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RISE & SHINE

***WITH EVEN MORE GLASSY CONDOS ON THE WAY,
WEST VILLAGE IS IN THE CLEAR***

By ADAM BONISLAWSKI



***THREE OF A KIND: The Richard Meier buildings changed the face of the West Village -
and development throughout the city...***



...says **James Lansill** (shown), who sold the buildings and himself owns a unit at **165 Charles St.**

August 9, 2007 -- IF you're in the window business, you might want to consider sending a thank-you note to architect Richard Meier.

After all, he's the guy who, with his celebrated and controversial designs several years ago for a pair of condo buildings on Greenwich Village's far west side, made floor-to-ceiling glass the must-have accoutrement it is today.

When Meier's see-through high-rises at 176 and 173 Perry St. opened for business in 2002, they attracted all manner of attention. Activists protested what they claimed were the excessive bulk and outré appearance of the buildings. Gossip columnists kept tabs on celebrity owners like Calvin Klein and celebrity flippers like Nicole Kidman and Martha Stewart. Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten followed through on plans not only to buy a unit in one of the buildings, but also to install a restaurant there as well.

Five years later, things have settled down a bit. The buildings are still there - along with a third, equally glassy Meier condo building at 165 Charles St. - but the buzz has faded to a quiet hum. Nonetheless, the buildings' influence continues to ripple throughout the neighborhood, with Meier's original efforts having set the stage for a number of similarly high-service, high-design new developments.

The Meier buildings **"were a very important moment for development in general,"** says the Sunshine Group's James Lansill, who sold all three buildings. Lansill has a unit himself at 165 Charles St. and is now handling new Village developments including One Jackson Square and 166 Perry St.

"If you look at pre-Meier towers throughout the city, and not just the West Village, there really were not any buildings that used a major architect in that manner for a

residential building," he says. "Everyone didn't love the experience of living in the glass building or everyone didn't love, perhaps, that particular spot in the neighborhood. But what it did do was elevate the standard and change the way people thought about living in a new residential community."

Prudential Douglas Elliman broker Darren Sukenik, who owns a West Village condo at Morton Square, remembers that "the Richard Meier buildings flipped everybody out. That was the first thing like that to be built."

Beyond "flipping everybody out," the buildings also demonstrated that lurking amid the Village's classic carriage houses and 200-year-old townhouses were buyers willing to drop \$2,000-plus per square foot on sleek new buildings loaded with modern amenities.

"At that time there weren't many new luxury buildings being built in the West Village," says Charles Blaichman, one of the developers of the Meier buildings. "It was sort of a leap. We took a chance, and it's worked."

David Penick, the developer of **One Jackson Square**, a new 11-story, LEED-certified eco-friendly building at 122 Greenwich Ave., is now looking to attract the sort of high-end, amenity-hungry West Village residents the Meier buildings began cultivating several years back.

"If you want to live in the West Village, and you want to live in a building that has a doorman and a building that has services, that's a bit of a rarity," he says.

Designed by architect William Pedersen, **One Jackson Square** comes with its very own glass-heavy exterior - a gently curving curtain-wall designed to reflect and open up to Jackson Square Park across the street. Amenities include a 24-hour concierge, a catering kitchen, a fitness center and a spa treatment room. The building's 35 studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom units range from \$880,000 to \$10.45 million.

Also playing up the "glass and services" angle is **166 Perry St.**, a new building rising just down the way from where it all began. Developed by Blaichman, Richard Born and Ira Drukier - the same team behind 173 and 176 Perry and 165 Charles - the project features a cascading glass exterior designed by the Hani Rashid-headed firm Asymptote.

Inside, the 24-apartment building (units range in price from \$2 million to \$11.5 million) will feature a 24-hour doorman and concierge, a fitness center and room service from Vongerichten's Perry Street restaurant next door. The two- and three-bedroom dwellings will offer 10-foot ceilings and sliding glass walls. Spring for a penthouse unit, and you'll get your own lap pool.

"These are people who have incredibly discerning levels of taste," says Sukenik, describing the sort of high-end customer **One Jackson Square or 166 Perry St. might hope to attract. "They have a very specific aesthetic, and they wouldn't move into a cookie-cutter condo."**

Even buyers who aren't necessarily looking to live in a Modernist icon, though, have found themselves checking out the neighborhood's newer buildings. When property manager and addiction specialist Diana Alexiou moved back to the Village after a 15-year exile on the Upper East Side, she initially intended to purchase a traditional loft.

"I had no intention of being in a modern building," she says. "That was the last thing I planned to move into."

Nonetheless, her desire for space and a washer/dryer eventually led her to Morton Square - a three-year-old, Costas Kondylis-designed development where the Olsen twins bought multiple units, intending to combine them before flipping them. And while Alexiou once imagined herself in an older abode, her favorite features of her current apartment - the floor-to-ceiling windows (there's that glass again) and the almost absolute quiet - are more characteristic of a new development than of an apartment in one of the area's 19th-century affairs.

Of course, not everyone is a fan of this trend toward modern design. Many of the new developments have been, as Andrew Berman, executive director of the Greenwich Village Society for Historical Preservation, puts it, "a bone of contention in the neighborhood."

"Until very recently you thought of the Far West Village as a somewhat gritty environment," he says. "So the sort of glossy, glimmering new towers have certainly been a marked contrast to what people have traditionally identified the neighborhood with."

In fact, politicians and community groups including the GVSHP battled The Related Companies' efforts to build a 195-foot high-rise on the site of the former Superior Ink factory at West Street between Bethune and West 12th streets. After their protests, the development, which was initially envisioned as - yes, you guessed it - an undulating glass tower, has morphed into a lower-lying, largely masonry Robert A.M. Stern-designed building with a style more closely resembling the neighborhood's older, more traditional structures.

All the same, though, the Meier influence is not to be denied. Just around the corner from 173 Perry at 423 West St. rises Hudson Blue - a new eight-unit building boasting an oh-so-familiar-by-now glass curtain-wall façade. Look around the other corner at the three-unit development going up at 163 Charles, and you'll find the same sort of thing. Everybody, it seems, wants in on the act.

What's that they say again about imitation being the sincerest form of flattery?