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DEPARTURES

THE CULTURE ISSUE



The Sky's

For a pied-à-terre in the world's tallest apartment building, designer William McIntosh created a soothing aerie that rises above it all. *by Jen Renzi*

Photographs by Richard Powers. Produced by Anita Sarsidi

the Limit



The living room features a William T. Georgis sofa from Maison Gerard and vintage Jean Royère armchairs upholstered in alpaca from Holly Hunt.

PARK AVENUE has no dearth of superlative addresses. But there's one property that stands quite literally above the rest: No. 432, currently the world's tallest residential high-rise. Completed three years ago, the super-slim glass-and-concrete grid, designed by Rafael Viñoly, thrusts 1,396 feet into the clouds—freakishly

tall even in the stratospheric company of Billionaire's Row—to offer gobsmacking vistas of Central Park and a sweeping view of the tri-state area.

Interior designer William McIntosh surveys this scene from an apartment on the tower's 63rd floor. "On a clear day you can see the Catskills," he says. The ver-

tiginous view through ten-by-ten-foot picture windows is indeed what sold his clients on the three-bedroom apartment. Well, the husband, at least; the wife is less ecstatic about heights. That clash fueled McIntosh's approach to the decor. "Subconsciously, I was trying to ground this place a bit, to give it a density through the



Top: The library includes a custom sofa, a McIntosh-designed wing chair in a Clarence House fabric, and a Tai Ping rug. The painting is by Hans Hartung. *Below:* McIntosh covered the master-bathroom bench in Holly Hunt velvet.

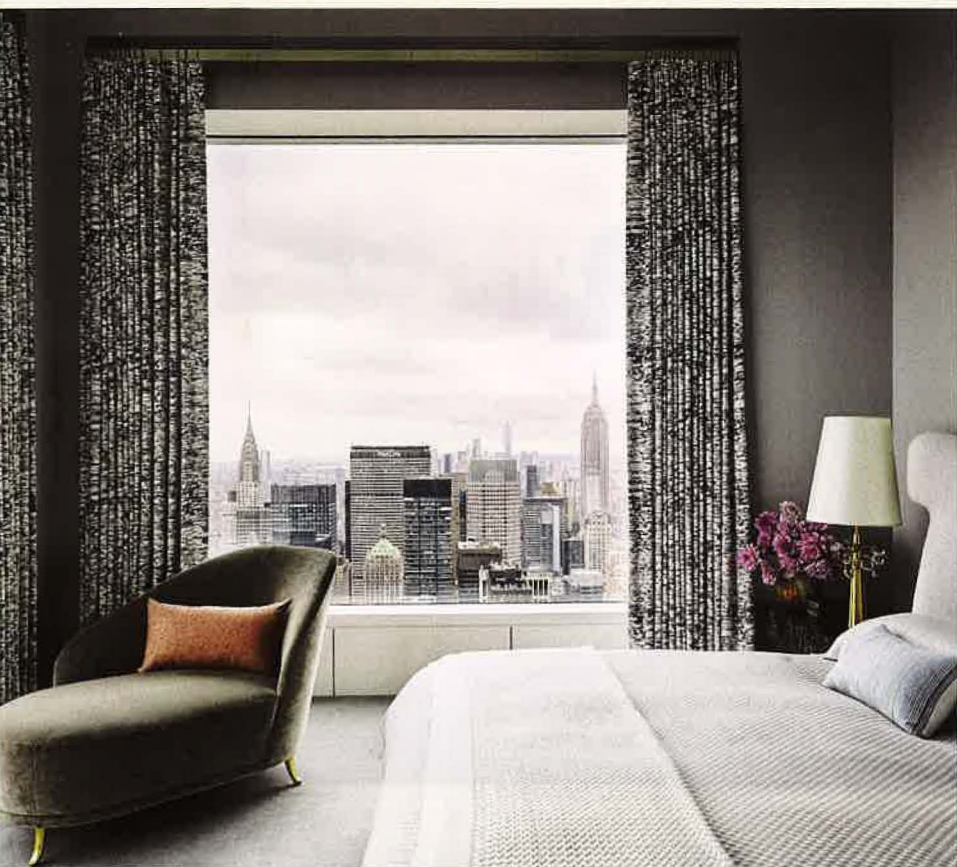
selection of materials, the coloration, the weight of the surfaces.”

The tension between solid and ethereal is evident the moment you step into the foyer. McIntosh rounded the vestibule’s corners and took advantage of the 12½-foot ceilings to create a cove light of tiered concentric circles for a cloud-like effect. The surfaces of the ceiling are matte-white plaster, which lends a competing impression of gravitas. “All these curves were a way to take the edge off the building,” he explains. “It softens the rigidity of the architecture, which is so severe.”

The New York-based designer describes his work here as a series of “surgical insertions” rather than the down-to-the-studs gut job that is more typical of his firm’s work (yes, even in newly constructed ultra-luxury skyscrapers). “I was a little surprised my clients didn’t want to go all the way,” he says. “But the layout was really rational”—living space and kitchen at one end, sleeping quarters at the other, library in between—“so there was nothing you’d need to change.” The apartment also came equipped with herringbone oak floors deemed worthy of preservation. “We walked in and said, ‘This works for us. We’ll take this color!’” McIntosh says. It was the inspiration, in fact, for the overall palette—a Scandinavian-inflected mélange of taupe and gray punctuated by a sultry teal that relates to both sky and cityscape.

There was minimal intervention in the marble-clad bathrooms and in the kitchen, which McIntosh upgraded with glass-globe pendant fixtures and sleek walnut-and-brass barstools that sidle up to a floating counter—also inherited—that spans the window’s full length. “This is the only breakfast bar I could love!” McIntosh says, laughing.





Clockwise from left: In the master bedroom, a custom chaise longue from Bernd Goeckler and curtains of Holly Hunt velvet; a vintage bronze console in the entryway with McIntosh-designed lighting; custom dining tables with brushed-bronze bases and tops of cerused oak, which was also used for the custom chairs.

Other refinements included new doors, baseboards, and moldings throughout, plus raked-plaster walls that “solidify and silence” the rooms. The library, in contrast, is dressed in cerused-oak panels with flared edges. “I indulged time and creativity in the detailing,” McIntosh says.

The living spaces were designed largely for wowing and entertaining. The twin dining tables, each poised on a cumulus-like base of brushed bronze, seat up to 16 under the watchful eye of a zebrawood-framed convex mirror. At the press of a button, a canvas by graffiti artist Retna slides open, like something in a James Bond film, to reveal a drinks cabinet for the cantilevered bar. The main seating grouping is arranged to evoke conviviality, with sinuous Jean Royère swivel chairs and a William T. Georgis sofa curling around a custom topographical coffee table. It’s all poised atop a ten-inch-high leather-tiled platform, which McIntosh devised to better connect sitters with the view. Complementing the vintage-inspired furnishings is a selection of more conversation starters from the couple’s art collection, among them works by Jean Dubuffet,

Harland Miller, and Robert Motherwell.

While blue-chip, the apartment is family friendly: The clients have five children ranging in age from elementary school to post-college, so fabrics and finishes are well-suited for the rigors of hard-core

lounging. McIntosh has witnessed the kids jumping on the sofas and slinging legs casually over the sides of swivel chairs. “As knockout as this place is,” he says, “it’s still livable.” In the clouds, maybe, but it remains grounded.

