

**EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN:
 MANHATTAN**

**LIVE
 WELL**

Creating built environments centered on wellness,
Robert D. Henry Architects enriches lives through
 architecture and interior design



1.

For some, a career in architecture is launched with dreams of leaving a signature on the industry; for architect Bob Henry, NCARB, it was set in motion by the kindness of a high school English teacher. “Ethel Chaney spent weekends bringing students to places she thought would be instrumental in their life,” recalls Henry. “She took me to Chicago to tour the works of Frank Lloyd Wright. The moment I saw his studio, I knew I wanted to be an architect.”

Moved by the humanist sensibilities and use of scale in Wright’s work, Henry founded his internationally renowned firm Robert D. Henry Architects (RDH-A) in 1990 with a vision of creating built environments that engage all five senses while enhancing homeowners’ health.

“I want to improve their health and bring joy to our clients,” he explains. “We spend 85% of our day inside our home and built environments: sleeping, eating, entertaining, and working. Therefore, it’s important that our buildings are healthy.”

Escape to New York

Influenced by 30-plus years of work in the wellness and spa industries, Henry transformed a New York City penthouse for client Barbara Littman into an oasis of calm among skyscrapers by reducing noise pollution through an additional layer of glass, adding an independent HEPA air filtration system, and alleviating his client’s sleep apnea with motorized blackout shades.

“We are concept-design focused, meaning that we spend a lot of time brainstorming and sketching with clients to learn what will



make an impactful difference in their quality of life,” says Henry.

Everything in Littman’s apartment revolves around the concept of “entry, path, and goal.” A walkway from the entrance to a sculptural staircase—in front of a vibrant, Van Gogh-yellow wall that pops with the brilliance of daylight, reinforcing the client’s sunny attitude—leads to the rooftop terrace overlooking the city.

“There’s a duality to the home: It’s bold and powerful, reaching for the sky, but it’s also a personal, nurturing cocoon that speaks directly to her health. It’s a place for Barbara to escape and sketch, read, and relax away from her responsibilities and family, though her husband might be able to visit if he makes an appointment,” Henry laughs.

Leading With Compassion

The encouragement Henry received from his teacher is now passed on to others as the architect has taken on roles teaching and collaborating with young people in the industry with genuine enthusiasm.

“My work is an extension of the endearment that Ethel provided me early on,” says Henry. “When teaching, I try to get inside each student’s head to understand their ideas and help them develop a voice. I watch the lightbulb go off in their brain and provide them with the architectural vocabulary to describe it.”

Giving young designers the space to voice ideas without fear, Henry creates professional environments not driven by ego, but by solutions within the studio. In this collaboration, young designers

learn how to improve their craft while discovering profound talents that may have gone unrecognized.

“I’m excited when young people and clients work with us and share their ideas collaboratively. If their idea is the best one during our dialogue, we’ll go with it,” says Henry. “It’s not about my answer; it’s about finding the best solution together.”

212-533-4145
rdh-architects.com

1. A refined selection from Barbara Littman’s furniture and art collection allows shape, texture, and color to enhance the quality of life in a clutter-free penthouse.

2. Located among skyscrapers, this penthouse is a love letter to Manhattan while remaining grounded in the client’s desire for an escape.

3. The rooftop terrace sculpture entitled *Ghost Stair* creates the illusion of climbing toward the Manhattan skyline.

4. The custom-tailored home operates as a cocooning retreat for days of peaceful sketching and reading.

5. The bedroom addresses the client’s sleep apnea through blackout shades, a HEPA air filtration system, and interior panes of glass to reduce noise pollution.

6. A predominately neutral palette of gray, white, and black allows bursts of yellow in the hallway to energize the space.