

Real Estate

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Section **11**

SKETCH PAD

Echoes of Paris, Five Flights Up

By TRACIE ROZHON

AS Page Goolrick blithely climbed the five flights of stairs that led to two top-floor apartments in a refurbished East Village tenement, she wasn't talking about the exhausting (for some) walk, or the workers who were tiling the stairs beneath her — occasionally cursing the interlopers who were messing up their job.

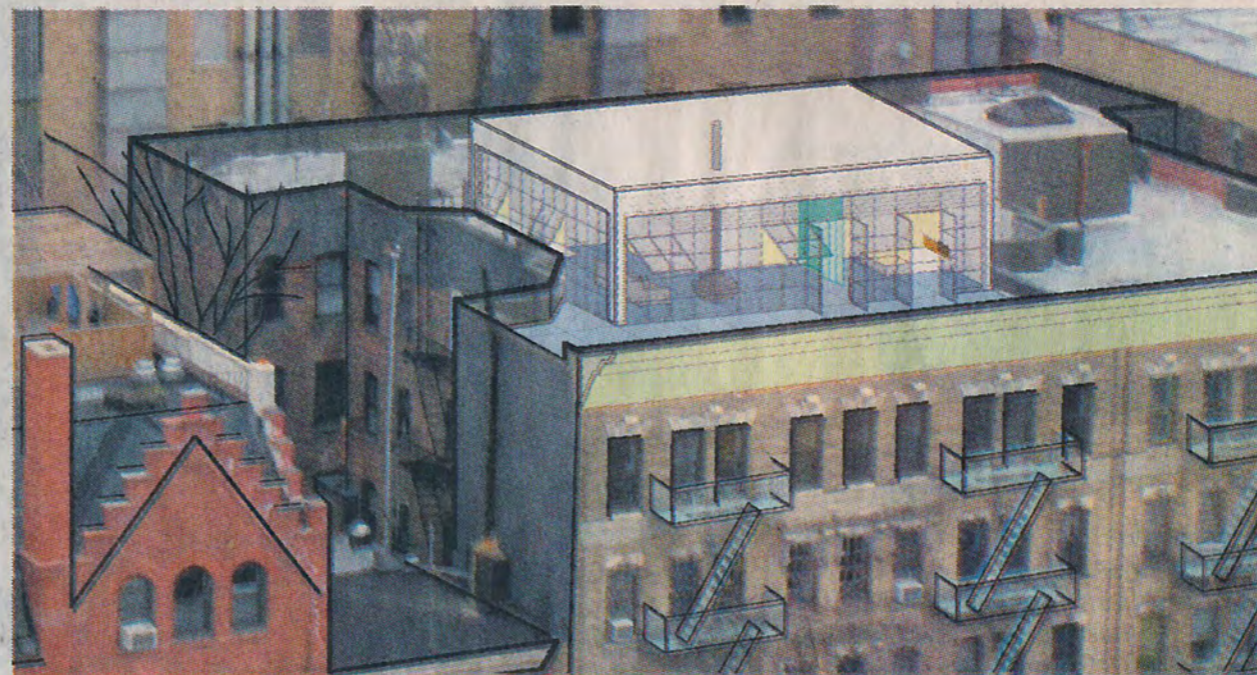
Instead, she spoke of Paris.

"What this building needs is one of those little iron-caged elevators, like they have in a building I'm working on over there," she said. "It could fit right into the stairwell." How cosmopolitan.

She also took a cosmopolitan approach to how she might renovate, at least on paper, the adjacent apartments at 315 East 12th Street, between First and Second Avenues. They are for sale at \$670,000 and \$600,000 unrenovated, with no co-op board approval needed and down payments of 10 percent.

Separately, they are less than inspiring, but "together they could be wonderful," Ms. Goolrick exclaimed, whipping off her Dr. Zhivago black toque and her cream-colored coat, tossing it on the (minimal) kitchen counter in one of the apartments and getting out her tape measure.

Ms. Goolrick — who in addition to her work on apartments in Paris and New York City is designing desktop accessories for the Museum of Modern Art — peeked into the small bathroom, and nodded. "Yes, an-



Rendering by Jody Brantner and Page Goolrick

other window — another exposure." The apartments have three exposures and, not surprisingly for the top floor, lots of light.

And there, in the distance, was the Williamsburg Bridge, silhouetted in the skyline.

Right now, the apartments are cut up into two handfuls of small rooms, too many to really visualize

without a floor plan. The partitions are not logical; in one, you walk through the front door and into the kitchen, which you have to traverse before entering the living room — how delightful for the cook.

