

Chic Comfort

A Tribeca loft combines downtown ambiance with upscale style

written by Barbara A. Nadel, FAIA

In a New York minute, this light and airy urban loft signals a downtown attitude with simplicity, style, color, and comfort. The single-family residence is located in lower Manhattan, an area known as Tribeca, or the Triangle Below Canal Street. Originally known as the Butter and Eggs District, Tribeca—one of New York City's oldest neighborhoods—has changed dramatically over the last century, from an industrial zone to an upscale residential and commercial district. In recent years, as demand for downtown domiciles increased and heavy industrial occupancies left for the outer boroughs and beyond, Tribeca's older buildings slowly converted their great interior expanses of high-ceiling space to upscale residences for artists, photographers, designers, and others seeking an open-plan lifestyle.

Many of Tribeca's modest and architecturally sedate streetfront facades are a stark contrast to the spectacular light and airy spaces inside, adding to the neighborhood's cachet and desirability. Because the area is still emerging and growing, the modern design of this apartment is an appropriate expression of timeless simplicity, form and function, in the manner of French architect Le Corbusier.

The charge for New York architect Alexander Gorlin was to design a residence within the confines of this 2000-square-foot triangular space. The owners, a young couple with an infant, required three bedrooms: a master, child's and nanny's, along with living and support spaces.

Major design challenges were twofold: first, to develop a workable floor plan for a triangular-shaped space with the entrance on the short side of the triangle; and second, to provide natural light in the bedrooms, on the triangle's interior side. Gorlin's solution provided concave and convex walls to punctuate the otherwise linear planes and angular space. He added skylights in the bedrooms to ensure these living areas receive natural light.

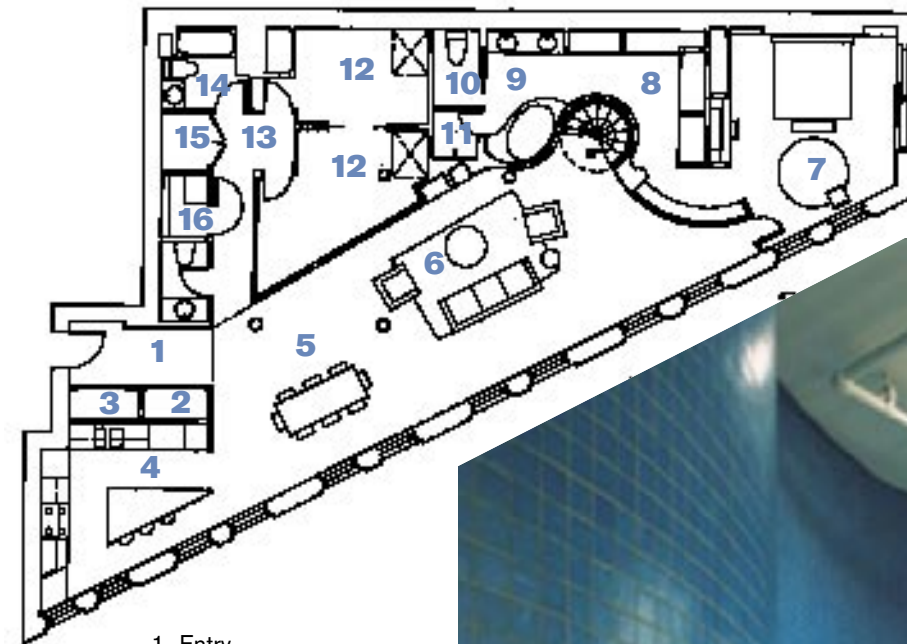
At the project outset, renovations stripped existing materials down to the building's structural frame, exposing walls and columns. Within this basic volume, the architect organized the floor plan around a central living area with a triangular-shaped kitchen work island, parallel to the angles of the overall space. The functional, industrial-style kitchen cabinets and stainless steel countertops reflect the rays of sunlight streaming in from

■ The spacious living room has a circular staircase that leads to a private roof garden and provides a vertical source of light from above. This room spans the longest side of the triangular plan.





■ In contrast to the angular space and linear planes of the loft, Gorlin provided occasional Concave and convex walls as seen here with the bookcase. The bold shapes and color create a unique take on a traditional bookcase.



- 1- Entry
- 2- Closet
- 3- Powder Room
- 4- Kitchen
- 5- Dining
- 6- Living Room
- 7- Master Bedroom
- 8- Walk-in Closet
- 9- Master Bathroom
- 10- Toilet
- 11- Shower
- 12- Bedroom
- 13- Hall
- 14- Bathroom
- 15- Mechanical Equipment
- 16- Laundry Room



■ The curving wall gently shapes this exotic bathroom, covered in imported cobalt glass tile. Here, natural hardwood floors are continued from throughout the loft apartment.



the opposite windows, as well as a practical, no-nonsense approach to New York's hectic urban pace. Throughout the living areas, track and task lighting supplement natural daylight from the expansive west window wall.

At the opposite end of the space, by the living room, a spiral staircase set within a curved wall leads to the roof garden, and provides a vertical source of light from above. Behind the sinuous wall's public side lies the master bathroom tub and shower, sculpted from within the curves. There, imported

■ One of the requirements the client had was space to house an art collection. In order to accommodate this, walls that did not exist before were designed as seen in the dining area.

cobalt blue wall tile and natural hardwood floors create a cool, private sanctuary for body and soul. The crisp, uncluttered lines of bathroom finishes, textures, and fixtures suggest a spartan Scandinavian simplicity to the overall design aesthetic.

Through the use of natural, durable materials and by maximizing natural light, this urban aerie offers a quiet, soothing respite from the noise and bustling pedestrian activity on the city streets below. ■

■ The triangular-shaped kitchen work island is parallel to the angles of the overall space, accentuating the unique shape and character of the loft.

Architect: Alexander Gorlin,
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