

200 ELEVENTH AVENUE | SELLDORF ARCHITECTS

# THE HEIGHT OF CONVENIENCE

YOU CAN PARK YOUR CAR RIGHT OUTSIDE YOUR APARTMENT DOOR IN AN ANNABELLE SELLDORF-DESIGNED 19-STORY TOWER.

BY SUZANNE STEPHENS



It is a poorly kept secret that many Manhattanites own cars — even in a city that prides itself on a plethora of transit choices. The developer of 200 Eleventh Avenue condominiums at the western edge of Chelsea, where art galleries and apartment buildings have replaced light industry, knew this. But he did not just build underground parking in his new residential project; he created New York City's first apartment tower with a high-rise car elevator and private garages. “We wanted a building that would stand out in concept and architecture,” says Young Woo, the developer whose eponymous firm put together the \$41 million real estate deal with Urban Muse Management. Woo had seen automated high-rise parking being used in Japan and Korea and was certain that even in a city of pedestrians it would give his apartments a certain edge.

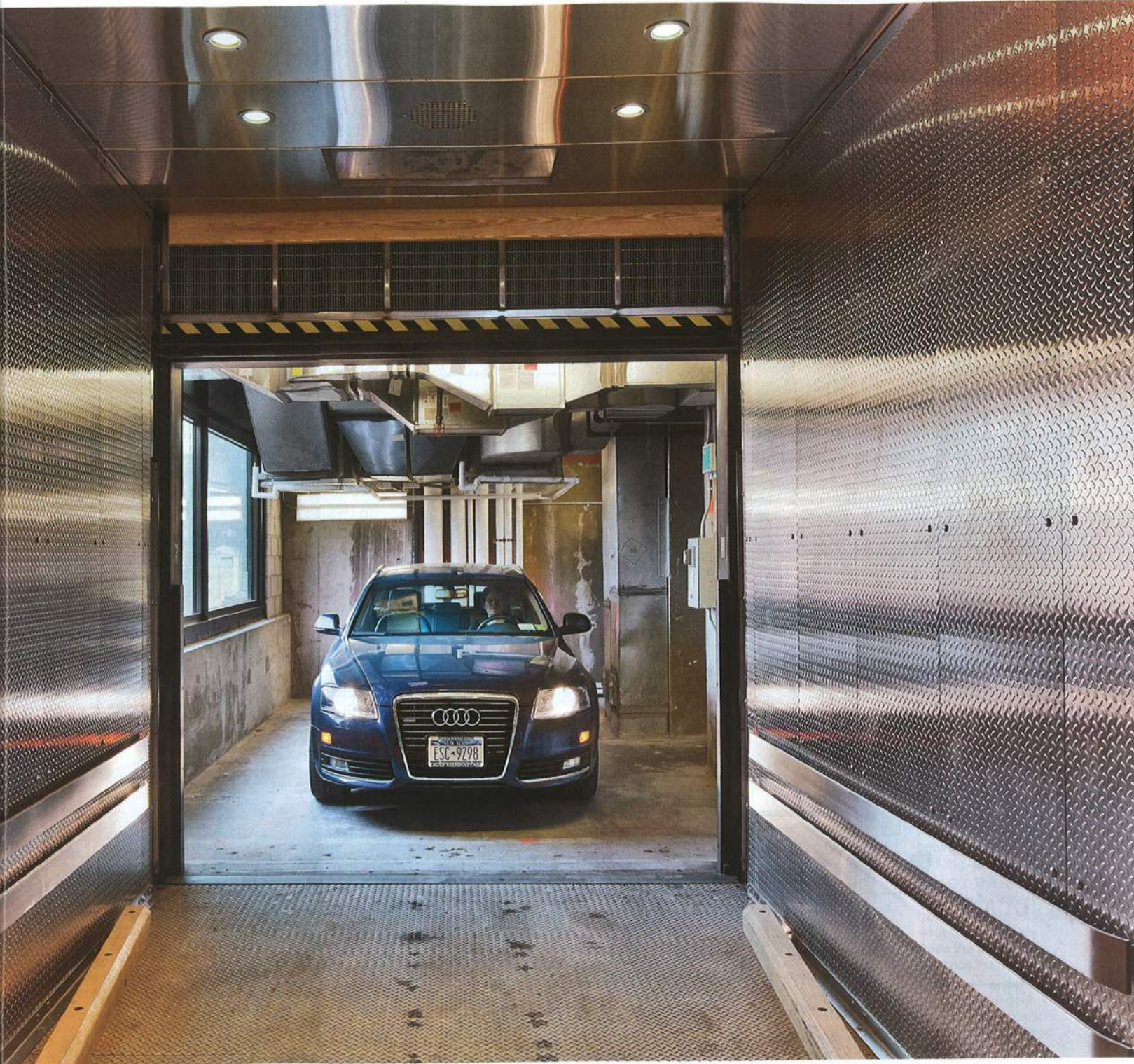
After interviewing a handful of architects, Woo enlisted Annabelle Selldorf to design the 19-story tower with a manageable density of 16 apartments, 14 of which are served by his trademarked sky-garage system. In integrating the car into the tower, Selldorf has residents enter a driveway on Eleventh Avenue, pull up to the car elevator on the tower's east side, then ascend to the garages adjoining the individual apartments. (Passenger elevators and a stairwell buffer the garages from the apartments' front doors.)

