

HOMES

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Staging to Sell

The Quintessential West Village Duplex

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Trophy homes in Manhattan once meant the big and ostentatious. Now, during these economically challenging times, trophy homes come in all shapes and sizes. Some are designed by leading "starchitects," others are renovated classics, and others are sought after for their prime location. All are standout properties for their neighborhood, from Midtown and Downtown to the Meat Packing District, and from the Upper East Side to the Upper West Side. At current values, what better time to shop for new architectural masterworks, prized prewar coops and condo renovations in the city's most coveted neighborhoods?

Grand Homes

NOW THAT SOME OF THE WORLD'S most highly regarded architects, from Jean Nouvel and Rem Koolhaas to Richard Meier, have made major commitments to the residential side of Manhattan, buyers of today's more understated trophy homes can compete over whose building has the most architecturally significant design.

The public has expressed tremendous interest in the Soho Mews following the passing of its acclaimed architect, Charles Gwathmey, last summer. The complex of two separate residential buildings on West Broadway opposite the Soho Grand occupies the largest open site in landmark Soho, and comprises 58 lofts, penthouses and street-entrance townhouses connected by a private landscaped courtyard — and after a spate of recent sales is now nearly 50 percent occupied.

The architecture was inspired by the stately geometries and modulated facades of traditional 19th-century Soho cast-iron buildings. "Gwathmey Siegel & Associates designed the buildings to complement the district — and they got a unanimous approval of their design because it did not mimic historic design with a cartoonish rendering, but instead reinterpreted it in a modernist fashion using steel instead of cast iron," explained

James Lansill, senior managing director for Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group. "Sadly, this is the only opportunity to live in the last environment designed by one of the great modernist architects of an era."

Tranquility in the midst of a densely urban environment is also the theme of The Chelsea Enclave, at 177 Ninth Avenue between 20th and 21st Streets, a seven-story condo-op of 53 residences with classic prewar layouts on an historic site framed by century-old elm, oak and sycamore trees reminiscent of a private European garden. The Enclave was built in context with the existing 19th-century Gothic architecture of the General Theological Seminary, the nation's oldest continuously operating seminary.

"The trophy in both buildings is tranquility — a very valuable commodity in both Soho and Chelsea," said Lansill. "There are many buildings in Manhattan that look at parks, but they look at parks across the street, an avenue or a highway. Many of the apartments in the Chelsea Enclave look onto a semiprivate historic park directly out their windows — with no trucks barreling past to interrupt your view every few seconds. The building creates a peaceful attachment to nature that is difficult



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The penthouse at 505 West 47th St.

to obtain in New York City, it almost feels like Princeton in the heart of New York City."

A different architectural masterpiece, this one designed to stand out as a "statement building" from its Chelsea surroundings, is being built at 515 West 23rd Street. The building, HL23, is situated between 10th and 11th Avenues on the north side of 23rd Street, and looks down the High Line to the south, and up the High Line to the north (the "HL" stands for High Line). HL23's trophy penthouse — an \$18-million, 6,176-square-foot triplex — spans the 12th through 14th floors and is infused with light. The 14th floor contains a futuristic 40-by-23-foot glass-box living room space with motorized glass doors that open onto 1,173 square feet of outdoor terrace and unobstructed panoramic Hudson River and Manhattan views.

"Architect Neil Denari came up with a design so cutting-edge and unique that city planning gave us many zoning exceptions to actually build it the way he wanted," said Erin Bolsson Aries, senior vice president and managing director at Brown Harris Stevens. "He really pushed the engineering envelope — and created an architectural statement that is as much sculpture as it is

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a building that fits a very challenging architectural site."

The completion of the building is scheduled for May. "We get so many requests from architects from all over to see this building because typically a building like this stays in the concept stages," added Aries. "In this case, we had a developer who was committed to avant-garde architecture and doing something really special,"

Ten blocks to the south, the closest penthouse to the Meatpacking District — an expansive 2,737-square-foot home with an additional 1,500 square feet of outdoor space, including four terraces and a private rooftop with an outdoor kitchen and protected views — has just come back on the market at the reduced price of \$4,950,000, down from the original asking price of \$6,750,000 a year and a half ago when the apartment was taken off the market. The apartment sits atop a boutique building of seven full-floor residences, each with keyed elevator access and the exclusive feel of a private townhouse.

"Very large spaces like this in the West Village are just very hard to find," said Michael Bolla of Luxury Lofts & Homes, exclusive broker for the building. "In the penthouse there is a big living room, an enormous eat-in kitchen and a formal dining room, and a very large master bedroom with huge walk-in closets. Being a newer building, they were able to build for today's market — and for people who can afford larger apartments."

Like the West Village, Hell's Kitchen is not known for its spacious apartments. That is what makes the penthouse at 505 West 47th Street special, said Ian Reikner, managing



The penthouse at 325 West 15th St. Photo: PAVOU PHOTO

partner for Park View Developers, the 505's developer. A few years ago, the 1,490-square-foot penthouse would have been priced at \$4 million; today, the price is \$2,695,000. The penthouse comes with an additional 1,415 square feet of usable outdoor space, which includes a massive two-tiered rooftop terrace equipped with a hot tub and barbecue grill.

"What I tried to design at the penthouse of the 505 was a Hell's Kitchen version of a trophy home," said Reisman. "It has a large roof garden overlooking Times Square, a skyline view with a huge outdoor Jacuzzi and a pergola — and the views are guaranteed because of the landmark status of the area. It is a three-bedroom, three-bath — so it is not huge, but for Hell's Kitchen, it is huge — and probably the nicest apartment in the entire area. If you want a trophy home scaled for the Great Recession, this is it."

At \$22.5 million, 26 West 76th Street is not priced for the Great Recession — but considering that the price has dropped 10 percent since October, it does reflect the tenor of the times. Steps from Central Park West, the six-story, 10,000-square-foot elevator town home has been painstakingly restored with a modern, sleek twist.



The facade of 26 West 76th St. Photo: Dawn Harris Stevens



A living room at 211 East 51st St.

In all, there are four separate outdoor spaces, three kitchens, a garden in the back, and a 2,000-bottle wine cellar. And because the building's underpinnings are a full 16 feet below grade, the new owner could build a pool or a squash court in the basement. "A 25-foot-wide limestone pre-turn-of-the-century house that is impeccably renovated — all you have to do is bring your art collection and your furniture — it truly is a one-of-a-kind this close to Central Park," said Wendy Maitland, senior vice president, Brown Harris Stevens. "With a parlor floor completely designated for entertaining, this building really captures the style of old Manhattan in Edith Wharton's 'Age of Innocence.'"

While the 2,400-square-foot duplex penthouse with a 2,400-square-foot wraparound terrace currently on sale at 211 East 51st Street is a trophy in its own right, it also sits right next door to another trophy: Greenacre Park, a jewel of a vest-pocket park. With its 25-foot waterfall, the Zen-like oasis was donated by the Rockefeller family to the city of New York, and it sets the mood for 51st Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, a block known for its pleasant, locust tree-lined European-style ambiance. The

living room of the upper floor of the penthouse has a soaring 16-foot floor-to-ceiling glass wall that looks down on 51st Street below. "This is classic Manhattan — not the financial district,

not Chelsea, but the heart of Midtown, the center," said developer Henry Justin, principal of HJ Development. "And this is the classic apartment that makes you feel like you own it all." ■



The garden at Soho Mews, 211 West Broadway. Photo: iStock