

american-architects

The Dillon

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View of 53rd Street façade with parallel projected sash



Even as other parts of the world build taller than the New York City and the rest of the United States, skyscrapers still get most of the attention in Manhattan. Yet low-rise buildings on an island defined by blocks and blocks of structures reaching for the sky can also offer architectural delight and innovation, as **The Dillon on West 53rd Street** attests. Architects Smith-Miller + Hawkinson answered some questions about their design, notable for its serrated glass wall and mix of housing typologies in the long and low building.

What were the circumstances of receiving the commission for this project?

SMH+ (Smith-Miller+Hawkinson Architects, LLP) has successfully completed an earlier residential project in New York for one of Mario Procida's partners at 322 Hicks Street in Brooklyn, New York. As the Hicks Street project was a design and commercial success, Mr. Procida elected to retain SMH+ for **the Dillon** project.

Can you describe your design process for the building?

SMH+ collaborated with Richard DeMarco, of Montroy Andersen, DeMarco Design Group Incorporated in the zoning and preliminary design process to assure compliance with all building law.

Once the permissible building envelope was established, Henry Smith-Miller, Christian Uhl and Richard DeMarco began the process of identifying different apartment typologies for inclusion in the building

volume. After considerable research and testing the “fit”, they settled on a Hybrid scheme, comprised of ground floor maisonettes, “skip-stop” duplexes and triplexes with penthouses, and conventional studio, one, two, three, four and five bedroom units. All apartments are served by an underground parking garage. The West 53st street façade is folded and creased to permit views eastward and westward along the street. The maisonettes are set back from the street by screened private entry courts.

How does the completed building compare to the project as designed? Were there any dramatic changes between the two and/or lessons learned during construction?

Slight changes in materials and interior dwelling unit configurations were made, but the conceptual basis of the project remained un-changed; that is, the presentation of a building typology unusual to New York City, a low rise high density residential building with diverse dwelling units, from studios to “skip-stop”, “thru-building” duplexes and street level Maisonettes, all served by a common below grade self parking garage.

How does the building compare to other projects in your office, be it the same or other building types?

SMH+ currently has a variety of building projects in the office; currently a US Federal Courthouse in Maryland, an Emergency Medical Services Facility in NYC, and new private residence in New Jersey.

How does the building relate to contemporary architectural trends, be it sustainability, technology, etc.?

The Dillon’s section and apartment plan configurations speaks to current sustainability objectives in that the majority are floor through, enjoying both southern and northern exposures, as well as cross ventilation and the “stack-effect”, resulting in a lessened demand for mechanical services.

Also the southern street side façade is by design, intelligent, meaning that a combination of low-e glass coating and directional film, insures energy conservation and occupant privacy from the street (view).

Are there any new/upcoming projects in your office that this building’s design and construction has influenced?

We are currently considering the inclusion of some of the building sectional and plan configurations in a new Hotel project.