"Let's get rid of the all the partitions!" said Ms.

NO STONES THROWN

Page Goolrick would add a glass-enclosed penthouse atop two combined apartments on East 12th Street. It would be set back about 10 feet, providing a generous terrace.

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SKETCH PAD

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Goolrick, and no one objected, even if there are vaguely original details: some moldings under the windows, for instance. But the apartments cry out not for gutting — because the plaster looks firm on the walls and the floorboards look solid — but for a more nuanced remake. The apartments have “good bones,” she said, complete with nine-foot ceilings (she measured them). Combined, they could make a grand three-bedroom.

“Right now,” she said, “the building is better than the apartment.”

Walking around, and having dreamed up the idea of combining the apartments, she saw new possibilities: “hidden pocket doors, so if you wanted, you could see the whole sweep across the front of the building: nine south-facing windows.”

The tiny bathrooms and the Americans With Disabilities Act would pose a challenge, she said, “with all those A.D.A. regulations that come into play if we want to expand.” Even though the apartments are on the sixth floor of a walk-up building, the disabilities act still is relevant. (Perhaps its proponents were anticipating that little French elevator.)

Ms. Goolrick walked back out into the corridor and stood in the hall outside the two apartments. “If we’re combining the apartments, why not ask the co-op board if we can buy this space and fold it into the apartment?” she said.

That’s a possibility; co-op boards have increasingly been selling off unused or redundant space to shareholders.

Now, Ms. Goolrick said, she was ready to climb yet another flight: to the roof. And what a roof it was! While many New York City roofs are full of pesky vents and water towers, this one seemed relatively empty, especially in the all-important space over the two apartments.

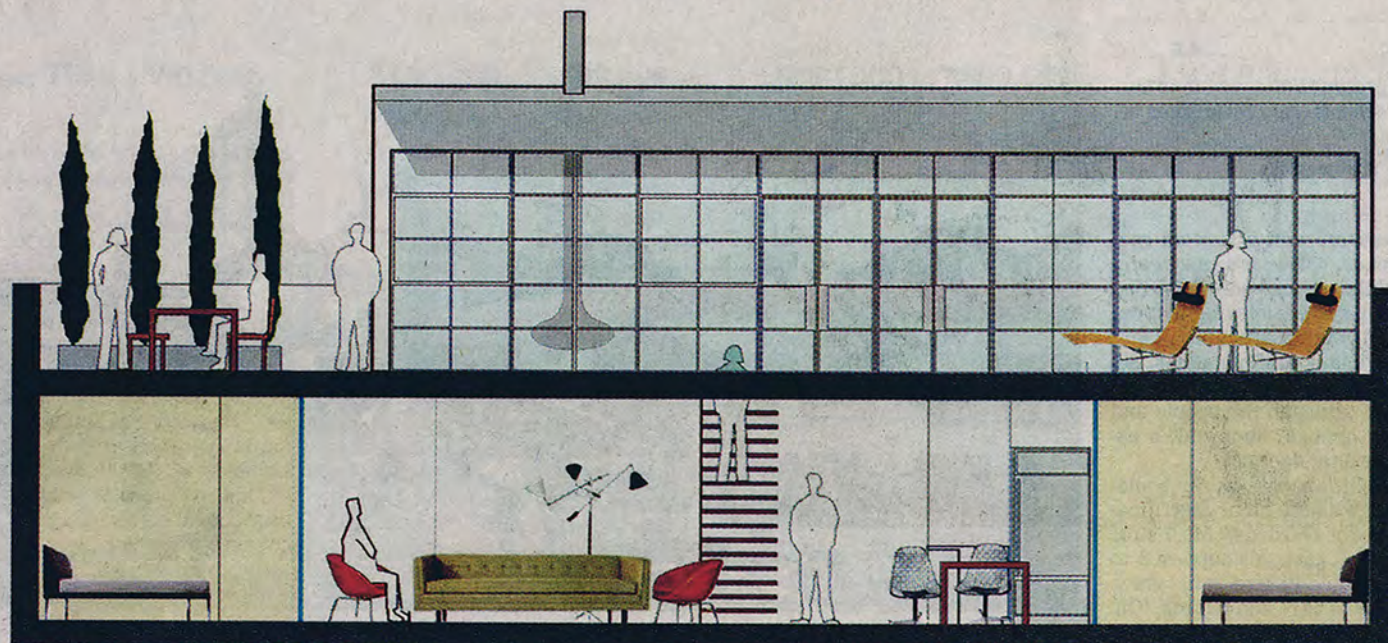
She got out her camera and started shooting, leaning out rather dangerously over the parapet, and talking enthusiastically to no one in particular. “What about the roof — is it buildable?” she asked Leslie Lalehzar of the Warburg Realty Partnership, the listing agent.