Upon arriving at their dwellings far above the street, residents find a panorama of the Hudson River unfolding before them. Ceiling heights are typically 11 feet high but soar to 23 feet in a dozen duplexes and to 15 feet in the remaining simplexes. The expansive and well-proportioned design of Selldorf's plan for the poured-in-place concrete-frame structure bears a certain affinity to the Immeuble Villas in Le Corbusier's Contemporary City for 3 Million People (1922). Selldorf remarks half-jokingly, “You have to look at Corb: I do every night before going to sleep.” The major difference: Whereas Le Corbusier envisioned an outdoor terrace for relaxing or exercise within the building's volume, Selldorf has inserted space for a BMW.

In working with this small 7,400-square-foot corner site with unimpeded views of the Hudson over a park, Selldorf faced certain zoning restrictions, including a street wall that rose 60 feet before setting back and an overall height limit of 250 feet. With a Floor Area Ratio of 7.5 for the lot, the developers and architect realized they could offer residents both duplexes and extremely high ceilings yet stay under the obligatory height cap.

Needless to say, permits were also required for a sky-garage, along





ABOVE: A high-rise elevator system provides private parking in the sky for 14 of the 16 condominiums in the building.

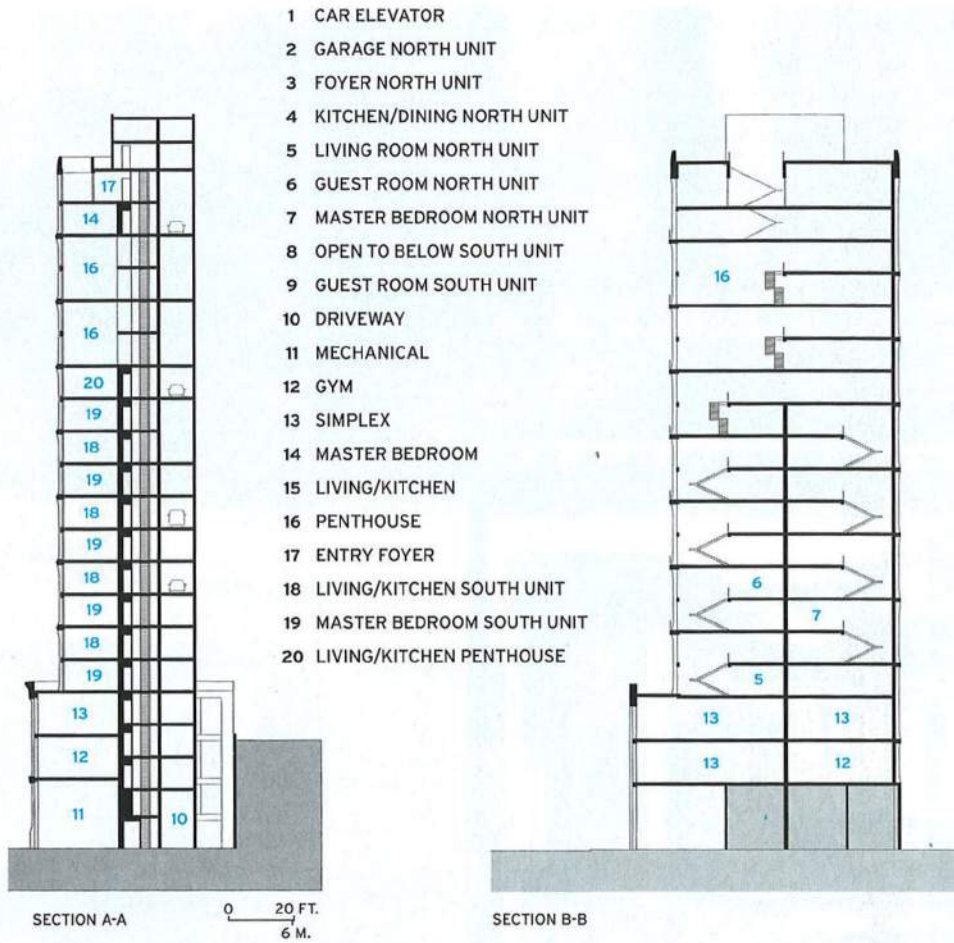
OPPOSITE: The tower sits on a terra-cotta-clad base, while the shaft itself features a stainless steel rainscreen jutting out past the glass window walls.



