

# GOTHAM<sup>®</sup>

M A G A Z I N E

A custom-made, hand-carved alabaster and brass chandelier hangs from the 20-foot ceiling of the foyer. It lights up the limestone-coated steel staircase, which was the most challenging renovation feat. "I made it more sweeping than the original, to go with the drama of the apartment," says Carol E. Levy. "They had to bring it in pieces and weld it here, and the railing was handmade in Brooklyn. We saw the whole staircase being made.... We have the staircase of our dreams. It makes a statement and really separates the private and public rooms."

## Solid as a Rock

Carol E. Levy finds home sweet home in the legendary Beresford.  
*by Jennifer Gould Keil • photographs by Marco Ricca*



The 50-foot hallway on the upper level is daughters Chloe and Camryn's racetrack for their plasma cars—aerodynamic mini cars that speed up and down the corridor. Levy designed the custom limestone moldings and corbels on all the archways—three in the upper hallway and two in the foyer—to accentuate the architectural design.



The living room walls are custom-painted honey beige to look like limestone. Levy even designed the hardwood floors, which display a subtle herringbone pattern in oak, with mahogany and maple trim on the edges. She joined the living room with a sunroom to create a larger, more welcoming space with “a wall of seven windows out to the terrace, with extraordinary light.” OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: The eat-in kitchen includes European-made stainless steel and glass cabinetry, including a large pantry with pull-out stainless steel drawers and a pop-up stainless steel step-stool. The back of each piece of the glass-tile backsplash was also hand painted by an artist in silver foil. “Installation—without breaking or cracking any tiles—was a delicate matter,” says Levy, adding, “Each four-inch-by-four-inch glass tile cost more than a 16-by-16-inch piece of limestone.” BOTTOM: The upstairs library/study offers a sense of cozy tranquility, thanks in part to the sweeping park and reservoir views.

THERE’S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT LIVING IN THE BERESFORD, the legendary Upper West Side prewar building. So it shouldn’t come as a surprise that Carol E. Levy—a Columbia-educated former actress and owner-president of Carol E. Levy Real Estate—jumped at the chance to create her dream home at this fabled address.

“I always wanted to live here,” says Levy of the 1929 Art Deco apartment complex built by architect Emery Roth, who also created some of the city’s most memorable, romantic, and ornate buildings—including the San Remo, the Ardsley, and the El Dorado, which also dot Central Park West. “It’s my dream castle in the clouds.”

Levy is an admitted Type A personality who sells more than 60 apartments a year and has been considered one of the city’s top independent brokers for the past 18 years. (Her husband, Chris Lipman, joined her company seven years ago after leaving C2 Media, an international digital imaging firm, where he was a partner.) She’s also no stranger to luxury living, having



grown up in a Pittsburgh mansion just down the street from the Mellons and other wealthy families. But after falling in love with Manhattan—and her husband—Levy decided she wanted to combine a fast-paced urban lifestyle with the joys of living on Central Park West.

