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Luxurious Loft

By Chaya Chang

Innovation leads this Greenwich Village gut-job

For nearly a century, the small area below 14th Street in New York City played home to the creative, rebellious type.

Today, Greenwich Village has a similar vibe as yesteryear, but with a complete architectural makeover. Meshing with the village's new modern vibe, Wayne Turett, RA and owner of Turett Collaborative Architecture in New York City designed a complete renovation of a three-story garage and residential space for a homeowner with "a wonderful design sense and a lot of trust."



The latter is something Turett applauds because he has the ability to do what he does best - be creative and innovative.

"For me, it was always about invention - whether it be designing a new light fixture or a new type of flooring," says Turett when explaining his art for designing. "As a child, I was naturally always building things like forts, etc., and the interest (in architecture) grew from there."

With a resume that includes building high-rises to becoming a partner in an accredited architecture firm, Turett's solo career is allowing his passion to show through every project he touches.

When called upon to perform a complete gut-job on this 1920s coal-delivery garage, Turett and the homeowner worked hand in hand to design and build a home that was efficient and innovative.

"Essentially, the project objective was to design a vertical luxury home that is designed around the lack of light and air typically found in NYC," explains Turett. "The design temperament was to be understated luxury."

Turett encountered numerous challenges which included everything from a lack of outdoor space, parking and virtually no natural lighting - leaving the building dark, cold and lifeless. When the homeowner initially purchased the building (with the intention of turning it into a house), he hadn't a clue how he would turn this once coal truck depot turned parking garage into a livable space. Having worked together before, the homeowner contacted Turett with another project.

The project began with a complete gut on the entire building, with the intention of lowering the ground floor, raising the second floor and building a penthouse addition on the roof. "This allowed for all the various rooms and spaces of the house to expand and become really luxurious," says Turett.

First Floor Luxury

Starting from the ground up, Turett resectioned the entire building. He lowered the ground level to house the much-needed parking garage. "We don't have the statistics, but it's safe to say that only an infinitesimal percentage of homes in Manhattan have private, on-site, indoor parking," says Turett. "Furthermore, the homeowner wanted to fit multiple cars, so a three-car garage was designed with a lift to fit all cars."

At the back of the ground level, the heart of the home, is a combination living room, dining room and kitchen. The level also leads to an unordinary (in this area) small backyard. "The ground is covered

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with river rocks; the back wall, at the property line is embellished with a large area of brightly colored plastic flowers," explains Turett. "They were unexpected and lively, and were a very inexpensive way to treat this area where it would have been difficult to actually grow plants."

Adding to the "Zen-like" quality of the yard, Turett innovatively designed a fish pond in the backyard under the tulips. "The rectangular trough at one end turns 90 degrees and runs into the house with a passage for the fish in the foundation wall and terminates in a larger square pond," explains Turett. "The inside trough has a 1-in. plexi top so you can walk on it and look down into the pond. The owner loves fish, and I felt that a pond rather than a tank would be more fitting to the design of the house.

Light-challenged

To infuse as much light as possible, one of Turett's main challenges, the ground level is roofed by a massive structural skylight. "Another issue for a townhouse with a shallow backyard and no windows on either side is letting light in; most design for this location would have been light-challenged, particularly the ground floor," says Turett. "This skylight incorporated a tremendous amount of natural light and also added an interesting design element."

With his imaginative design ideas, the skylight also doubles as a second floor terrace and provides constant indirect daylight. Leading out from the second floor office space, this roof deck allowed the homeowner to have this rare outdoor space that he wanted - landscaped with grasses and planting on the perimeter.

Inside, the second floor features a home office and media room, while the "bedroom" floor is located on the third level and includes three rooms that look out over Leroy street via a three-story glass wall. "Guests rooms on the third floor and a media room downstairs are well proportioned and provide private spaces out of the main circulation path," adds Turett.

The Penthouse Suite

Possibly the best part of the house, if one could choose one, would be the fourth-floor "penthouse." Turett's bold, original design includes a third outdoor space that is accessible through either the master bath shower or from the top of the staircase, where a small path leads to the roof door. "The client wanted a strong connection to the outdoors, and this design provides that with a multitude of outdoor areas," says Turett.

Building 'Green'

Ultimately, Turett's design philosophy includes building "green." "If it were up to me, I'd always build with sustainable products, but in this business I have to pass it by the client and will go as far as the client wants," he explains. In this project, all of the roofs are green and certified sustainable mahogany is used throughout.

Because the plan called for a complete gut on the building, the homeowner and designer wanted to use some elements of the old building in the new program.

"The wooden stair treads were fashioned from the existing building's old beams, and the brick walls of the ground floor are also the old walls," says Turett. "The main room feels old and settled, as though it's an historic space, but in fact it was dug out and entirely recreated."

Used for more of a cosmetic appeal, a high-velocity HVAC system was used. "I like this system for its aesthetic appeal because instead of large ducts, a clean, 2- to 3-in. hole in the ceiling is used."

The interesting aspect of this design is the use of different configuration on each floor, yet it all relates to the others because of the openness of the plan and the transparency of the design. "Per the wishes of the client and the original goals, the spaces are bright and dynamic and entirely unconventional."

Fast Facts About the Company:

- Turett Collaborative Architects
- Headquarters: New York, N.Y.
- Established: 1991

- Employees: 7

Specified Products:

Bath cabinets: Custom
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Lighting fixtures: Cooper Lighting
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