



ESCAPE TO *Manhattan*

When it comes to customised real estate - Manhattan is all about approval status with its strata of condo review boards and their architectural equivalents, the NYC Department of Buildings, and the Landmarks Commission. John Rusk of award-winning builder Rusk gives Sarah Logan the lowdown on the challenges of a renovation investment

Manhattan has long been a coveted location with overseas buyers seeking a desirable pied-a-terre. But when it comes to customising property – the location comes with its own distinct set of rules and regulations. One solution might be to purchase in a brand-new development. Yet realistically, that wouldn't satisfy the needs and aspirations of a large proportion of foreign buyers, who have taste, history, lifestyle and family to consider which often necessitates the customisation of a property. "This educated group enjoy the process of helping to design something they love - it's part of the fun of building," says John.

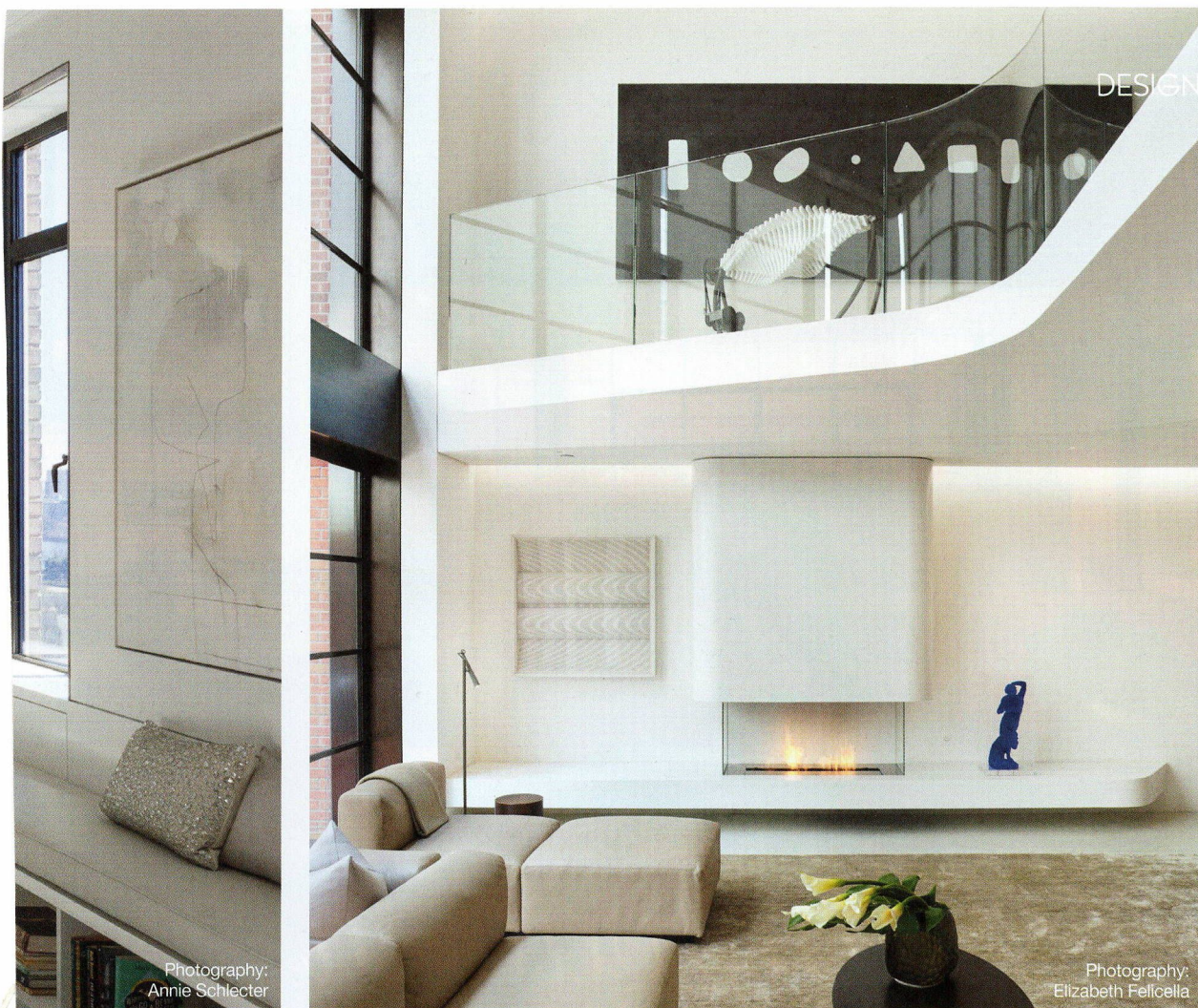
But how do these global citizens peel "The Big Apple?" How do they acquire the property, design, get approvals and build from outside NYC? Rusk, a renowned builder in New York City since 1987, set out to solve this problem in 2006 with a call for a project at the Plaza Private Residences. The legendary development was home to many a well-heeled

resident, not only from New York City, but from every major city around the world. Rusk learned on that first project that this international client was special; altogether different from the established client base for whom they had long been renovating New York City homes.

He explains: "From listening to the client's wishes, we realised that they would not only need to rely on our team to collaborate with their hometown designer and staff, but also work with an architect of record in New York.

"This particular buyer would need a residence that would function flawlessly each time they landed in New York, so we had to work to understand the family's vision and the vision of their designer from back home, rather than produce a "New York Standard", and then bring in the resources to accomplish this vision with world class artisans in a way that was quick, efficient and cost effective."

Rusk went on to build another 19 projects at the Plaza based on the trust and recommendations of that first client.



Photography:
Annie Schlecter

Photography:
Elizabeth Fellicella

The company's approach to building is defined by their motto: "Build Once."

For a property to endure for years, Rusk focusses not only on surface craftsmanship, but also underlying quality. The firm has 31 checklists with over 750 individual items across every trade in the building of their client's apartment. They apply every lesson, and strategy they have learned over 32 years of building in New York City and items are updated monthly.

Endurance, however, is not enough. The higher goal is to delight the family and their guests. The property must suit the inhabitants and address their needs. Rusk's checklists expand to design questions as well: What desired room temperature does the family wish to sleep in? How does the family wish to control the lighting? What's the largest plate the family wishes to store in their upper kitchen cabinets? Rusk learns from its history and systematically brings that knowledge to every project it builds.

The final obstacle is pulling it all off. How does a home get built in Manhattan when the client doesn't live here?

Explains John: "Since that first project at the Plaza, many prominent clients simply rely on us. Our team uses a fully transparent, construction management approach, and invoices are provided and discounts passed on - we sit (virtually) beside our clients as an experienced, trustworthy guide.

"We introduce architects, local interior designers, owners' representatives, mechanical engineers, lighting engineers, landscape architects and audio-visual consultants; whatever the clients need. We make sure that all these well-vetted consultants share our collaborative approach."

For the prominent residential buildings, it's a two-way street. Over 32 years in business, Rusk has developed relationships with most of the major property management companies in Manhattan along with reviewing architects and engineers. Aside from running the business with his partner Mary Kocy, founder John, has been teaching residential project management at Columbia University for the last 14 years. Many of these building managers and architects have sat in on classes as guest lecturers. From these interviews, Rusk has developed a unique knowledge base and set of relationships that allows him to accomplish what few have the access to do.

Concludes John: "Building in Manhattan can be interesting, creative and rewarding. But once built, the fun begins, because you have a place that's exclusively yours, in one of the greatest places in the world."

Contact us now on:

Info@ruskinc.com

www.ruskinc.com

+1 (212) 544 0986