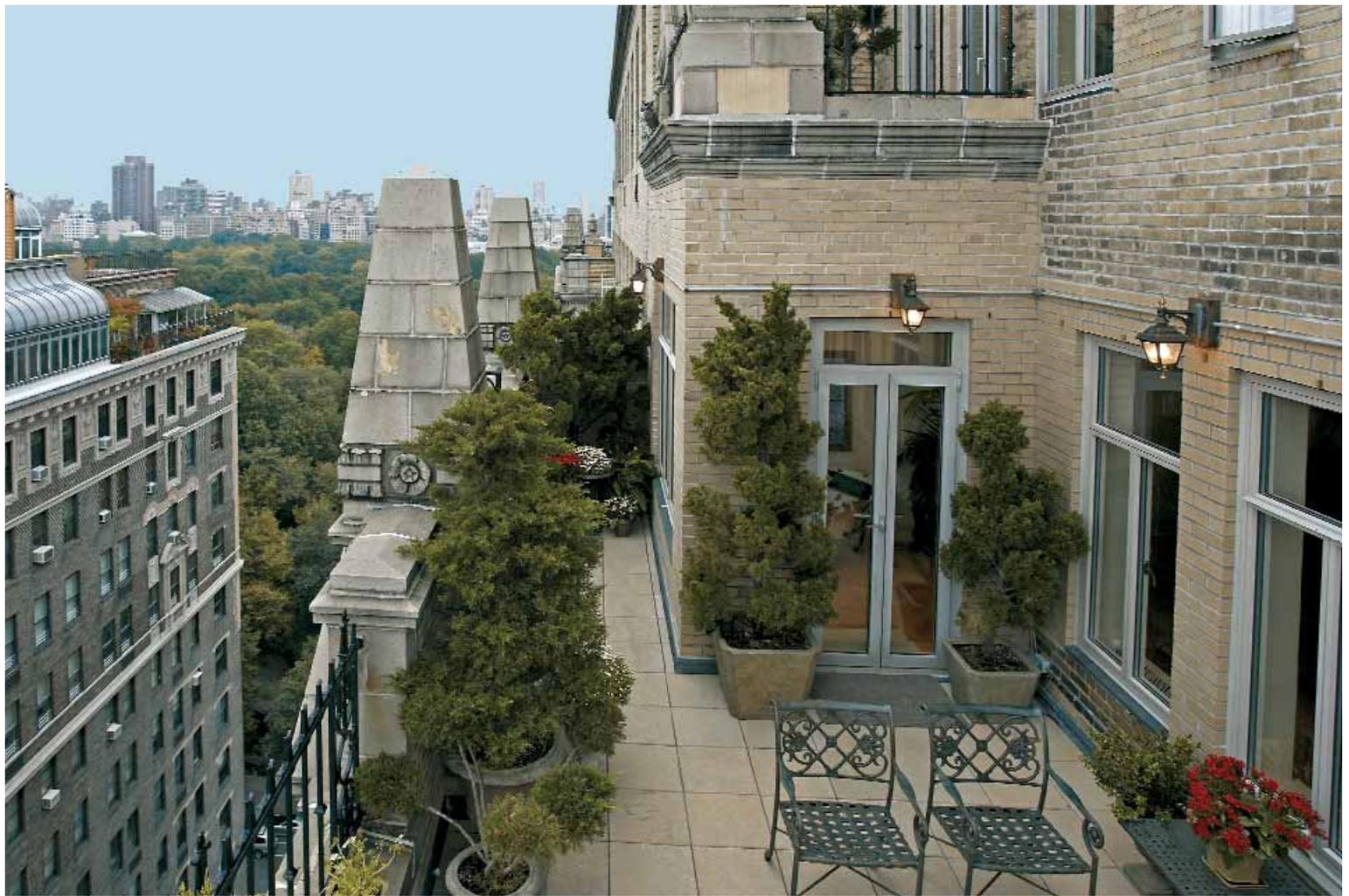
Today, clad in a black minidress, fishnet stockings, and heels, the property pro leads me through her 11-room duplex with its dramatic sweeping staircase, two terraces, and park views. Included in the spacious residence are six bedrooms, four baths, a media room and library, dining room, sunroom, stainless steel gourmet kitchen, 10-foot ceilings, and two wood-burning fireplaces. “I like the eclectic, castle-style, prewar background with the contemporary furniture—the monotone background and honey beige-colored walls are livened up with modern art, shots of color, and antique posters,” she says.

