SPACES
INTERIORS/ARCHITECTURE/FASHION/DESIGN/TRAVEL/ART

STUCK ON YOU
DREAM HOME THAT THINKS IT'S A STICKER ALBUM
LORIOUSLY GREEN
ECO-CHIC BAR WITH A VERTICAL GARDEN

LIGHTEN UP
WITH FABULOUS FLOOR LAMPS
PLUS SMouldERING FASHION & FURNITURE

UP AND AWAY
THE RACE IS ON TO BUILD THE WORLD'S LEST BUILDING
THE ULTIMATE BACHELOR PAD

As more of us choose to stay foot loose and fancy free for as long as possible, the shape and function of our homes has been subtly shifting to suit the needs of a bachelor, rather than a family lifestyle.

The New York skyline provides the perfect backdrop for stylish dinners.
SUDDENLY RATHER THAN SLIGHTLY CRAMPED LAYOUTS INTENDED TO MEDIATE DIFFERENT TASTES AND AGES, ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS ARE BEING ASKED TO CONJURE UP INDULGENT INTERIORS UNBURDENED BY ANY NOTION OF COMPROMISE.

In New York (and in Paris and London) architects have been taking large family homes and cleverly refining them to suit the needs of affluent urbanites. Suddenly rather than slightly cramped layouts intended to mediate different tastes and ages, architects and designers are being asked to conjure up indulgent interiors unburdened by any notion of compromise.

Two years ago Studio ST Architects were commissioned to create this 2,200 sq ft duplex apartment in downtown New York and the firm soon sensed that if they were to give their client what they wanted they would have to make some big changes.

Esther Spertber, who was on the design team for the project, commented: 'although the unit came with expansive views of Manhattan to the North, West and South, it also presented difficult design challenges. Typical of postwar high-rises, the apartment had eight foot concrete slab ceilings, small generic bathrooms and a minuscule kitchen.'

She added: 'The main design goal was to create a series of differentiated spaces, each with its own atmosphere, that added up to a coherent whole.'

The architects quickly set about replacing the tiny bathroom and kitchen with spacious modern alternatives and had soon imbued the apartment with a feeling of continuity - something they knew was vital to the success of the project.

Spertber said: 'During the design process we used computer-generated renderings to explore various design possibilities. The final renderings closely resemble the actual space as constructed.'

Having looked at a selection of the early computer-rendered images alongside recent photographs of the project I can vouch for the fact that the design really was immaculately planned down to the finest detail with nothing left to chance. This may have taken away a little from the excitement of watching a project evolve, but meant that the architects could give their client an uncannily accurate idea of what to expect when the building work was completed - always an advantage when major structural work is being undertaken.
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RENDERED IMAGES FOR A SIMPLE APARTMENT RENOV...
Sperber explained: 'The principal design element on the lower level (the 19th floor) is a glass and metal conservatory that blends the inside and outside.

'To achieve this, the exterior wall of the small kitchen was demolished, opening the kitchen out into the conservatory and creating a breakfast room and casual living space.'

She added: 'The kitchen island extends into the conservatory, enlarging the kitchen and creating a comfortable space for entertaining. Finally, a hot-rolled steel TV wall with a two foot high and eight foot long slot window connects the conservatory with the formal dining room, maximising the conservatory's abundant natural light and spectacular views.'

Other design elements on this floor include a ruby red plush powder room, a dramatic entry hallway with a wenge wall and floating ceiling and a rather luxurious wet bar in the living room.

Sperber said: 'On the second floor we focused on the bathrooms, creating a generous master bathroom and updating the guest bathroom. We combined the original small master bathroom with two closets to create the marble and glass-tiled master bath.'

Frosted glass panels and sliding doors close off the landing to create a study area overlooking the stairs and new stainless and
hot rolled steel handrail gives the old staircase a new look.

Around the stair walls we located five wallwasher lights that illuminate the pale blue venetian plaster walls', said Spertber, adding: 'Hanging over the stairs is an Artemide Nur light with Metamorfose technology, which provides programmable ambient light in endless color variations.'

The finished apartment has all the space, luxury and high-tech features that one imagines when thinking of a 21st century bachelor pad. Some might argue that it seems a little like overkill to employ a highly regarded team of architects using detailed rendered images for a simple apartment renovation. Indeed, we are much more likely to see such tactics employed for ambitious new builds. However, this project illustrates that if you demand impeccable results it really doesn't matter how big or ambitious your build – working with good architects and a detailed plan can always add an extra dimension.

While once choosing to live alone might have meant making do with a tiny flat or 'rattling around' in a big family home, we are now asking more than ever of the humble apartment, and some of the world's finest architects and designers are working rather hard to deliver.

So does this mean the end for the traditional family home? Probably not, but it does mean that if you've always been inclined to dismiss apartment blocks, assuming that the only way to create your dream home is from the ground up, it just might be time to take a second look at the new breed of architect-designed flats.
'DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS WE USED COMPUTER-GENERATED RENDERINGS TO EXPLORE VARIOUS POSSIBILITIES.'