

## **Superfund Chic: In Gowanus, Industrial Touches Aren't Just Affectations**



*The condo features a 'sculptural' staircase, skylights and painted white brick.*

The very word “Gowanus” seems to resist the possibility of glamor. Were the Brooklyn neighborhood’s famously fetid canal to vanish suddenly, there would still be that name—an unpleasant gulp of syllables, somehow reptilian in flavor. Until recently the province mostly of garages and machine shops, it is not the sort of place where one expects to find condos on the market for \$4.395 million.

But one evening last week, at an open house for the lower of two duplex apartments occupying a brick building at 459 Carroll Street, that’s just what we discovered. A former brush and ink factory dating to 1888, the structure was purchased by two couples in 2006, divided and outfitted for occupancy.

The lower unit, an airy abode of 3,300 square feet, is owned by artists and evinces a variation on Soho chic, rather than a take on the brownstone aesthetic of pricier neighborhoods nearby. Walls of clean, white-painted brick rise to high ceilings, while dark, intricately tooled radiators offer warmth and slatted skylights peer out at the world above. An open kitchen softens bright metallic appliances with a block counter of smooth, blonde wood.

Industrial styling notwithstanding, as we entered, we could smell neither the sulfur nor the gasoline of Gowanus’ traditional bouquet, detecting instead the unmistakable aroma of fine hors d’oeuvres. A small crowd composed chiefly of real estate agents invited by CORE listing brokers Doug Bowen and Paul Johansen moved over dark wood floors, sipping wine and plucking dainty toasts spread with sprouts, fennel and sea bass from passing trays.



*No fumes in evidence.*

“There really aren’t any comps for this,” Mr. Bowen said, meaning area properties of comparable style and not the asking price. “It’s a condo, but it’s a potentially attractive option for a townhouse buyer.”

One broker cooed over a swing hanging whimsically from the ceiling between the kitchen and dining space on great lengths of rope. Another offered an approving one-word appraisal: “Damn.” Yet a third considered that the sellers were “shooting for the moon.”

We ascended the “sculptural” staircase, wherein light wood steps climb inside a weathered-looking metal frame, to inspect a trio of simple and elegant sleeping quarters, and a sleek, lumbered roof deck.

The master bedroom had been configured as an artist’s studio, with an array of worktables, fabric rolls and small images attached to walls. We peeked through a window looking out onto Carroll Street, across which stands a dark brick building with graffitied garage doors. Outside, a man in mechanic’s garb wearing forearm tattoos buffed a late model BMW to high sheen.



*The building once housed a brush-and-ink factory.*