

REAL ESTATE

Jean Nouvel's 'Vision' Rising in Chelsea

Renderings

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Special to the Sun
April 5, 2007

A gray strip of West Chelsea is about to become the capital of bold architecture in [Manhattan](#). In one corner, the undulating curves of [Frank Gehry's](#) new IAC building. And now facing it, [Jean Nouvel's](#) "Vision Machine," a 23-story glittering glass residential tower at the 19th Street and the West Side Highway, which broke ground this week.

The project's developers, Cape Advisors, are betting that buyers are willing to pay extra to live in the iconic-looking structure. Apartments in the 72-unit building will range from \$1.6 million to \$22 million.

The development is part of a growing trend of star architects lending their name and design prowess to residential structures in New York.

"Buyers have become extremely sophisticated because the market has changed so dramatically," the marketing and sales agent for the property, James Lansill of the Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group, said. "A large percentage of what a new buyer looks at now is future construction and things in process. Buyers have gotten very sophisticated about seeing distinctions among different properties."

Some of the amenities at the building to rise at 100 11th Avenue include white terrazzo floors within each residence, a 70-foot half-indoor, half-outdoor swimming pool separated by a glass partition, and terraces opening onto a seven-story hanging garden loggia of ornamental plants and trees. The project also features an on-site concierge, a private spa with steam rooms and a sauna, and a high-end restaurant on the ground floor, which early rumors have pegged to Union Square Café's Danny Meyer. A project spokesman said discussions on the restaurant site are still ongoing.

"We're strong believers that design pays and that people are willing to pay a premium for design," [Craig Wood Wood](#) of Cape Advisors, said. "Jean designed everything in every room and put a tremendous level of energy into the innermost details."

"You haven't really seen anything like this in New York in recent times," Mr. Wood continued. "You see it in other cities, or with cultural institutions and office buildings in New York. It's one of the most important residential buildings done in the city in the past fifty years."

Mr. Nouvel is known for avoiding a signature style, and instead designs each project to fit its unique surroundings, according to Jack Beyer of Beyer, Blinder, Belle, the executive architects for 100 11th Avenue.

"Unlike other renowned architectural stars, he deals with the context of building in a way that's special and site-specific," Mr. Beyer said in an interview. "All of his projects are different. They don't ring out a branded look."

The building's curtain wall contains nearly 1,700 pieces of glass, each uniquely sized and jutting out from the structure at odd angles and catching the sky and light of the city at different angles throughout the day.

"This kind of glass housing tells you about the kind of democracy and transparency that all of our society should have," the executive director of the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Rick Bell, said. "The building is not walling itself off from the city. It's not a fortress turning its back on the street. His use of light and glass reflects and refracts the life of the city going on around it."

Unlike other projects in the city where developers wrestle with the architects to keep costs as low as possible, sometimes doing little more than slapping the boldfaced name of a well-known designer onto sales literature, 100 11th Avenue is Nouvel throughout, from the light fixtures to the cabinets to the placement of windows that maximize views of the city and river.

"The client here wants everything they could possibly get in the way that Nouvel delivered it," Mr. Beyer said "It's not just the façade but the entire building, every bit of it. It's a true craftsman experience which is very rare in today's world of residential construction."

The building is scheduled to open in the fall of 2008.



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The building's curtain wall contains about 1,700 pieces of glass. Apartment prices will go as high as \$22 Million