floors below are luxury rentals. There are 18 different two- to five-bedroom layouts with custom kitchens and floor plans ranging from 1,742 to 5,242 square feet. Prices begin at \$4.5 million; the 8,139-square-foot penthouse lists at \$37.5 million.

Romualdez, a classically trained architect who’s completed projects for brewing heiress Daphne Guinness, brought “very classic Upper East Side proportions and concepts” to the project, Hodgson notes. He included finishes of his own design: gleaming white quartz kitchen counters juxtaposed against untreated horizontal grain walnut, a theme echoed in the bathrooms’ walnut vanities and white Nanoglass walls and floors.

Increasingly, developers who historically have sat on the sidelines of the design process are becoming more involved, selecting interior experts who can deliver lifestyle, comfort and customization.

“There’s a different kind of developer out here,” says Brian Meier of Douglas Elliman. “It used to be an IKEA-style project manager, but now it’s more hands-on and the developers are showing up, feeling the wood and sitting in on design meetings.”



The Greenwich Lane, \$2M to \$30M: Designer Thomas O’Brien used classical and modern paneling and cabinetry to echo the historical periods of the five buildings that make up this West Village complex. Photo: Pieter Estersohn; Jason Penney

When the Rudin Family sought a designer for the Greenwich Lane, a West Village complex that’s a mix of new and prewar buildings, they already formulated a vision thanks to Aero, a store and design studio founded by Thomas O’Brien.

Samantha Rudin, who oversees the project on behalf of the Rudin Family, where she is vice president, notes the personality of O’Brien’s store provided “visual comfort” in his ability to create distinct identities for each of the buildings, while envisioning it as a whole. “He gave them allegory and all these layers that unraveled like a beautiful story,” she says. The project is co-developed with Global Holdings.

“The biggest challenge was coming up with a language,” says O’Brien, who designs for Waterworks, Williams-Sonoma and its affiliate brands, West Elm and Pottery Barn. His references for the Greenwich Lane included a Connecticut farmhouse, a West Village loft and a Fifth Avenue residence reimaged for downtown.

The Greenwich Lane's 200 units range from 1,000 to more than 7,000 square feet, listing from \$2 million to more than \$30 million. Launched last October, the project is nearly 70 percent sold.

The lobbies mix antique and Art Deco-like finishes. Fourteen kinds of marble help set off the residences from each other and still provide a unifying element, as do the custom-paneled interior doors with Nanz hardware.

Throughout the buildings, O'Brien blended traditional and modern details, incorporating his own designs for lighting, custom millwork and cabinetry, and plumbing fixtures.

"For the more traditional person it's a way to feel young and new, and for the modern person, it's giving them the confidence for a bit of detail," the designer explains.



1 West End Ave., approx. \$1.5K to \$4K per square foot: Veteran designer for the hospitality sector, Jeffrey Beers, designed the chef-friendly kitchens at 1 West End Ave. Photo: 2014 DBOX; Chris Payne

Details are most significant in the kitchen and bathroom, and for that reason, 1 West End Ave. tapped Jeffrey Beers, founder of Jeffrey Beers International, a veteran designer for the hospitality sector who has designed more than 100 restaurants and bars, including kitchens for Daniel Boulud and Michael White. (Anna Wintour is also a fan.)

"The attention to detail is much greater," Beers says of 1 West End Ave.'s kitchens, noting most designers don't work with concepts like sauté stations. And with food-obsessed New Yorkers spending more time at home, he considers the kitchen "very much the heart and soul of the residence." Sales have not yet begun for the 246 condos in the Lincoln Square building, but the one- to four-bedroom units will be market rate, according to reports.

It's not just in New York City that interior designers are working on such developments for the first time: Elsewhere, in glittery ocean-fronting projects, developers hope to capture an international market by offering both known entities and fresh takes.



Ward Village, Oahu, \$2M to \$20M: Interior designer Tony Ingrao tackled the interiors at the Waiea tower, part of this 60-acre mixed-use development in Hawaii. Photo: Bjorn Wallander

The Howard Hughes Corp. hired New York designer Tony Ingrao, co-partner of Ingrao Inc., for Honolulu's Ward Village, a 60-acre planned community. The first phase includes the 36-story Waiea tower with interiors by Ingrao. Waiea broke ground last June and 84 percent of 171 units have sold, according to Nick Vanderboom, senior vice president at Howard Hughes. The bulk of the buyers are from Hawaii, Asia and the West Coast.

Vanderboom says Ingrao, who designed Baccarat Hotel & Residences in New York, a palace in Saudi Arabia and private residences for ad-man Danny Deutsch and former GE honcho Jack Welch, was chosen for his "tremendous range. Having worked internationally he understands the buyer's mentality. We have a significant amount of buyers from Japan, and want to [be] responsive to that market."

Ingrao notes that Ward Village, his first Hawaiian project, is an opportunity to design for a well-traveled audience that doesn't necessarily have a sense of Hawaiian design.

"Everyone's interpretation of what Hawaii is will be a little different," he says. Buyers will have a range of finish options created by Ingrao, a first for the company, says Vanderboom.

Developers for Miami's historic Surf Club conversion hired a design team using Richard Meier as the building architect for both the 150 condominiums and 77 Four Seasons hotel rooms. Lee Mindel will design the interiors of 122 of the private residences, which will be branded under Richard Meier Signature Homes. The remaining 28 hotel condominiums will be designed by Joseph Dirand.



Glass, Miami Beach, \$9M for final unit: Architect Rene Gonzalez designed this shimmery tower in Miami Beach, which features fritted glass railings. Photo: Michael Klausmeier; Stephan Goettlicher

Also in Miami, Terra Group commissioned architect Rene Gonzalez for Glass, an 18-story residential tower, after his private home on Indian Creek Island sold for a Dade County record: \$47 million in 2012. “I think they’re looking to use design as a differentiator, and definitely looking at innovative architects and designers,” Gonzalez says.

Glass, designed inside and out by Gonzalez, does just that. On the southern tip of Miami Beach, his ethereal tower seems to connect ocean and sky. He incorporated fritted glass on the railings — vertical patterning that mimics the water.

With units starting at \$7 million, the 10-unit tower has almost sold out, including the \$30 million penthouse, attracting buyers from Europe and New York.

“The trend is to dig in deep and understand what you’re trying to create,” says Terra Group President David Martin. “And that doesn’t mean it has to be a Pritzker Prize winner.”