



## See No Evil

*A look at some all-glass buildings for people who like to walk around naked*

| By Sophie Donelson |

It wasn't long ago that the trio of Richard Meier glass towers at Perry and Charles Streets hosted an endless string of cocktail parties. Guests came for the million-dollar views, not of the glittering Hudson, but of the famous neighbors—Martha Stewart, Calvin Klein, Vincent Gallo—careering around in their skivvies. The thought of living in a glass cube was baffling: Was it a testament to the city's vanity? A manifestation of the nothing-to-hide mindset in the age of Facebook? The end of privacy altogether?

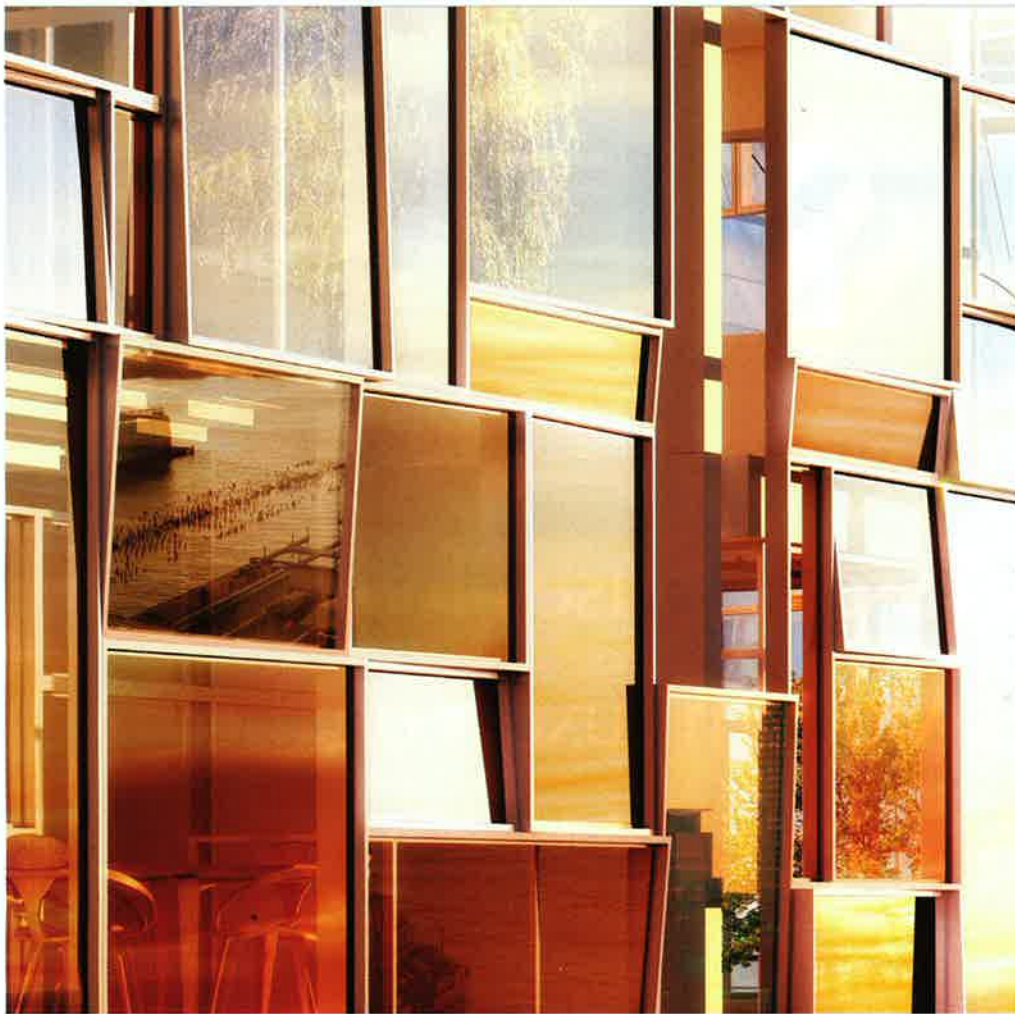
While tipsy partygoers were left to ponder, architects and developers were already back at the drawing board. Social implications aside, glass was proving itself as the It material. Leave it to the decorators to figure out how to handle the window treatments. But crystal-clear curtain walls don't suit everyone—especially not those who sleep sans-culottes and certainly not most architects. Instead, the latter are unveiling a host of slick ways to use the material du jour unexpectedly.