Ms. Lalehzar replied that the sponsor — the building’s owner, who is selling off the apartments — had not decided yet.

“Perfect!” Ms. Goolrick said.

ONLINE: AUDIO SLIDE SHOW

Page Goolrick combines two apartments in the East Village and creates a light-filled penthouse. nytimes.com/realestate.



Renderings by Jody Brantner and Page Goolrick



MIND'S EYE

Page Goolrick, right, would use privacy glass to partition off the downstairs bedrooms at opposite ends of the combined apartment. The steel-windowed penthouse, left, would have a view of the Williamsburg Bridge in the distance.



Michael Falco for The New York Times

A week later, she had all she needed to design her proposal: one combined apartment with a glassy-band-shell sort of penthouse for the roof.

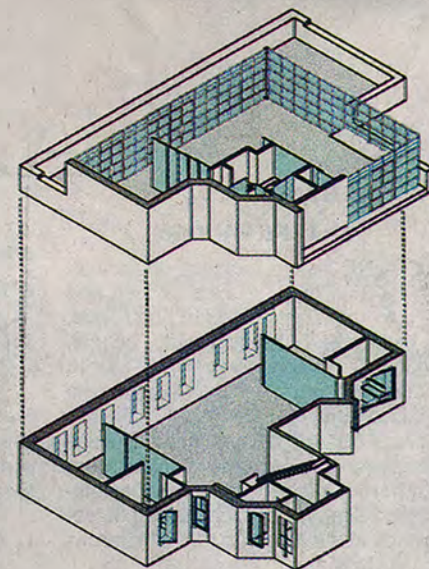
“This was a coincidence,” she said, “because we’re currently doing three projects where we combine two or three apartments.”

But this one, the fantasy combination, was even more like a maze than the others, she said. She and her assistant Jody Brantner “joked about doing the drawings, aided by a little white rat,” Ms. Goolrick said.

In her solution, she eschewed her earlier

idea for omnipresent pocket doors, substituting privacy glass for the partitions, which would change from near transparent to opaque at the flip of a switch. The downstairs bedrooms are set at opposite ends of the combined apartment, giving privacy to several age groups in a family.

“When I came in, all I thought was, ‘What dingy little apartments,’” she said. “But when you take out the walls, it’s a tabula rasa. The place cries out to be excavated.” On the roof, Ms. Goolrick has placed a loft-like, steel-windowed penthouse, where the new owners — whoever they are — could sit



DOUBLING THE SPACE

The new penthouse and terrace would follow the footprint — more or less — of the combined apartments below.

THE SPECS

Sketch Pad focuses on an apartment, loft, house or shack now for sale that has unrealized potential.

Each month, a different architect or designer is asked to create a vision of what the place might look like.

There are no guarantees that the plans would be approved by co-op boards, municipal building departments or planning boards. But they can help real estate shoppers learn to see past ugly paint, too-small kitchens and a warren of rooms.

DESIGNERS

Page Goolrick and Jody Brantner
Page Goolrick Architect
(212) 219-3666

PROPERTY

Two adjoining co-op apartments on the top floor of 315 East 12th Street, priced at \$670,000 and \$600,000 unrenovated.

RENOVATION COST

\$300,000 to \$400,000 for combining and remaking the apartments or \$800,000 to \$1.2 million including a glass and steel penthouse.

REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Leslie Lalehzar
Warburg Realty Partnership
(212) 327-9657

and look out at the bridge.

(The rear elevation of the penthouse is almost windowless because it looks up at a much taller office building, with what seems like miles of ugly ductwork crawling up the side.)

And even though the beige brick tenement building is not a landmark or even in a landmark district, the architect has set the penthouse back about 10 feet, making it invisible from the street — and, of course, making a stylish terrace.

And, finally, what about that elevator? She looked sheepish. “Well, I’d like to,” she said, thinking back to Paris. “We’re working in a building on the Île de la Cité, and it costs only about \$10,000 a floor for a small hydraulic elevator. That would be \$50,000 for five floors.”

“But the rules are different here in the United States. They probably wouldn’t let you.” She sighed. “I’ll add it to my wish list for this project, though.”