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Architect Dan Kaplan Loves a Little Patina

The New Yorker also appreciates a little bit of paring down



Mr. Kaplan with his recent projects: (middle) The Greenwich Lane and (right) The NOMA.

COMPOSITE: DAN KAPLAN; HAYES DAVIDSON; FXCOLLABORATIVE
SAVE

By **Lucy Cohen Blatter**
Impressions

New York-based architect Dan Kaplan is a senior partner at FXCollaborative, and the man behind buildings including The Greenwich Lane and Circa Central Park in Manhattan, and 1 Willoughby Square, an office building in Downtown Brooklyn.

The firm has also worked on the Statue of Liberty Museum, the Second Avenue Subway and the Javits Center renovation and expansion.

FXCollaborative and developer Alchemy have worked together on at least seven residential buildings, most recently The NOMA, a 24-story neo-Bauhaus tower in Manhattan.

The building ties into the architectural past of the neighborhood, Mr. Kaplan said.

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"We wanted something that only felt like it could be in New York, and only on the west side of New York," he said. "It's got a direct resonance to the 1930s New York City high-rise past, but it's done in a very up-to-date modern way. It's textured and it's warm, and it's got some patina."

We caught up with Mr. Kaplan, 57, to discuss the very basic elements of luxury, the long-term effects of Brexit in London and elsewhere, and more.

Mansion Global: Describe your dream property.

Dan Kaplan: Something with grit, with history. Not too slick and with a little patina. Something with layering and a sense of history. I like there to be a sense that the property's been around the block. You can do a modern intervention inside.

But nothing brings authenticity like age.

Our work is all about context. It's all very city by city, neighborhood by neighborhood. We like to celebrate where we are.

MG: Do you have a real estate property that got away?

DK: Now it's an event space, but on the Gowanus Canal on Union Street in Brooklyn, there was a village of one-story and two-story houses. Every time we passed by, my wife would say we should buy that. That could have been our little village.

MG: What does luxury mean to you?

DK: Luxury to me is aeriness, with daylight, and a space that's well-proportioned, quiet. People think of it as something that's an additive. Like it would be luxurious to add a special material. To me, luxury is the things that are edited out instead.

MG: What area do you think is the next hub for luxury properties?

DK: We're talking a lot about the Brooklyn waterfront; DUMBO, Cobble Hill, Brooklyn Heights. We're doing some work there, and we're seeing other people doing some.

MG: What's the biggest surprise in the luxury real estate market now?

DK: What's been a happy surprise, or happy evolution, is that there was a real frothiness. People couldn't build big enough, luxe enough, or tall enough. That's swung back a little.

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We've moved toward sensible luxury. Big, well proportioned space and volume is what works at the end of the day.

MG: Where are the best luxury homes in the world and why?

DK: Northern Europe continues to delight. I was just in Amsterdam. Their reuse strategies are really great. And their new architecture is wonderful too. And some of the most astounding architecture I've seen is in Sydney, Australia.

MG: What's your favorite part of your home?

DK: There's a corner of the sofa that looks over Washington Square Park. I spend as much time as possible there.

MG: What best describes the theme to your home and why?

My wife and I had a very historic house in Montclair, New Jersey, and now we're renting a two-bedroom pre-war. The theme is now "a life edited." It was an exercise in paring down.

MG: What's the most valuable thing in your home?

DK: A photograph by Petah Coyne, a very large photograph. It started at a gallery in Chelsea, went to New Jersey and then back to Washington Square Park.

MG: What's the most valuable amenity to have in a home right now?

DK: A sauna—either in a health club or in an apartment.

MG: What's your best piece of real estate advice?

DK: Buy something you love, and weather the first downcycle.

MG: What's going on in the news that will have the biggest impact on the luxury real estate market?

DK: Brexit. Brexit is a sea change. I'm pessimistic about any resolution that will bring anything back to the status quo. The confidence in London has been shaken. If it's a total mess, it'll be even worse, of course.

New York and Northern Europe will be a beneficiary of that.

MG: If you had a choice of living in a new development or a prime resale property, which would you choose and why?

DK: A prime resale property that I can customize to get that old-new feel.

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