Tinted or colored glass is one approach and there's no more poignant example, of course, than the aptly named "Blue," the Lower East Side condo that arrived last year. It's the first residential high-rise for both Bernard Tschumi Architects and the neighborhood, but for all the hubbub about its color, the note of cerulean was an afterthought. The grid-patterned shell—an ode to the neighborhood's checkered past, er, diverse culture—was the project's impetus, says Kim Starr, a director at the firm. Only after a hard-hat tour did the team commit to using a few blue panels in the apartments themselves; the original plan called for the colored squares to cover just the solid, exterior walls.

Across town on far West 18th Street is a newer azure residence, Chelsea Modern. The undulating façade and proximity to the waterfront prompted Tribeca-based architect Audrey Matlock to choose the hue. That, and the fact that tinted glass helps a project surpass energy code. Developer Robert Gladstone of Madison Equities didn't hesitate about Matlock's choice to have blue-tinted panels inside the residences themselves, so long as it was the right blue. "It's the color-of-sky blue. Not tropical blue and not blue-green," he notes. "Blue-green says 'Miami.' The water on the south shore of Long Island is not blue-green." The team sorted through 20 swatches before picking the right variation. "I had what Joni Mitchell called 'the crazy you get from too much choice,'" says Gladstone. CONTINUED...



**GLASS HOUSES** *Clockwise from top left:* Bernard Tschumi's Blue on the Lower East Side that kicked off the color craze in New York; the Chelsea Modern's flowing façade, which is supposed to echo the rivers encircling Manhattan; inside HL23, which uses structural elements to offset the expansive openness created by floor-to-ceiling windows.



SEEING IS BELIEVING *Clockwise from top:* Jean Nouvel's Pritzker Prize winning 100 11th Avenue going up next door to Frank Gehry's IAC building; the glass-skinned condo bucking the restrained architecture of Sutton Place; a (purposely obstructed) view from inside Nouvel's tower. *Far right:* a peek at the privacy problems facing future residents of HL23.



...CONTINUED Matlock's topsy-turvy application of glass looks downright Type-A compared to her neighbor, Jean Nouvel's 100 11th Avenue, just a block south on the Hudson. The Pritzker Prize winner speckled 34 distinct windowpane shapes to form a 1,650-piece mosaic on the 23-story building. Each pane is tilted and torqued, forming a haphazard patchwork that the developers tout as "the most highly engineered and technologically advanced curtain wall ever constructed in New York City." While Nouvel's 40 Mercer Street condo boasted translucent red-and-blue windows, his newest offering is clear. Albeit with so many facets, it'll shimmer like a sequined pantsuit.

Pattern dominates 441 East 57th Street, too, where the firm FLAnk has created an almost entirely glass building that's only 30 percent windows. Set amidst canyons of prewar brick co-ops, the wisp of a building is sheathed in an ornamental layer of clear and printed glass that reflects the surrounding brick-scape. "We're interested in landmark-quality glass buildings," says FLAnk managing director Tim Crowley. "Anyone can throw up 80 stories of stacked glass boxes in Hells Kitchen. But glass does a lot of things—not just windows. Being innovative is not rocket science, you just have to think about it."

It's yet to be determined if the trophy architecture along the West Side Highway will ever get landmark status, but in the meantime, architects will keep brainstorming new approaches. For Neil Denari's HL23, which hovers over the Highline at 23rd Street, that meant obscuring the glass expanses with a web of white-painted steel and contoured metal panels. The metal grounds enough of the 11 floor-through residences to simplify the job of interior architect Thomas Juul-Hansen, who worked at Meier's firm before striking out on his own. "Denari really nailed it," says Juul-Hansen. "He was clever enough not to do an all glass building." All units require dimmers, we assume. **M**



## ROOMS WITH A VIEW

*Advice for New Yorkers living in plain sight*

"You should always have a den, somewhere you can skulk around and suck your thumb. It's very hard to be a thumb-sucker in a glass house."

—Clodagh, interior designer

"I'm actually moving to one and plan to create vignettes of sculpture—which look good in 360 degrees—anchor the space with area rugs, and make sure my underwear are clean and of high quality."

—Jamie Drake, interior designer

"The other day I was facing 40 Mercer and saw people inside in the buff! They looked good. Some people must think 'I'm part of the trophy, so I should go the gym.'"

—Jennifer Carpenter, Principal, TRUCK Product Architecture

"I fantasize about living in those buildings. I imagine that even the dust balls are lit with sunlight. And you'd want to pee with the lights off just to see the view."

—Steven Sclaroff, designer and shop owner

"Absolutely no one has come up with a great design for window treatments. Either you don't have any and you fry in the summer or you put up some hideous white drapes and it becomes a motel."

—Carlos Mota, stylist