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MAGAZINE

WHY PLANTS ARE THE NEW ART IN ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

By Chiara Spagnoli Gabardi • July 13, 2017

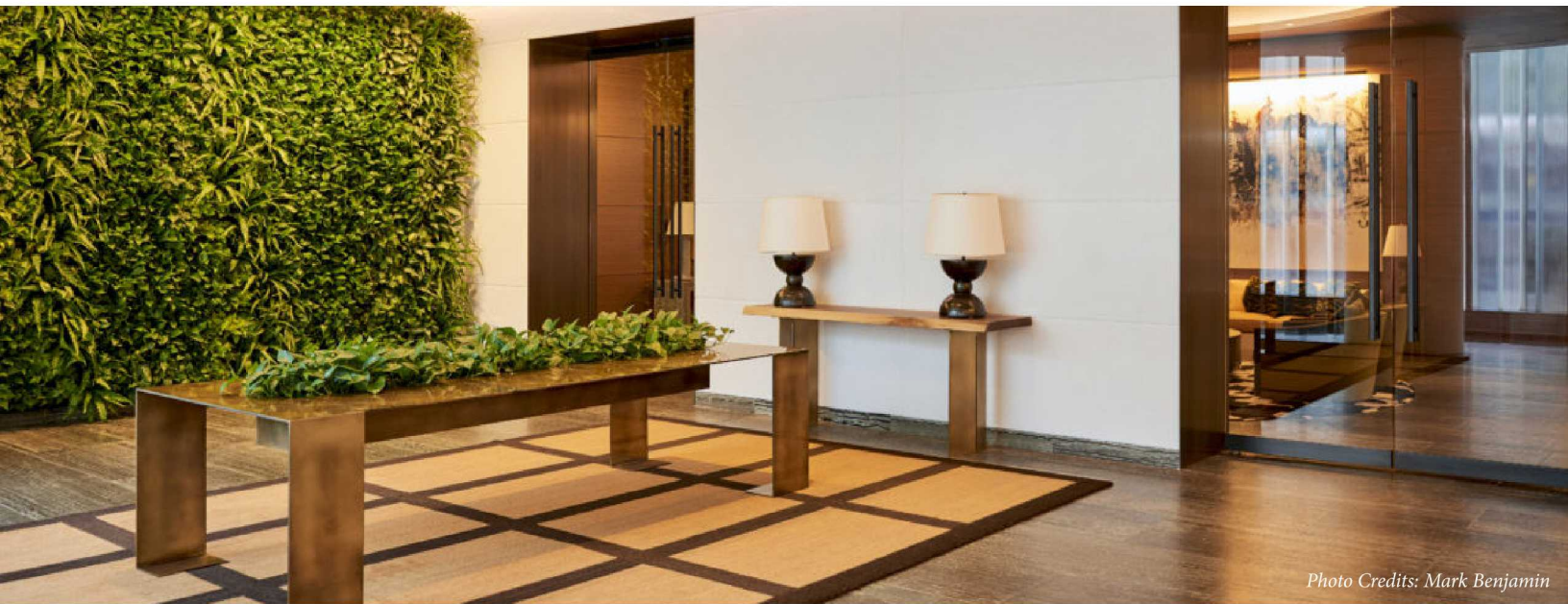


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Back in the 80's, it was de rigueur for architects to incorporate huge, showy and highly pricey works of art in lobbies. For many of us, the first time we had direct contact with works by the likes of Mark Rothko Julian Schnabel or Mark Tansey was in the foyers of banks, expensive condos, or company headquarters. The works were designed to impress, awe and even intimidate a bit.

But times have changed, and today's architects' goals are different – they want us to feel centred, calm and healthier when we enter a building. And what better way to induce those feelings than through the use of green walls?

