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Escape frenetic New York City in a Battery Park Zen oasis

Developer teams up with designer Clodagh to create condos that make residents feel relaxed, at ease and centered.



The pool at 225 Rector Place.

BY JASON SHEFTELL / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

It's all about the "wows and ahs" for the one-named downtown-based designer Clodagh. There is no small talk in her design, or "visual chatter," as she calls it. Her work is immediately gripping and always intended to make anyone inside her spaces feel relaxed, at ease, centered and softer.

"It's not about design, it's about creating life-enhancing experiences," says Clodagh, draped in black, sitting in her windowed office on Broadway surrounded by bricked archways and a team of designers searching the globe for obscure natural materials. "You want to create a series of moments where everywhere someone looks is beautiful. We only use simple materials. We never fight nature. I call it silent design. You're in a room, you feel better. Sometimes you don't know why."

A designer of private residences, luxury spas, houses and hotels, Clodagh has of late been translating the Zen experience to the urban jungle on a mass scale. Her work with Related Companies, one of the biggest developers worldwide (Time Warner Center, Hudson Yards, and MiMA locally), has given the city its most transcendent residential lobby at the Caledonia at 450 W. 17th St. at 10th Ave.



The tomb- or womblike hallway leads to the swimming pool.

Related recently took the Clodagh experience to Battery Park City, imprinting it in a run-of-the-mill building on Rector Place steps from the park overlooking the Hudson River. Related originally built 225 Rector as a rental building in 1985, sold it in 2005 to YL Real Estate Developers, who began to convert the building to a condominium, then bought it back three years ago. The challenge was turning something ordinary into extraordinary. That's where Clodagh comes in.

The pool with a skylight staring at One World Trade and blue skies is where Clodagh's work is evident. You enter from the elevator into a dark chamber with walls covered in gunmetal and light gray rectangles. Windows with slats let little lines of light seep into the room. The space has the sensation of somewhere ancient, like walking through a 3,000-year-old house of worship. It's something unexpected in a downtown condo. Battery Park doesn't exist anymore in the space.



Designer Clodagh at 225 Rector Place.

As you turn the corner, the reflecting light of the pool dominates the room, changing color and form against the light gray of the ceiling and easy stripes of the pool chair pillows. Custom-made copper lighting fixtures as tall as people work together with more slits on the windows.

"The hallway is the 'ah,' and the pool is the 'wow,'" says Clodagh. "The 'ah' is the exhale, the moment that makes you relax. The 'wow' is a level of excitement that thrills the senses. Both are beautiful. Both feed the soul. These are spaces for walking and meditating, but also for children playing. We didn't expect it, but somehow yellow comes into the space. It's the sun through the skylight bouncing around with the reflection from the water. So much good happens when you mix water, light, and reflective surface."



A studio for a sexy young Wall Streeter.

Other amenities include a children's playroom, fitness center, common roof terrace with sun chairs and barbecues, and rooftop cabana with prep kitchen, powder room and dining for eight. The lobby is another "ah," with a burnished metal sculpture framing the concierge desk, a rock and water formation to the right of the building entrance, and a darkened seating area near 14-foot windows.

"The angles are meaningful and deliberate," says Clodagh, who uses feng shui experts in each of her projects to give spaces the karma they need to interact cohesively with the people who enter them. "We wanted something like a welcoming monument when you enter the building. The angles of the burnished steel with the built-in flower vase creates balance with the water and stone. The space invites and retreats at the same time, allowing anyone who enters to ease their way into a soothing space."



The Metropolitan kitchen offers light woods.

Buyers can choose from two types of home finishes. The Signature Collection combines dark wood floors with light grey custom kitchen cabinetry and pewter limestone in the bathroom. The Metropolitan line has white/gray Himalayan Silk Stone in the baths, lighter floors and kitchens accented with Okite, a new type of low-absorbent and top-quality quartz.

The hallways will have rugs designed by Clodagh for her Canyon Rapids Collection for Bentley Prince Street. They will be lined with photos the designer took of water reflections in Amsterdam, Marrakech and the Hudson Valley.



The lobby at 225 Rector Place with woods and burnished steel.

For Clodagh, the New York City living experience means using the total building. She likes the simplicity of studio living at 225 Rector and how families in the two-bedrooms can take advantage of building common spaces.

“The value is in the total living experience,” she says. “Even if you live in a 576-square-foot studio, you still have 15,000 thousand square feet of space. I try to channel people who may live here. For the smaller homes, I see the buyer as someone young, sexy, smart, who wants to live in a building that is both ancient and modern at the same time. They want to entertain, bring pretty boys and girls back to their home for fun. Our model for the studio can sit 22 to 25 people comfortably for a party. We turned the bed around to make it loungy. This is a sexy building. Life is sexy.”

Studios start at \$520,000. One-bedrooms range in price from \$620,000 to \$750,000. Two bedrooms come in at just below \$1 million. Already, 23 contracts are out on the 181 units Related will be selling. A portion of homes are inhabited by buyers left from the previous owner. Twelve yet-to-be-released penthouses will be designed for an even more luxurious experience. Foot traffic for all units remains healthy, with a minimum of 10 showings per day.

“These units are priced to sell,” says Sherry Tobak, a senior vice president of sales at Related and sales director at 225. “The major attraction is a combination of Clodagh and that you can live in a Related building with all the amenities and services for this price. The finishes and appliances are top of the line.”

The Clodagh factor, according to Related, drives sales.

“At the Caledonia, Clodagh showcased her unique ability to translate urban living environments into Zen retreats, and the response from the marketplace was an eight-month sellout,” says executive vice president of Related Bruce Beal Jr. “At 225 Rector Place, she drew inspiration from the surrounding parks and waterfront location to create a welcoming environment for residents.”

That fits the designer’s mind-set just fine. Opinionated, tough-minded yet soft and sweet, she is as balanced as her spaces. She is also out-there. Clodagh sees spaces in her mind, walking through them in her head before they are

built. When she can't find a piece she imagines in the space, she makes it herself. She is certain design affects a person's mind, body and soul.

"How can it not?" she asks. "The things we surround ourselves with are an extension of our body. I don't know any other way to be than positive. I design spaces that ask for a moment of pause, that make you look at something. If it's beautiful, it adds to life. It makes you smile, think and want to be healthy. You can live a very full life now at 225 Rector Place without ever leaving the building. You have light, shade, air, outdoor space, a place to swim, exercise, the hallways will make you feel good. I don't really think there is any other way to live."



Outdoor space at 225 Rector Place in Battery Park City.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

What: 225 Rector Place. A study in holistic design and enhanced living from the one-named designer Clodagh and Related Companies.

How much: Studios start at \$520,000, one-bedrooms at \$620,000 and two bedrooms around \$1 million. Call (212) 779-0225 or go to rectorplace225.com.

Why: An indoor pool, value and the belief design can change your mood, make you relax and feel centered.

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