

# The Architect Is In: The Twice-Designed New York Loft by Christine Chang Hanway



OLDER



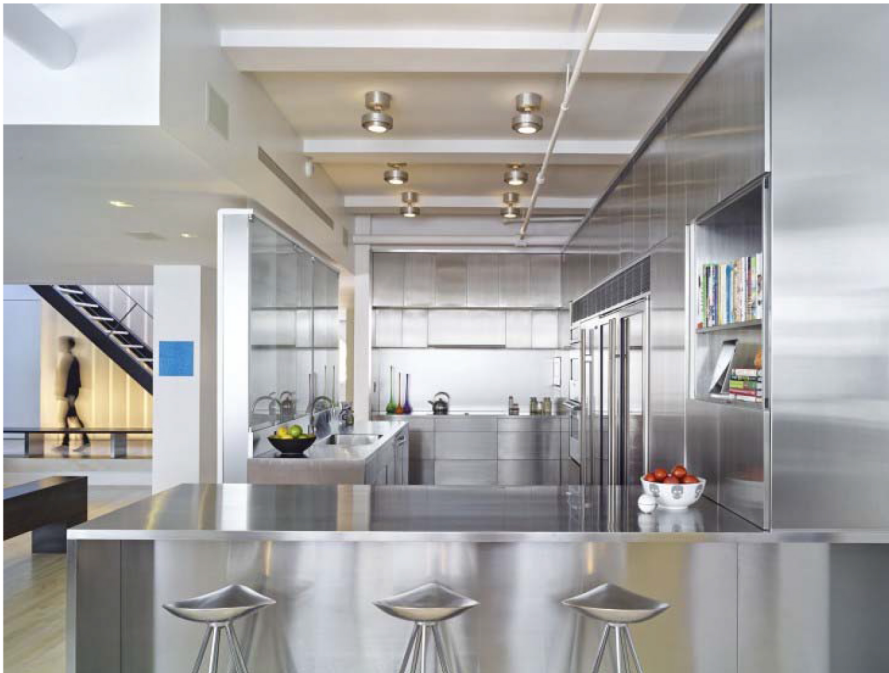
NEWER

Issue 1 · New Beginnings · January 11, 2014

This week, Jeff Murphy and Mary Burnham of New York firm Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects talk about upgrading a New York loft they converted for the same clients 11 years ago. They're available for the next 48 hours to answer your questions, so ask away!

In 2003, the clients originally commissioned **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects** (members of the **Remodelista Architect/Designer Directory**) to combine two lofts into one. The result was an expansive 4,200-square-foot space that acted as a backdrop for the clients' extensive art collection while offering unfettered views of the midtown skyline to the north and Wall Street to the south from the top (10th) floor of what had been a printing warehouse. At the time, the couple had recently had twins, and as the children have gotten older, the family felt ready to recast and update their setup a bit. "As architects, it is an unusual pleasure to have the opportunity to revisit a previous design with the same clients," Murphy says. "Having been through a renovation together already, our relationship as architects and clients was familiar. It didn't take us long to settle on the right approach and to make the appropriate changes."

Photography by Ty Cole.



Above: The second time around, the architects kept the general layout, but upgraded finishes and renovated the kitchen as well as all the bathrooms. "Our client has an aversion to wood and an attraction to stainless steel, making it an obvious finish choice in the kitchen," Burnham says.

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Above: The glassware cabinet over the sink is clad in 5/16th inch sandblasted tempered glass. The clients' glassware collection creates a colorful backdrop.



