

MAY 7, 2013 - JESSICA COHEN IN THE NEWS - By Emily Frost

## Inside the Beloved Homes of Upper West Siders

UPPER WEST SIDE — No one knows the loyalty felt by lifelong Upper West Siders — and those who seek to join their ranks — as well as real estate agent Jessica Cohen.

Cohen, who works with Douglas Elliman, has become an expert in Upper West Side real estate, learning all the subtle nuances of the neighborhood, from which places offer a charming pre-war feel to where to find the most contemporary amenities. Thanks to her, DNAinfo.com New York has gotten a peek inside some of the Upper West Side's most beautiful apartments.

“People get accustomed to their blocks,” said Cohen, who spends much of her time working a 30-block radius of homes from West 59th to West 90th streets. She added that many of her clients come with a very narrow map of where they're looking to live.

“So many people will only go from 67 to 72 [streets] or only a few blocks west of the park,” she said. They're also always seeking proximity to one of the many subway lines in the area, the A/C/B/D or the 1/2/3.

While everyone wants to be close to the park, said Cohen, she helps guide people to the most appropriate destinations. Those looking for state-of-the-art amenities and ten-and-a-half-foot ceilings shouldn't get their hearts set on living in the first few blocks from Central Park West — where landmark restrictions limit ceiling and building height.

She helps guide new families moving to the neighborhood in search of proximity to PS 199 and PS 87, known stand-out public schools in the district, as well as retirees seeking out a pied a terre with easy access to Lincoln Center and other cultural hubs.

### West 86th Street

Victoria and Josh Feltman and their 18-month-old son George moved into their three-bedroom, 1,800-square-foot apartment on West 86th Street



A Peek Inside Some of the Most Interesting Apartments on the Upper West Side

between Riverside Drive and West End Avenue in June of 2010. It cost around \$2 million.

The couple was looking for a home that could fit an expanding family, but had character.

“We loved pre-war apartments, but in a lot of pre-war apartments you have small bathrooms and closets,” said Feltman.

When she and her husband saw their co-op apartment, which was built in 1927, they wanted it immediately. The spatial issues they were concerned with were solved by a renovation by the former owners that combined a one-bedroom unit with a two-bedroom unit, making the layout become more expansive and functional. One of the kitchens became a small office nook where Feltman and her husband tuck away their computers, and there's a large entry space with a whole wall of closet space.

Feltman, a nutritionist and co-owner of the healthy eating company Apple to Zucchini, uses one of the extra bedrooms to meet with clients and stow guests. The room has a decidedly feminine feel with a pink chevron rug, pink accent paint and bright, and almost tropical feeling curtains.

But, decorating was a bit of battle, Feltman admits.

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“I think my husband’s tastes are much more modern than mine, but we wanted to preserve that pre-war feel and have it be comfortable.”

Decorator Colleen Simonds helped the couple find common ground in a Jonathan Adler-inspired style mixed with touches from ABC Home, known for its modern, colorful pieces.

For the most part Feltman loves the layout, but she said, “if I could change anything, I’d take out the wall and make it an open kitchen,” instead of having a separate formal dining room.

### West 69th Street

The Lincoln Spencer building was built in 1903, and like Feltman’s apartment, has units that are newly renovated and combine two units to make a more accommodating space for a family.

While the owners, the Novembre Family, was out, Cohen gave DNAinfo.com New York a tour of an eleventh floor three-bedroom apartment, which was renovated by Brian Shait.

After putting it on the market last year at \$3 million, the owners decided not to sell their roughly 1,500-square-foot apartment. Cohen said she had been “mobbed” with prospective buyers.

Located in the popular PS 199 school zone, Cohen said “people are willing to pay a premium to be in a good zone.”

With a washer/dryer, garbage disposal, Viking range, wine cooler and a bathtub imported from England, the apartment is decked out.

There are Italian hung radiators, which Cohen said are sleeker and cleaner than regular radiators, custom tiles in the kitchen reminiscent of the family’s home in Martha’s Vineyard and master bathroom hardware imported from England.