ABOVE: Spacious duplexes soar to 23-foot heights. The views of the Hudson River to the west will remain unimpeded since a park occupies the Eleventh Avenue site between the building and the river.

FAR LEFT: The apartment house lobby, entered from a side street, looks west to the Hudson while the garage entrance is on the east.

LEFT: Black anodized aluminum window frames are set back from a stainless steel rainscreen.

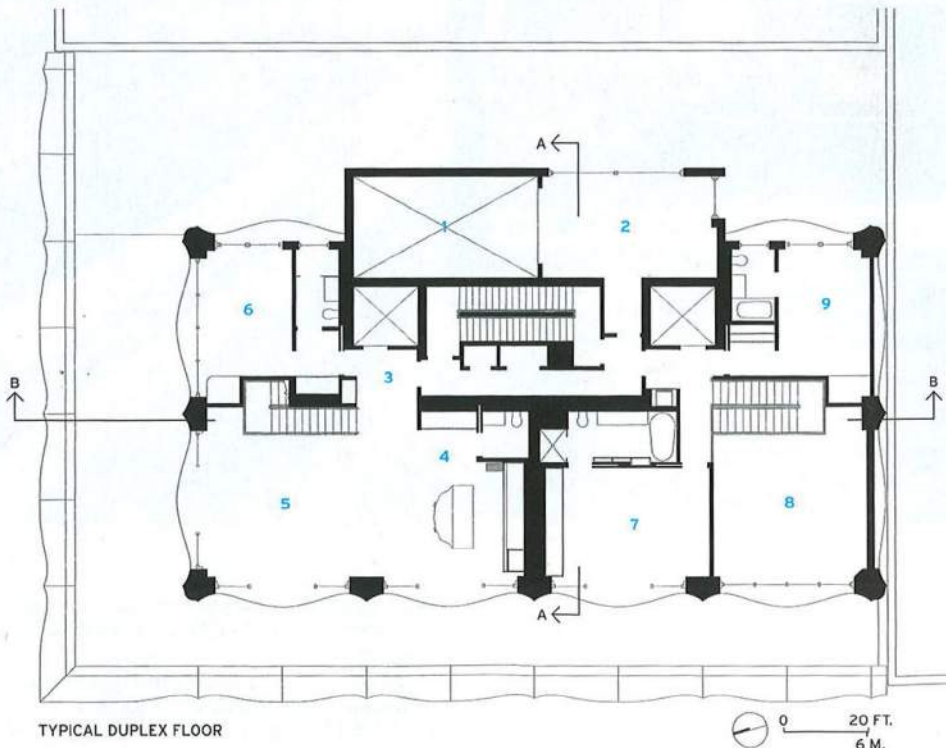


with special monitors that help coordinate movement and parking in the air. Fire safety precautions called for building the garage as a separate concrete structure.

The tower's three-story base contains the lobby, a gym, and several simplex apartments. Clad in gunmetal glazed terra-cotta blocks, the base intentionally refers to the vintage materials and solidity of existing loft structures in Chelsea, many now converted to art galleries. Since Selldorf had designed two galleries for dealer Barbara Gladstone, plus another apartment building there, she was familiar with the neighborhood's architecture and wanted to retain its industrial character.

"The streetscape is already starting to get lost among glass high-rises," Selldorf points out, explaining why she opted for the tactility of the terra-cotta. Similarly, the faintly rounded elements framing the openings recalls 19th-century arched facades nearby. Above the three-story podium the architect designed a stainless steel rainscreen for the 16-story shaft — detailed with curvilinear profiles — which juts forth from the glazing to create deep shadow lines.

Because of its referential quality, the tower appears less assertive in the cityscape than the bold or brash apartment buildings by Jean Nouvel, Audrey Matlock, or Neil Denari a few blocks away. Nevertheless, it maintains a civilized commonality with both the existing neighborhood structures and the new construction now going up along the High Line. These houses, with garages in the sky, tap tellingly into the American dream, even if out of reach for the typical home buyer. ■



**CREDITS**

- ARCHITECT:** Selldorf Architects – Annabelle Selldorf, principal; Sara Lopergolo, partner in charge; Marc Pittsley, project manager; Cory Taylor, project architect
- ARCHITECT OF RECORD:** Steven Kratchman
- ENGINEERS:** GACE Consulting (structural); Ettinger Engineering (m/e/p)
- CONSULTANTS:** Gordon H. Smith (window wall); IROS Elevator Design Services (elevator)
- CLIENT:** Urban Muse Management and Young Woo & Associates
- SIZE:** 61,000 square feet
- COST:** \$41 million
- COMPLETION DATE:** October 2010
- SOURCES**
- STAINLESS STEEL RAINSCREEN:** Zahner
- TERRA-COTTA:** Boston Valley Terra Cotta
- CAR ELEVATOR:** The Peele Company
- INSULATED GLASS:** Oldcastle BuildingEnvelope