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Blogging From the Five Boroughs

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Big Deal | Hudson St. Penthouse Back on the Market

By *MARC SANTORA*

Marilynn K. Yee/The New York Times A penthouse blocks from the Holland Tunnel has 4,500 square feet of outdoor space.

New York City can seem like a mighty unpleasant place if you're trying to get into or out of the Holland Tunnel.

The horns, the gridlock and the crush of cars competing for fewer and fewer lanes — it is easy to wonder who would live amid such madness in the northern reaches of TriBeCa. What misery it must be for those poor apartment dwellers.

Well, not exactly poor.

High above Hudson Street, the most expensive apartment ever sold south of Columbus Circle when it went for \$30.5 million in 2009 is going back on the market, looking to break records again with an asking price of \$45 million.

The duplex penthouse atop the 14-story Art Deco former industrial building at [145 Hudson Street](#) feels as if it were not in the same universe as the clogged streets below.

It is a glass box in the sky, with panoramic views. Designed by the architect James Carpenter, who is known for his work with glass structures, it has nearly 7,500 square feet of interior space and 4,500 square feet of outdoor space on a wraparound terrace. There are two stairways and three fireplaces, and customized millwork in plain-sawn cherry wood throughout.

As one might expect at such a high price point, there are unusual features like a climate-control system, self-adjusting lighting, and walls that allow artwork to be hung without fear of damage from sunlight.

Marilynn K. Yee/The New York Times The penthouse has two staircases.

The current owner allowed a tour on the condition that he not be identified and that no photos be taken of his extensive art collection, which made full use of the specially designed walls.

“Everything is customized to the nth degree,” said Leonard Steinberg, a managing director of Prudential Douglas Elliman, the broker handling the sale.

Real Estate Highlights

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The apartment has an open and modern aesthetic, with polished concrete complementing all the glass. On the main floor, insulated glass panel dividers can either be closed to create more intimate spaces, or opened, to create a larger one.

Mr. Steinberg said that while the penthouse had a modern feel, the terrace reflected the building's Art Deco origins, with restored parapets that provide both architectural detail and a sense of privacy not found in any other penthouse in the area.

In fact, this was the second go at creating a penthouse at this property. The original design and construction ran into trouble after the [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#) found that it was not appropriate for the neighborhood.

For years, enraged residents were unable to move into their apartments because the commission's decision kept the building — known as Skylofts — from getting its certificate of occupancy. In 2005, the developers were forced to tear down the original penthouse. Mr. Steinberg said that after this episode, they decided to up the ante, creating the current duplex penthouse in its place.

Looking out at the traffic circle around Hudson Square, rendered mute by the thick glass walls, Mr. Steinberg said that although the tunnel might evoke thoughts of aggravation, the traffic was in reality worse in other areas.

"It is probably 20 percent of the traffic at Fifth Avenue and 75th Street," he said.

Just Up the Street, Too, 'You Sleep Extremely Well'

When the fashion photographer [Antoine Verglas](#) bought his apartment at 169 Hudson in 2001, he viewed the tunnel with some trepidation.

But, after years of living and working out of his 4,400-square-foot loft, which sold late last month for \$5.2 million, it was hardly noticeable, he said.

"When I was looking for a new space, I looked at where I thought real estate could get more value in the future," Mr. Verglas said, noting that he had made several other real estate investments in the city over the years. "I was a little bit concerned about the traffic. But it is really only Thursday and Friday evening when it is a bit congested."

He said congestion on the streets around his new studio on Wooster Street was about the same, noting, "There is traffic everywhere."

In fact, although the real estate values in TriBeCa began their rapid ascent in the 1990s, the northern stretches of the neighborhood, especially the streets surrounding the tunnel, took a bit longer to catch on with wealthy buyers.

Mr. Verglas bought the Hudson Street apartment, which then was just raw space, for \$1.3 million. He recalled that when he first moved in, the area retained some of the grittiness

that one might expect in an area that until a decade or two ago was more known for exhaust fumes than luxury properties.

But soon after he arrived, he said, other celebrities were also drawn to the property, including the rapper

Antoine Verglas A loft at 169 Hudson comes with a translucent tub.

Sean Combs. Mr. Verglas designed his apartment as a three-bedroom space, but also maximized its potential as a photo studio, including a translucent bathtub that he said felt something like a swimming pool — a useful amenity when your clients include Sports Illustrated swimsuit models.

He was not thinking about selling until his broker, Richard Orenstein of Halstead Property, suggested that he could find a buyer, especially because there were so few luxury apartments on the market at the moment.

Mr. Verglas decided to take his advice. But he will miss the neighborhood around the tunnel.

“In reality,” he said, “TriBeCa is pretty quiet at night. You sleep extremely well.”