



# RUSK *renovations*

*A passion for craft and creative collaboration are hallmarks of this famed New York renovation firm*

*By Katherine Frankel*

Oscar Wilde said: "A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament." That may be why many of New York's most prominent art collectors, artists and well-heeled homeowners are drawn to the elite New York renovation firm of Rusk Renovations Inc. From principals to tradesmen, the company shares their clients' artistic vision and temperament.

"Many of our employees have conservatory training in fine arts and design," explains company founder and president, John Rusk. "We search for second, third and fourth generation builders who have developed a level of craftsmanship that is rare in the industry today."

As a result, seventy percent of Rusk clients choose the firm

without seeking competitive bids. These clients work with the project development team to determine a scope of work and a desired budget.

Rusk's clients are leaders in the worlds of finance, business and the arts and entertainment industries. The firm is accordingly protective of its clients' privacy.

"We place a high value on discretion," says Mary Kocy, CEO and a principal of the firm. "Even internally, projects are referred to by address only."

While Rusk clients come from many different industries and cultural backgrounds, they are typically on their third or fourth renovation and know precisely what they want in a contractor.



Budgets typically range from \$600,000 to \$7 million dollars and requires between six months to a year to complete.

"Most projects are gut renovations, and we rebuild from the bottom up paying meticulous attention to every detail," Rusk explained.

He cites a recent project at the Plaza where the client required a complete renovation but wanted the end product to look original to the hotel's construction.

"We spent a lot of time working with their designer to get the right 'aging' look in the paint and patina on the millwork."

The firm is building its thirteenth project at the Plaza and has a history in most of Manhattan's landmark buildings, including the San Remo, the Beresford and premier properties on the city's East side, as well as the Village and Tribeca.

"Because so many of our clients have extensive art collections, we've developed expertise on climate control, lighting and structural support. Our clients typically hire us because they know exactly what they want in their renovation and they know we speak their language" Kocy said. "Our clients are looking for our boots-on-the-ground experience to assist their design staff." The firm collaborates with noted architects and designers including Matthew Baird, Jeffrey Hitchcock and Benjamin Noriega Ortiz.

"Our clients are interesting, successful, often international and deservedly demanding. Our mandate is to satisfy those expectations."

Case in point, client Dianne Wallace, former beauty manager for *Vogue*, a trustee for Manhattan's New Museum of Contemporary Art, and noted private art collector. "I have done many homes and their work is by far the very best. They follow through on all requests and I have recommended them to many friends. They know how to listen to and complete the smallest detail. They get 5 stars plus," says Ms. Wallace.

The art of listening well is a core value at Rusk. It's no coincidence that this developing skill is at the heart of a popular course on residential project management Rusk teaches at Columbia University. The firm values collaboration and works closely with architects and designers on their projects.

"Our clients have complicated and busy lives. Some want to be very involved, others want regular walk-throughs and still others don't want to see anything but the finished project," explains Rusk. "Architects, designers and clients choose us for our ability to manage complex projects and the relationships with the buildings and neighborhoods they are in. The bottom line is that the entire process deserves to be a satisfying, creative experience, and we go out of our way to make it fun, to boot."

Rusk and Kocy are hands-on on every project and their passion and enthusiasm is infectious. They make running crown molding a work of art. Rusk received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from Carnegie Mellon, where the school's



motto is a quote by Andrew Carnegie that states: "My heart is in the work."

The company has incorporated that motto into every aspect of its operations.

"Each detail of every renovation is like a sculpture," Rusk says. "Every step deserves a minutely considered choice, an artist's eye and a real sense of passion."

That's the level of commitment; attention and artistry that continues to make Rusk Renovations an excellent choice for Manhattan's most discerning homeowners.

