



Leroy Street Studio and Asaf Gottesman Convert a Printing Warehouse Into Luxury Condos

The West Village property marries industrial details with modern amenities

Posted June 19, 2018
Text by Hadley Keller
Photography by Binyan by IPSTUDIO

"I think one of the beautiful things in New York is what happens at the tops of the buildings," muses architect [Asaf Gottesman](#). He's speaking to me by phone from Paris after a few failed attempts at transcontinental connection—a situation indicative of the global practice that in many ways defines his design sensibility. But back to New York. We're discussing [90 Morton Street](#), where Gottesman, GSARCH, and Leroy Street Studio have converted one of the West Village's historic warehouses into a luxury condo building for developer Brack Capital Real Estate. In doing so, they retained the original structure's industrial aesthetic, coupling it with contemporary details and modern amenities for a structure that, as the architect says, "tells a story" of its own history.

The building's façade is, in itself, a manifestation of the area's heritage, as well as Gottesman's nuanced understanding of vernacular architecture. "The building is originally from 1915," explains Gottesman. "Then, in the '60s, they added three badly constructed floors on top of the eight that existed. So when we came, initially what we decided to do was to remove the four top floors and reconstruct them. So the top four floors, which are markedly different, are new."

In a way, the structure was about working within New York's confines. "In terms of the regulations, the codes for dormer windows in New York are pretty unique," Gottesman says. "Usually, in Europe, above a certain height, the whole façade tends to be recessed. So as you go further up the building recedes in order to allow light to enter the street. But in New York, it works by percentages, and that's what allowed us to create this offset top."



The building consists of a 1912 base topped with four newly constructed floors.

Offset from their base, the staggered, cantilevered top floors add a contemporary point of visual interest without seeming like a tacked-on topper (thanks to Gottesman's careful integration with the lower floors). "The base building is classically inspired," he says. "It's a repetitive façade; there are some classical details; the ceilings are ten feet or more. It's beautifully proportioned and has very thick walls. So all of this gives it a sense of permanence and quality. The original sash windows weren't really attractive, but the openings were beautiful. So we decided to accentuate these windows using a frame that maximizes light and underscores the proportions of the windows. Then we pushed the window all the way to the outside so we gain these large windowsills where you can sit or place large works of art. The upper floors follow a totally different logic. They're more site-specific. We're basically framing views and creating expanded terraces."

Gottesman and Leroy Street Studio chose several elements to serve as common motifs through the new and old parts of the building: The same dark bronze that clads the upper floors runs through the window frames and banisters in the lower floors, and a latticework pattern inspired by the building's silhouette pops up on terrace railings, the front entrance, and elsewhere. Perhaps most noticeable is that instead of simply building atop the original building, Gottesman effectively cut out the classical structure's corners, nestling the top floors more closely into their base and underscoring the building's geometric patterns.

Inside, [Leroy Street Studio](#)—working on its first residential condo building—made design decisions that similarly celebrate the building's history. "This part of the West Village, which is very beautiful now, was manufacturing and industrial at the turn of the [20th] century," says Marc Turkel, founding partner at Leroy Street Studio and a resident of the neighborhood himself, who worked with Leroy Street Studio's head of interiors Sybille Schneider on the building. That heritage made for several pragmatic decisions that now read well aesthetically.



The lobby features custom furniture and a metal screen that echoes the building's industrial roots.

"In these old industrial buildings they tried to minimize the need for electricity by having these huge windows to let in natural light, and then they were very substantial architecturally to support all the equipment—so massive beams and really thick walls," Turkel explains. "All of that today reads as buildings that have integrity and are timeless. That quality was something we were keen to express in the process."

Working within that same aesthetic language, Turkel and his team refined and reimaged several of the building's defining qualities: Elegant metalwork in the lobby recalls industrial beams in a more delicate manner, deep windowsills are reimaged as places for seating or displaying art, and a quartzite stone inset into kitchen floors was inspired by inset steel plates used to spread the weight of factory equipment on hardwood floors. "We were really interested in the historic language of that architecture but in making it more defined," Turkel says.

Beyond that, Leroy Street Studio took cues from other design styles that made use of such raw materials. "There's kind of a language of early modernism that combines metalwork with plaster and woodworking," Turkel says. "That was where we went in terms of architectural reference; it feels considered and appropriate."



A view from the living room into the kitchen, which is segmented by a stone-inlaid floor.

It also makes for a careful balance between the building's industrial bones and more elegant details. "A lot of the palette is this language of contrasting refinement with things that feel a bit rougher and more edgy," Turkel explains. "We have polished plaster next to metalwork, cerused oak with rougher textures. I think if you walked in and it was all this industrial, weighty thing, it would feel a little oppressive."

Leroy Street also designed many custom pieces—from millwork to lighting—that translate the building's history in more nuanced ways. "At first glance they look like they're original to the building, but then you realize they're something special," says Turkel. "I think the layering of the custom on the smooth and rough contrast makes you feel like there's a real hand at play."



The building's basement swimming pool, where industrial columns are modernized in an all-white treatment.

That said, the "hand" with which Turkel and team have refined the space is deliberately understated. The windows, for example, Turkel describes as "focal points, but not distracting. The space isn't frivolous, it's functional." This distinction is one gleaned from years of working on private residences for what Turkel thinks are the types of buyers whom 90 Morton will attract. "It's a space for someone who appreciates aesthetics but wants to think a bit outside the box," he explains. "We've done a lot of work for these types of collectors, and what they really want is an interior that doesn't compete with their lives, that leaves room for them to layer their own art and possessions and life into the space."

In today's era of über-luxurious super-skyscrapers, that might sometimes be a balance that's hard to achieve, though Turkel hopes he's done so successfully. "This is a building that's meant to be about luxury, but we're in this mind-set right now that there have been a lot of splashy developments, and we were interested in doing something a bit more refined and quiet," he says. "We were trying to find a language that would be timeless and enduring."