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THE HIGH END

A New Tower Designed to Blend Into Yorkville

By Tim McKeough

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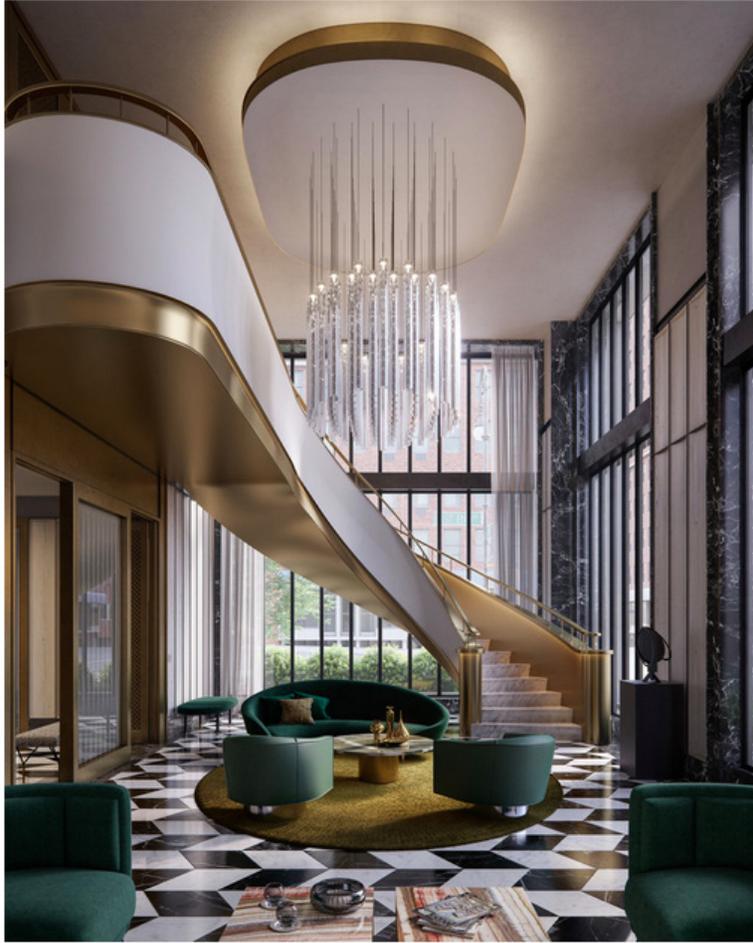
When Mitchell C. Hochberg, the president of the real estate company Lightstone, needed an architect to design a new tower just a few blocks away from his home in the Yorkville neighborhood of Manhattan, he didn't have to look far. The decorated architect Deborah Berke, dean of the Yale School of Architecture, lives in the building next door.

Of course, while living close to one's architect is convenient, it wasn't the primary reason he selected her firm, Deborah Berke Partners, to design Lightstone's new 29-unit condominium at 40 East End Avenue. Rather, he was impressed with Ms. Berke's tastefully simple work and ability to bridge old and new.

"She has an unbelievable aesthetic in terms of blending traditional with modern sophistication," said Mr. Hochberg. "I don't think many designers are able to do that."

Deborah Berke Partners has designed a 29-unit condominium with brick and cast-stone cladding at 40 East End Avenue in the Yorkville neighborhood of Manhattan.

Rendering by Binyan Studios



The lobby connects to a double-height parlor that has a subtly Art Deco appearance, with a chevron-patterned floor of black and white marble, and a curled bronze-and-marble staircase.

Rendering by Binyan Studios

He also assumed that Ms. Berke would share his desire to realize a building that played nice with the area’s prewar and midcentury neighbors. “The idea was to build something that is a modern interpretation of the local and historic architecture that we have,” he said. Not, he added, “a flying saucer.”

Ms. Berke was on board (with [Gerner Kronick + Valcarcel, Architects](#) serving as the architect of record). Her vision was to design a building that catered to “contemporary lifestyles and contemporary families — life in New York in the 21st century,” she said, “but that also feels a part of the neighborhood.”

Knowing that her neighbors would be scrutinizing the design, Ms. Berke and her colleagues were particularly eager to impress.

“There was a lot of anxiety at the beginning of the project,” said Stephen Brockman, a senior principal at Deborah Berke Partners. “Like, ‘We better make this good!’ ”



Apartments have white oak herringbone floors and large casement windows, many of which open to Juliet balconies or terraces. Rendering by Binyan Studios

The result is a 19-story masonry building with a mix of light gray and charcoal bricks, and ribbed cast stone details separating large casement windows, many of which open wide to glass Juliet balconies.

At street level, there is a porte-cochere with white marble walls. Near the top, where the building steps back from the street, the cladding changes to cast stone, and a number of units have private terraces with gardens designed by [Gunn Landscape Architecture](#).

Inside, Deborah Berke Partners designed an intimately scaled lobby that connects to a double-height parlor with a subtly Art Deco appearance, including a chevron-patterned floor of black and white marble, and a curled bronze-and-marble staircase. The staircase leads to amenity spaces on the second floor, which include a library, game room, catering kitchen and fitness center.

The finishes in individual apartments are upscale yet deliberately simple, with white oak herringbone-patterned floors, white lacquer Pedini kitchen cabinets with woven metal inserts and beveled metal trim, and white Arabescato Cervaiolo marble in the kitchens and master bathrooms.

“There’s a framework that allows people to apply their own aesthetic,” said Mr. Brockman.

Some rooms also have streamlined plaster crown molding, he noted, with an appearance that is “more Deco than classical.”

Yorkville may not have the same urban buzz as popular downtown neighborhoods like NoHo and SoHo, but James Lansill, a senior managing director at Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group, which is handling sales and marketing for the building, said that is actually one of the area’s biggest attractions.

“It’s an oasis of sorts in the urban context,” he said. “It’s remarkably quiet and filled with tree-lined streets and parks. You can hear birds chirping, and your kids can ride a bike on the sidewalk without fear of too many buses and cars.”

He expects the building will receive a lot of interest from people who already live in the neighborhood and, he said, “want to upgrade to a building with more amenities and services, modern building systems and higher end finishes.”



“The idea was to build something that is a modern interpretation of the local and historic architecture that we have,” said Mitchell C. Hochberg, the president of the real estate company Lightstone. Rendering by Binyan Studios

Coincidentally, the project is just one block away from 20 East End Avenue, a new condominium designed by the previous dean of the Yale School of Architecture, Robert A.M. Stern.

Units at 40 East End Avenue include two- to five-bedroom apartments, a maisonette and a duplex penthouse with a private roof terrace, priced from about \$3 million to \$25 million. Lightstone hopes to begin sales late this month.

Construction of the building is well underway, and the exterior is already largely complete. “We expect the first residents to move in in January,” said Mr. Hochberg.

As for Ms. Berke’s neighbors, “They’ve been very complimentary,” she said. One neighbor quizzed her about the choice of brick, she noted, “And then another neighbor was interested in buying two units.”