

STYLE

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The owner can enjoy spectacular views of New York City from the roof.

STORY JOANNE LAM
PHOTOGRAPHY GIANNI FRANCHELLUCCI/ LIVING INSIDE

MANHATTAN PROJECT

Architects take up the tough challenge of creating the ultimate penthouse in a peaceful environment amid the urban jungle of New York

Say the name Manhattan, and images of bright lights and tall buildings come to mind. But the lush greens of a manicured lawn? That's something one can only dream of having in the heart of one of the busiest cities in the world.

Yet this is exactly what architects Steve Blatz and Antonio Pio Saracino achieved with a penthouse loft located in the heart of Manhattan and one of New York City's trendiest neighbourhoods, TriBeCa.

Working according to their client's request for "a place that would be unique, have an abundance of outdoor space and be suitable for entertaining as well as for quiet contemplation", the designers set out to "create an urban, modern, sophisticated Manhattan apartment filtered with nature against the views of the chaotic urban jungle of New York City".

"We wanted to create a unique apartment that would express the dichotomy today in Manhattan – where the distinctions between indoor and outdoor spaces are blurring with nature, and vice versa," the designers say.

To bring their vision to life, a complete reorganisation of the penthouse space was required.

"Contrary to what most people would do," Blatz says, "we actually reduced the space inside to maximize the outdoor [area] and create a really wonderful relationship between the two."



THE DESIGNERS KEPT THE SPACE FLOWING AND BEAUTIFULLY CLEAN

ABOVE

The living room is light, bright and zen. The designers also created bespoke pieces of furniture for the living spaces.

RIGHT

A spiral staircase concealed inside a 4.9-metre-tall cocoon of laser-cut, mirror-polished stainless steel. The cocoon mimics what it's like standing below a canopy of tree branches.

It was no easy feat. To accomplish their goal, the building envelope and all systems had to be completely redesigned to integrate a stringing connection to the outdoors, Saracino says.

Floor-to-ceiling windows were installed on the north and south elevations of the space, which reduced 400 sq ft of living space, but this loss in space is nothing compared to what the owner gained in ambience.

The floor plan was transformed to integrate a stronger connection to the outdoors by developing lush gardens split across two levels and adjacent to all the primary living spaces.

This is a stark contrast to the original shell of the

space, which was "poorly designed and poorly built," Blatz recalls. "The primary views were barely visible."

The space was completely transformed. Downstairs, the designers built an open living, dining and kitchen area, while the upper level contains a den, a home office and three bedrooms. Both floors have plenty of outdoor area. The outdoor spaces are perfect for both hosting parties and finding quiet solitude, as requested by the owner.

For the designers, the courtyard is what makes the home special. "The courtyard brings natural light to the living area. It also serves as a showcase for a spiral staircase enmeshed in a mirror-polished stainless steel cocoon that [takes] guests to the roof consisting of a meadow, a lawn, a hot tub, and dining and gathering spaces," Saracino says. The perforated, polished surface of the cocoon acts as a mirror reflecting natural light into the living area, he adds.



A wooden deck on the roof provides areas for sunning and lounging, surrounded by wild flowers and spectacular views. The owner and his friends can kick back and relax in the hot tub while enjoying views of the Big Apple.

In addition, the stunning views of lush greens set against Manhattan's skyscrapers can be seen throughout the penthouse. Blatz and Saracino designed the space, so that the primary rooms face the gardens, offering a touch of nature in contrast to the urban jungle. At night, this experience is heightened as the night sky is lit up by the city's flickering lights.

Careful consideration was placed into furnishings to allow the owner to enjoy every moment of his unique backdrop. "We designed all interior furnishings and finishes along with the outdoor

BELOW

Plush greens stand out against the backdrop of TriBeCa's old industrial buildings and Manhattan's chic skyscrapers, offering a charming dichotomy.

BOTTOM

An urban oasis: a hot tub on the roof offers the owner a way to relax while soaking up the views of New York City.



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

In the bathroom, a painting by Bertrand Lavier brightens up the space;

The orange sofa by DWR and the vibrant painting by Flora Zhang lend bright splashes of colour to the sophisticated studio, while the Noguchi floor lamp adds geometric interest;

Looking out the window of the guest bedroom, one can truly feel the essence of both old and new TriBeCa;

Glass partitions open up the bathroom and allow natural light to shine through the entire space.



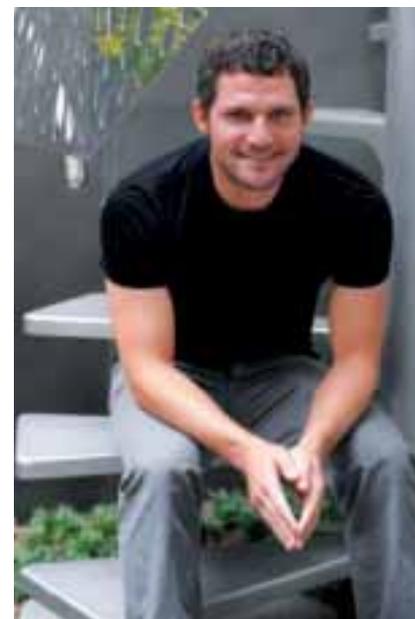
THE BUILDING HAD TO BE REDESIGNED TO INTEGRATE A STRINGING CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS **ANTONIO PIO SARACINO**

spaces,” Saracino says. Artful mixes of vintage, contemporary and custom pieces which share a streamlined masculine sensibility are placed throughout the home. In the living area, Rodolfo Dordoni sofas flank a cocktail table with a jigsaw puzzle top. In the den, which was converted out of two bedrooms, a Serge Mouille swing arm lamp extends from the wall to illuminate Jeffrey Bennett tub chairs on swivel bases.

The designers also pay tribute to the bustling neighbourhood. Before its modern-day glory as a fashionable and desirable neighbourhood with many celebrity residents, TriBeCa was a thriving industrial

base in the late 19th century. In reference to this, in places such as the dining area, horizontal slot windows strategically frame the skyline, along with water towers and other charmingly gritty elements on the roof, which helps create a “greater sense of being in TriBeCa”, Blatz says.

The designers kept the space flowing and beautifully clean by incorporating structural cores that hid stairs, the pantry, bike storage, laundry and powder rooms, and mechanical rooms. To reflect TriBeCa’s industrial vibes, these constructs are covered with hand-painted zinc panels. This design solution – what the duo call “volumes” – is testament



SPEC CHECK

OWNER:

Jason Carroll (pictured)

PRINCIPAL DESIGNERS:

Steve Blatz and Antonio Pio Saracino

LOCATION:

TriBeCa, New York City

TOTAL AREA:

5,000 sq ft of indoor space and 7,000 sq ft of outdoor space

FAVOURITE SPACE:

"We love the apartment throughout. But if we were to choose one space, we definitely have a special affinity for the courtyard, which is the heart of the home connecting the primary living space with the roof garden above," the designers say.

to their careful yet creative design eye. "The two volumes are complemented by hand-rubbed walnut millwork throughout, and they act as the functional elements in the overall space and are meant to create a fluidity of movement around them, interconnecting the spaces," Saracino explains. "The zinc [panels] add an urban, artisanal warmth to the space while also giving a sense of curiosity to the space beyond. The overall design of the rooms circulates fluidly around these volumes."

For the designers, the fluidity is "a younger way of dealing with space" and mirrors their design aesthetics. With their approach, they've broken stereotypes of what one would imagine for the Big Apple through their determination to create something extraordinary: "We felt that creating lush green spaces in a place like New York City would be the ultimate luxury." [T](#)

