

Spotlight: Zakrzewski + Hyde Architects

This firm designed the upscale 304 Spring Street, an 11-story SoHo condominium set to open in September. Partner Marianne Hyde talks to us about this project, past and future endeavors, and the ins and outs of designing and building in the Big Apple.





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By [Marianne Hyde](#)

Marianne Hyde, partner of Zakrzewski + Hyde Architects, answers some questions about designing in the Big Apple, and shares a bit about her firm's work.

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With so much iconic architecture, as well as building boom, in the Big Apple, it's no wonder that the city that never sleeps draws students of design and architecture on a regular basis. Two such individuals were Marianne Hyde and Stas Zakrzewski, who both came to New York to finish their education in architecture in the 1990's. Following graduation, Zakrzewski worked for Wendy Evans Joseph and Maya Lin, while Hyde went to work for Raphael Vinoly and SOM, before heading to the smaller design firms. "I feel as if this gave me a nice overview of the challenges of working on large and small projects," comments Hyde. Licensed in New York since 2000, the pair went off on their own and founded their practice, Zakrzewski + Hyde Architects, in 2002. We ask Hyde her thoughts on design (and its obstacles) in the city, and to tell us about a few projects, including the recently opened 304 Spring Street, an upscale condominium in SoHo.

Do you feel that this city influences and inspires you?

MH: Absolutely. In a city that has access to so much design information, it is impossible not to be influenced. Also, much of what we design considers the needs of New Yorkers that may be different from other clients. For example, the concept of "refuge" becomes a priority in a city of eight million people. We all find the need to shut out a bit of the stimulation. Another site-specific concept found here is the capturing of a specific view, or if you push that concept in a different direction, you begin to investigate voyeurism. Most of us spend a lot of time looking out of our windows, watching street life, or our neighbors across the street, the city lights going on, or the traffic on the river. Developing spaces that shield or accentuate this comes into the design process.

How have your designs changed from being in New York?

MH: I think our design has changed because we have become more agile at manipulating the constraints of designing in New York. We are constantly learning and applying our knowledge to the next project.

What challenges and obstacles in general do you find in designing residential spaces in New York?

MH: The city has its specific set of building codes and requires political maneuvering, especially if it's a co-op or condo. Those issues become fairly standard with practice though. Perhaps the more difficult element of designing interiors in New York is the constraint of having to work within the limits of the apartment as defined by the co-op or condo. For example, if you want to relocate a poorly situated bathroom within an apartment building, it requires the approval of the co-op for permission within their apartment. Working on a freestanding house, you do not have this required approval by your neighbors to do work within your own home. This issue is similar when working on a new building, except that you are dealing with zoning laws, building code, and city agencies.

Do you feel that there are more obstacles in this city compared to any other you've designed in?

MH: If we find an idea in the design process that is compelling but requires approval from either a co-op board or the city, we try to present the concept as clearly as possible using our drawings, photo montages, etc. We argue the strengths of the concept and explain the impact (or lack of impact) on the building and neighborhood. That being said, I don't think there are more obstacles in this city—they are just different. In the end, the challenge of good design is working within the constraints, whether physical or budgetary, and making it beautiful.

How do tastes differ between most residential clients in New York and other cities?

MH: That varies greatly. The most important thing is that there is an aesthetic match between the client and the architect. New Yorkers tend to be very educated consumers who have access to a number of showrooms, so they often bring interesting materials, products, and ideas to the project. We like that because we think design, especially residential, should be a dialogue between architect and client.

How did you land the job for 304 Spring Street?

MH: We were just finishing a penthouse addition for a client, who'd recently turned his interests toward developing. He approached us about designing a new building from the ground up—taking us off guard. We were of course excited because it was a great project and we already had a working relationship with the client.

What was the client looking to do, design-wise?

MH: He wanted something modern, with a facade that was elegant, and interiors that were light-filled. There was a trend toward glass curtain walls which we chose not to do because we didn't want the building to be one of the many similar looking curtain-wall ones sprouting up all over the city. So we created a custom walnut window system instead.

How much detailing were you involved with?

MH: We designed or specified everything, inside and out. That is what made this project so much fun—there wasn't disconnection between the inside and outside. Often you see projects where the exterior is highly considered, but the development of the interior is neglected, or you have one architect for the building envelope and another for the interiors, and the two aspects of the building are mismatched. We chose everything from the color of the grout between the bricks to the bathroom faucet.

Tell us about a couple of these design details.

MH: We worked with an Italian kitchen manufacturer to design and detail all of the kitchens. We were fortunate because our client appreciates the difference between basic and refined finishes. The custom window units are 8-foot high, walnut faced on the interior, and aluminum clad or stainless steel on the exterior. The rhythm of the windows is irregular, creating a varied elevation, as well as allowing each unit to have its own individual views.

What was your ArtBox project?

MH: It was a competition entry for a cheap, durable, easily constructed multifunctional performance space. We chose to explore with cardboard because it's inexpensive, lightweight, and recyclable. We worked with Arup engineers to design the structure.

How did you fare, and did anything come out of this?

We received an honorable mention and a citation from the New York AIA chapter. We are now hoping to find someone to build it. In the end, it was a lot of fun, and allowed us to explore our interest in sustainable architecture.

What's a recently-completed non-residential project of yours?

MH: Last year we completed Pasha, an upscale 2,700-square-foot salon with a terrace in the Armani building on Madison. The strategy was to use continuous surfaces of materials folded into planes and volumes to envelope the various services of the salon, which were articulated in a contrasting material or texture.

What was the materials palette then?

MH: They were consciously dissimilar: a dark walnut wood wall on the floor wraps up the wall to create a backdrop for the lighter, more elegant cutting stations. The glass wall of the terrace is intersected with a dark plane of walnut creating an office for the salon manager. An 8-foot-long Corian trough sink has been designed to allow water to slowly trickle continuously along the bottom surface to create a sleek, shiny surface.

Did anything inspire this space's design?

MH: The inspiration was to create a highly tactile experience for the client. The juxtapositions of materials and surfaces were chosen to organize the space by program, as well as quietly stimulate the senses.

What's on the boards for your firm?

MH: We have a couple of penthouse additions that are in the preliminary zoning and design stages. We love these projects because there are more opportunities to develop interesting spatial sequences. In response to our proposal for inhabiting an abandoned water tower, which was shown in the New York Times, we've been approached by a client who has a building with an amazing water tower structure, which he would like us to develop along with an adjacent empty lot. It could be a great project since it has a lot of potential and is unusual.

slide show



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Trading Spaces



A hedge fund in SoHo proves that not all financial transactions have to take place in hushed-down settings. Thanks to Irwin Design, desks go down amid 10,000 square feet of steel, glass, concrete, marble, and walnut.