### West 76th Street

Tali Blankfeld, 28, moved into her parents’ new \$3.3 million apartment at The Harrison on West 76th Street at Amsterdam Avenue three years ago. With her parents in Texas, Blankfeld, a photographer, is enjoying the expansive east facing windows and the many amenities that come with the newly constructed building. Plus, she has a closet devoted only to shoes.

“I love just sitting here in the living room,” said Blankfeld, of the modern space with nearly floor to ceiling windows that face out on Amsterdam Avenue. “You can see the Museum of Natural History,” she said.

Blankfeld and her family have gone for a clean, modern look throughout the apartment.

The guest room is almost entirely white. “It kind of looks like a spa room,” Blankfeld shrugged.

“When we have guests we don’t want them to be overloaded. We want a clean look, nothing too cluttered.”

The spacious kitchen opens onto the living room and is ideal for a crowd, said Blankfeld.

“It’s great to cook with more than one person. Everyone has their own space,” she said.

And if Blankfeld wants to work off a big dinner she doesn’t have to brave the cold. Each apartment comes with memberships to Equinox.

Post-workout, Blankfeld enjoys recharging in the sauna that’s built into her shower.

“It really does have a zen feeling,” Blankfeld reflected on her apartment.

If Blankfeld wants a more festive atmosphere, she heads downstairs to the game room, lounge or outdoor patio.

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"I've had tons of barbecues outside," she said.

The lounge has midnight blue lacquered walls and leather chairs that make it reminiscent of a men's only den. A card table and kitchenette provide entertainment as does the ping pong table.

"My parents stayed and played ping pong until the wee hours," said Blankfeld.

A playroom down the hall looks more like a fancy preschool classroom than a building's play space.

"They do try to top each other," said Cohen of the new buildings' arms race to have the best play space.

### West 95th Street and Riverside Drive

Every now and then, you come across a New York City apartment so unique it becomes a neighborhood landmark.

Peter Guttman's Riverside Drive apartment draws out-of-town visitors, locals, and leaders of major cultural institutions to see his museum-like collection, drawn from traveling to more than 200 countries over his lifetime as an award-winning travel journalist and photographer.

The apartment has the luxury of sitting right on the water. Guttman and his 16-year-old son Chase describe the hawks that sit on their terrace and the peace of being next to nature in a busy metropolis.

Guttman is like other Upper West Siders who are proud of their location, nestled between two major parks.

"When you look out the window in the summer all you see are trees and in the winter you see the river. The idea of living in Manhattan and being in nature is incredibly important," he said.

Inside though, Guttman has amassed a dazzling collection of 1,450 objects in a relatively small residential apartment.

"It's sort of indescribable. It's a real life version of Pee-wee Herman's fun house," said Guttman.

Almost everything in the collection is handmade, from the neon signs to the African masks, with the exception of a lama fetus or two.

"Some people call this an extended branch of the Natural History Museum," said Guttman.

"In elementary school [at the Manhattan School for Children], we'd have the whole class over for a field trip," said Chase, who has followed in his father's footsteps, already traveling the world and garnering awards for his photography.

The collection, which comes from "every corner of the earth," includes rare objects like an 18th century horn from a Bhutanese monk, a silver dagger from Oman and wood carvings from Papua New Guinea.

The objects, which Guttman said he's spent hundreds of hours cataloging, form a mosaic of color and texture across the room, densely packed into every corner.

"People flip out when they come in," said Guttman, who said he fields frequent requests from people in his building who have guests in town and want to impress them.

Just as popular, said Guttman, is his yearly round of slideshows, where he shares where he's traveled for half the year and tells stories. Guttman packs around 100 people into his small apartment, many of whom have been coming to his shows for decades.

Guttman said he's considering pairing with a museum to showcase the collection alongside his photos. He may not be on Riverside Drive forever, but the collection will be passed on to future Guttman generations, starting with Chase, an eager collector himself.