Levy and her husband originally moved into the Beresford 15 years ago. Then in 1998 they sold their first apartment in the building and closed on a second. Five years ago, with their family growing (the couple has two daughters, Chloe, eight, and Camryn, six), they bought the apartment directly below them, which had once been joined to their space as a duplex; that configuration had been split up decades ago, so Levy made it her mission to return the





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Carol E. Levy, Chris Lipman, and their daughters, Chloe and Camryn, all love their home's location—especially its close proximity to the park; a sunny corner of the home displays some of the family's art; the large limestone guest bathroom, with an 11-foot ceiling, is made out of limestone tiles and moldings. "It was a tedious two-month installation," says Levy. "I handpicked all the tiles, which go up to the ceiling and frame the built-in custom mirror"; Chloe, Camryn, and their friends love to watch the Disney Channel on the 70-inch projection TV in Chloe's hot pink bedroom with its canopy trundle daybed. OPPOSITE PAGE: "We love our views and outdoor space. It's the ultimate glamour, to have your own little piece of the outdoors," Levy says. "It's forever green outside. We joke that Chris can recite Shakespeare to me from the downstairs terrace when I'm on the upstairs one. We also have stereo speakers, a limestone water fountain, and a blow-up pool for the kids in warm weather."



units to their original two-story grandeur.

The extensive renovation cost about \$2 million (after a layout of \$5 million for the combined 5,000 square feet of space, in addition to 700 square feet of terraces), but the duplex is now estimated to be worth at least \$20 million. The gut redesign took approximately a year, and the Levys stayed put through most of the work, save for two vacations at two weeks a pop during the noisiest episodes.

Levy, who regularly oversees remodeling projects for her clients, spared no expense on her own home, which she designed and decorated with the help of architect Kay Leong, who “tweaked” when necessary. She also counted on her husband as a consultant: “He studied architecture at the Cooper Union and has great taste!” she says admiringly.

The dwelling’s 10-inch-high plaster crown moldings were created by New York experts for about \$150,000 (wood moldings would have cost much less) and took six months to complete. “The contractor sent us to Long Island City, where artisans who’d made templates of our ceilings poured plaster into moldings. It was like being in a small factory in Italy,” Levy says, adding that she also worked with two artists who hand-painted all the walls a honey brown to imitate limestone.

“My favorite part of the apartment is the terraces,” she says, explaining that they work well for the parties and charity events she hosts at home, and one even houses a blow-up pool in the summer for the girls. “But I also love the dramatic limestone foyer with the 20-foot ceiling and sweeping staircase.” In fact, it’s this limestone-covered steel, wrought iron, and brass-railed staircase—which turned into even more of a showpiece than it was in the original plan—that Levy considers the job’s biggest architectural accomplishment. It was all hand built and

welded in place in the apartment for a total price of about \$200,000.

As for the duplex’s fixtures and furnishings, “I love the prewar minimal look with a mix of contemporary furniture, artwork, and sculptures, with some antiques,” Levy explains. The home’s artwork includes abstract oil paintings by Peter Max, modern steel and brass sculptures, antique European posters, and antique marble pedestals. The alabaster living room sconces and foyer and dining room chandeliers were all custom made and hand carved. Levy also ended up snagging an original fireplace mantel that another apartment owner had thrown out (that duplex was later bought by Bob Weinstein).

Though the project took a year, the wait was worth it, especially for daughter Chloe, whose hot pink bedroom also includes a 70-inch projection TV above a canopied trundle daybed near a built-in maple desk and bookcases.

Levy and her family (and, most likely, the building’s other residents, who include Jerry Seinfeld, John McEnroe, and film director Sidney Lumet) love most everything about the Beresford, particularly its location at Central Park West and 81st Street: It overlooks the park and the American Museum of Natural History, and each year the Thanksgiving Day parade passes by its windows.

And the real estate whiz is “invested” in the building as more than just an owner. Levy (also considered the go-to broker for the building) created the Beresford’s 2,000-square-foot health club; organizes the building’s annual Halloween party; and is at work on its first children’s playground.

As if that weren’t enough, she’s also wrapping up the filming of “a new real estate TV series for a major network” in which she’ll star. The show, tentatively called *Your Awesome Apartment!*, is all about urban renovations.

This is definitely a woman to watch. [G]