

HONG KONG TATLER

HOMES

The insider's guide to luxurious living



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UNMATCHED
ELEGANCE

AN EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW
OF AN UTTERLY UNIQUE
DEVELOPMENT

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INTERIORS

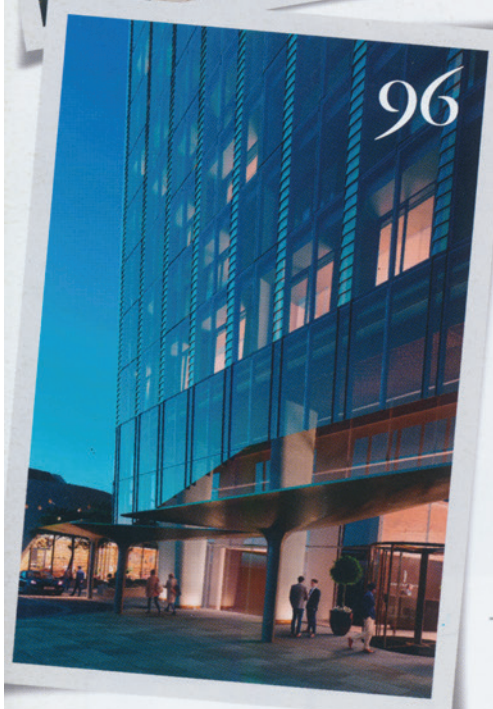
- 70 **Eternal Effervescence**
Perrier-Jouët's Maison Belle Epoque reopens its doors in a fizzing celebration of art and nature
- 78 **New York State of Mind**
How Kelly Behun took inspiration from sweeping views of Manhattan when designing a penthouse apartment in the world's tallest residential building
- 86 **One & Only**
James Tu's awe-inspiring interiors for an apartment in the Opus matches the building's stunning architectural design



120



70



96

PROPERTY

- 96 **Joint Ventures**
London property developers are partnering with luxury brands to offer residents an ever-growing range of services
- 104 **High Roller Home**
Find out why the "Billionaire" mansion on 924 Bel Air Road is the most expensive home in the US
- 112 **Property Finder**
The wow factor abounds in these gorgeous homes around the world that are ready for new owners
- 120 **My Favourite Things**
Jérôme de Lavergnolle, CEO of Saint-Louis, loves Venice, the Louvre, dining at La Maison du Jardin and more



112



NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Kelly Behun tells **Melissa Twigg** how she took inspiration from sweeping views of the Big Apple when designing a penthouse apartment at 432 Park Avenue

EMPIRE BUILDERS
With stunning views across Manhattan and beyond, designer Kelly Behun had to work with the city, not against it



Kelly Behun is standing in one of those extraordinary New York apartments where the view is so breathtaking that the rooms and walls could be bare and you wouldn't notice. But with the designer's creative flair and understated style added to the mix, the room is so pretty it could itself be a compelling work of art.

The address isn't bad either. Located on the 92nd floor of 96-storey 432 Park Avenue, this beautifully designed half-floor residence is the highest completed penthouse in the skyscraper, which is currently the tallest residential building in the world.

Decorating an apartment such as this was never going to be an easy task, as such a dazzling view can overpower even the most impressive piece of interior design. But Behun was up to the task.

"Aside from putting a live zoo inside the apartment, it would be hard to upstage the views; they are that singular and extraordinary," she says. "I have often felt,

while sitting in one of the window seats and seeing all the iconic landmarks of the city unfurl below, that it's like watching a movie about a love affair with Manhattan from the greatest seat in the house."

So instead of trying to compete with the neon and skyscraper-strewn vision of Manhattan laid out in front of her, she decided to work with her rival and use it for inspiration instead.

"I didn't want to do anything that might distract from the views," Behun says. "All of the colours used throughout, the greys, creams, dusky pinks and blues, are taken directly from the tones in the many buildings,

CITY IN COLOUR

Grey, cream, pink and blue tones throughout the apartment are inspired by the multifaceted hues of the city



URBAN RELIEF

From top: Wood, linen and velvet create a welcoming fireside-style space in the library; window seats in the living room offer unrivalled views of Manhattan

the other skyscrapers, the rivers and sidewalks, and especially the sky as it changes throughout the day."

Designing the interior of such an apartment comes with a very particular set of needs—to respect and reflect the urban jungle outside while providing a refuge from it.

"I always think the function of a home, beyond the obvious function of providing shelter, is to provide a place to recharge," Behun says. "When I design in a city, that becomes even more of a priority because the very things that attract us to city life, the 24/7 energy, the non-stop activities and possibilities, are also the very things that can deplete us."

Like Hong Kong, New York City is famous for its relentless energy, which is why the atmosphere Behun most wanted to create in this apartment was one of calm.

"The city home more than ever needs to feel like a sanctuary and to exert a restorative influence," she says. "That tends, for most of my clients, to translate into soothing colours and warm, tactile fabrics and finishes. This is not a hard and fast rule, though; it's really an individual thing, so I speak to my clients about what makes them





**MIDNIGHT IN
MANHATTAN**
One of the bedrooms is
decorated in a rich blue,
redolent of the tones of a
New York City night

feel calm, safe and happy and I go wherever that leads.”

The sense of peace and tranquillity in the apartment largely comes from the use of natural fabrics: linen, cotton and silk velvets, mohair, alpaca, grasscloth and hand-painted wallpapers. These are accented with metallic touches on the silver-leafed ceilings and in the accessories, and lots of ceramics and warm lighting.

“I wanted everything to feel soft to the touch and generally used colours that have warm undertones,” she says. “I was hoping to create a cocoon-like feeling that balances the monumental views through the signature 10-foot by 10-foot windows, and essentially create a warm embrace from which to enjoy the whole of Manhattan.”

An excellent example of this warmth is the library, where the combination of wood,

a velvet sofa and a woven linen rug look wonderfully inviting under amber lights. The atmosphere is enhanced by hammered bronze metallic foil wallpaper on the ceiling, which provides a warm, sensual reflection for the room. The bookshelves are subtly lit individually, creating the impression of gently glowing wooden boxes and the ambience of a fireside setting.

When it comes to potent use of colour, it is difficult to trump the bedroom, which is a rich blue throughout, reminiscent of royalty, dark oceans at night, and the evening sky of New York City.

“I have noticed throughout my many years of living in Manhattan that the sky over the city at night never really turns truly black but more of a dark, inky blue,” says Behun. “So I worked closely with Calico Wallpaper to try to replicate this colour. The blue has a



GOLDEN HOUR
An emphasis on natural fabrics creates a sense of tranquility, accented with metallic textures and fittings

IMAGES: RICHARD POWERS; COURTESY OF MACKLOWE PROPERTIES AND CIM GROUP



wonderful depth to it and an almost watery effect that, coupled with the beautiful touches of silver leaf, resulted in a wonderful reflection of the night sky. It almost feels as if the sky is being pulled inside the room.”

This romanticism and passion imbues the entire apartment as well as Behun’s other projects, but her calling as a designer came late. The half-Czech, half-Irish powerhouse had worked in half a dozen industries without finding something that satisfied her—until she

stopped and thought about what elements of her life gave her the most pleasure.

“I finally realised after a number of detours into the worlds of business, finance and fashion that interior and furniture design were the things I was best at and the things that made me really happy,” she says. “When you find yourself endlessly redesigning your surroundings in your mind wherever you go, it’s probably time to take the hint.”

We’re glad she did. ❶

WASHING HEIGHTS
Behun designed the home to celebrate New York City’s energy, but also act as a place of sanctuary and restoration



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MANHATTAN**
One of the bedrooms is
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