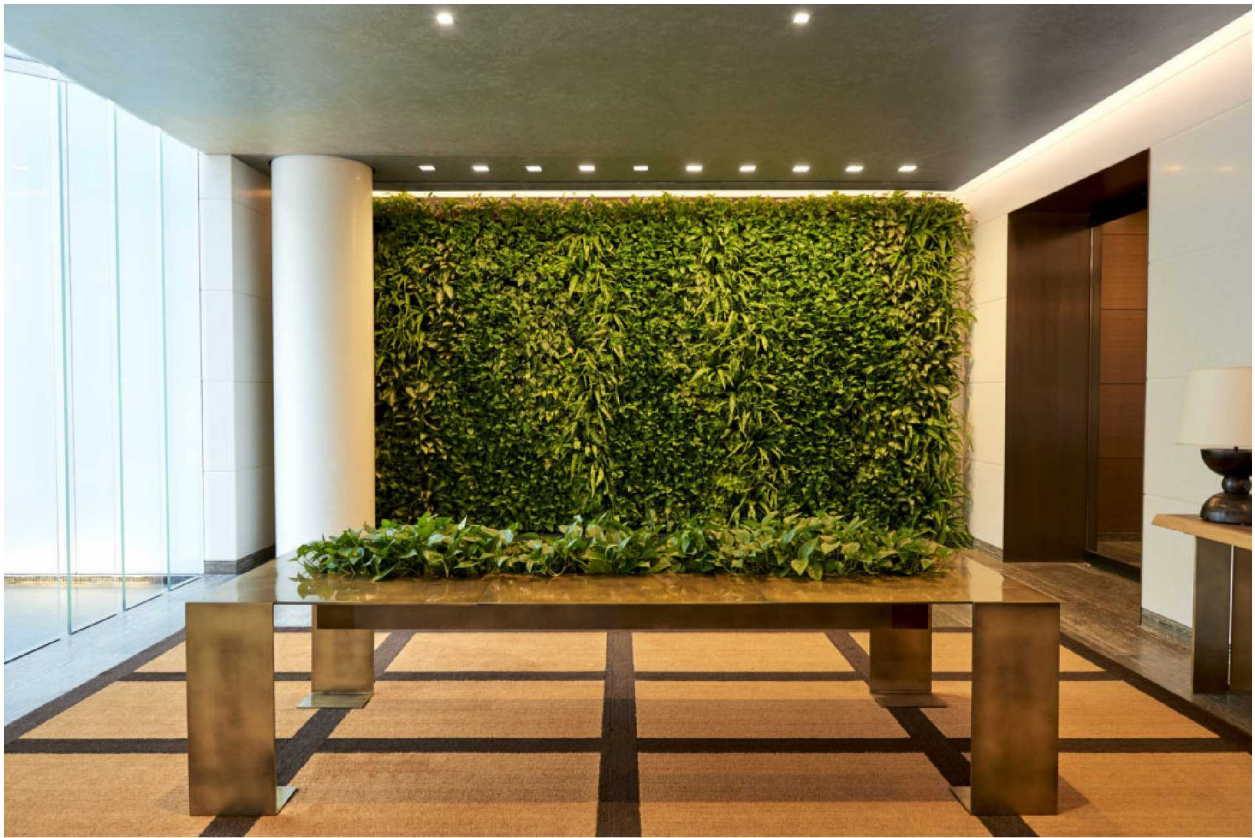
Green walls, also called living walls, have been installed in company lobbies for businesses as diverse as Lululemon, Google, Airbnb and Air France, and no wonder: studies have shown that in the workplace, green walls make an enormous positive impact. Just some of the benefits include:

- Reducing urban heat island effects and smog
- Cleaning outside air of pollutants and dust

- Offsetting the carbon footprint of people and fuel emissions
- Removing VOCs and other harmful toxins like benzene and formaldehyde from the air
- Soundproofing
- Insulating and cooling buildings
- Creating habitats for birds and beneficial insects, increasing biodiversity
- Growing food in urban settings
- Increasing foot traffic in retail spaces

But it's not only companies that are applying living walls to their constructions – residential developers who once invested heavily in statues and paintings to adorn their work have discovered adding green walls and other plant based features increases real estate value, residents' well being, and of course, aesthetic value of a building.

Here, we take a look at 7 beautiful developments that demonstrate how plants are the new art in architectural developments.



252 East 57th Street

While entering 252 East 57th Street, residents traverse a walkway between babbling pools of water to enter the lobby (designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Daniel Romualdez, and Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects), before encountering a floor-to-ceiling green wall and a long brass table brimming with plants. By incorporating these natural elements, project developers World Wide Group and Rose Associates have created the feeling of a serene oasis in a built environment.