

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

By LANA BORTOLOTT



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.

↑ 252 E. 57th Street,
\$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:
RENDER - PIRANHA 3D
PORTRAIT - ROGER DAVIES

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.”

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Julia Hodgson

Director of Development, World Wide Group
Developer of 252 East 57th St.

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.

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.”

Image is an artist rendering.

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