

House of the Day: 23 Downing Street

August 1, 2013

Everything But the Facade

Price: \$9,500,000

Location: Greenwich Village, NY

Type of Home: Townhouse

This Greenwich Village townhouse underwent a gut renovation that involved excavating a lower level and adding a top floor, all while working around the original brick façade, which was also restored.

Joshua Gurwitz purchased this property at 23 Downing Street, pictured at center, in Greenwich Village through an LLC in 2011 for \$3.35 million, according to public records. Mr. Gurwitz is the co-founder and principal broker for Good Property, a real estate development and consulting firm with offices in New York, Miami and London.

A sculpture sits at the base of the stairs in the building's lower level. Mr. Gurwitz is a native New Yorker and started his company in Miami in 2009. "Generally speaking, we're a repositioning firm," said Mr. Gurwitz. "We take an old asset and turn it into something new."

Pictured, the first floor living area. Mr. Gurwitz's parents live in TriBeCa and he says he first heard about this property from his mother. "I recall her saying, 'I think you'll like this,'" he said. It became his company's first project in New York. He describes the renovation as practically a ground-up construction, apart from the façade – which they were required to preserve and restore because of the property's landmark designation.

The kitchen and dining area is pictured. The townhouse falls within an extension of the Greenwich Village Historic District that was designated in 2010. The home was originally built in 1836 and has been altered several times since then. The Renaissance-Revival style façade was added in 1886.

Sliding doors lead from the kitchen to the backyard garden. The renovation involved excavating the backyard of the building to increase the lower level space. A fourth floor was also added, enlarging the property from 2,400 square feet to approximately 3,700 square feet, Mr. Gurwitz estimated. The building's design was by Turrett Collaborative Architects who have worked with Mr. Gurwitz on other properties.

A section of the backyard has a skylight which allows daylight into the lower level living area, a signature design feature of the company, Mr. Gurwitz said. Construction took nine months and was completed in spring, but the process from acquisition to completion of the renovation took 22 months, Mr. Gurwitz said.

The lower level living area with skylight is pictured. The company excavated an additional six feet down, giving the lower level an eight foot ceiling. Mr. Gurwitz says the space would be ideal for a living room, play room or artist's studio.

The skylight and backyard is pictured from below. "It's a completely new building except the façade," said Mr. Gurwitz.

Shown here, the second floor master bedroom. During construction, they kept the façade in place by building a scaffolding system from the inside and reinforcing and securing the façade to the scaffolding. "We tore down the existing building and built the new building around the scaffolding, so there was never a need to anchor and dismantle the faced," said Mr. Gurwitz. "It worked out beautifully."

Shown here, the master bathroom on the second floor. Mr. Gurwitz said in building the house, he imagined what we would want and need if he lived in the space. His priorities for the home's design included a warm "organic environment," modern amenities and "great walls for art."

A bedroom on the third level is shown. "I think it's a really breathable, livable space for a young family or a couple to live in," he said.

The top floor bathroom is shown here. Mr Gurwitz lives in SoHo and has worked in interior design and strategic planning. He studied art at Parsons the New School of Design and initially wanted to be an art dealer. "I'm an artist at heart," he said.

The top floor features another bedroom or study, pictured, and has a terrace. Mr. Gurwitz declined to disclose the cost of the renovation. The home has four bedrooms with en suite bathrooms, two half-bathrooms and 900-square-feet of outdoor space.

The top floor front terrace. The property was first listed by Good Property in June 2012 for \$9.5 million and increased to slightly under \$10 million in March this year. It was listed again at the beginning of July with Emily Beare and David Beare of CORE Real Estate for \$9.5 million.