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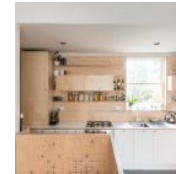
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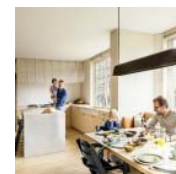
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Above: The stainless steel sink was welded to the counter and backsplash. The weld was then ground smooth and brushed integrating the sink into the unit. The architects used 16-gauge stainless steel sheets with a #4 brush finish. The grain runs vertically to match the refrigerator and wine cooler. While pleasing to the eye, brushed stainless steel with welded corners requires regular maintenance; the owners regularly apply an aerosol stainless-steel cleaner with a cotton cloth to keep the design clean and polished. "To address this issue, there is a chemical treatment that minimizes fingerprints, but it will change the hue of the stainless steel," Murphy says. "Alternatively, in the future, we would use a coarser brush finish."



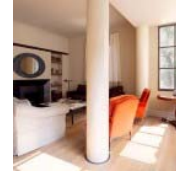
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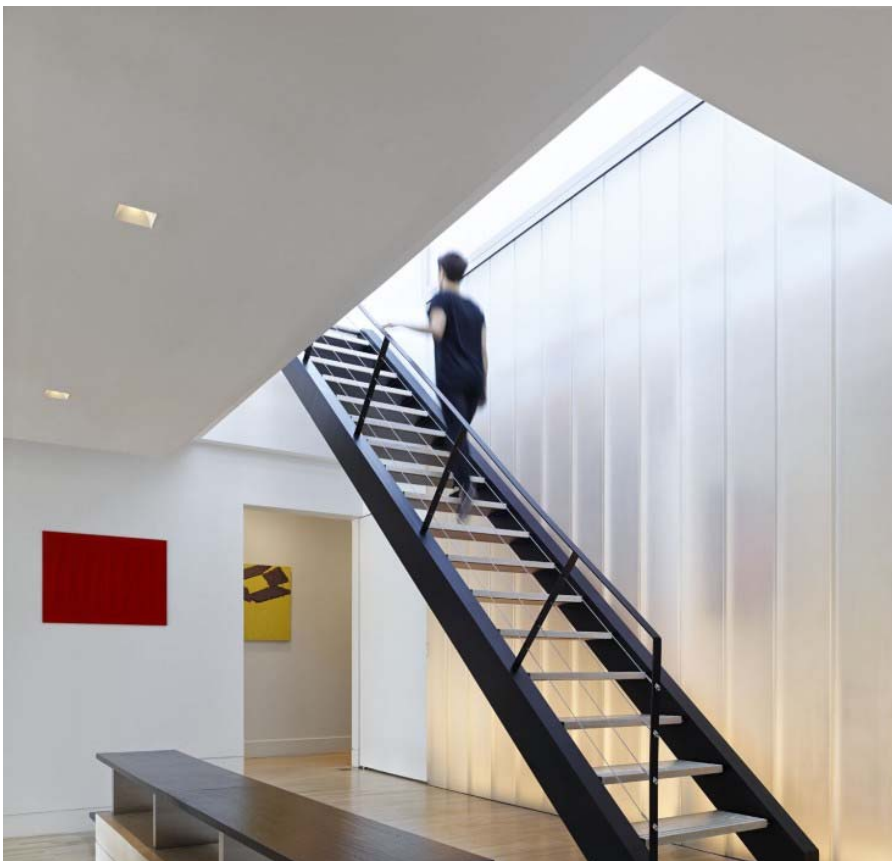


Above: "The orange Poltrona Frau sofas and custom Tibetan silk rug in the living room were selected in response to the client's love of color," says Murphy.





Above: A view from the living area toward the master bedroom suite tucked behind translucent glazed doors. The floors are a white-washed oak with 4-inch wide planks.





Above: Beyond the internal stair that takes the family up to an outdoor space on the roof terrace is a dressing room. Instead of a railing that is required to highlight the level change, the architects designed a bench, which provides useful additional seating when the family entertain.





Above: The translucent wall of the dressing room is made of channel glass, an extruded structural glass product, and is lit from below with discrete LED lights installed flush in the floor and ceiling. At night the wall glows like a lantern and conducts light into the living room. Conversely, during daylight hours, the dressing room is flooded with natural light from the stairwell. The Keith Haring bench is part of the owners' art collection.

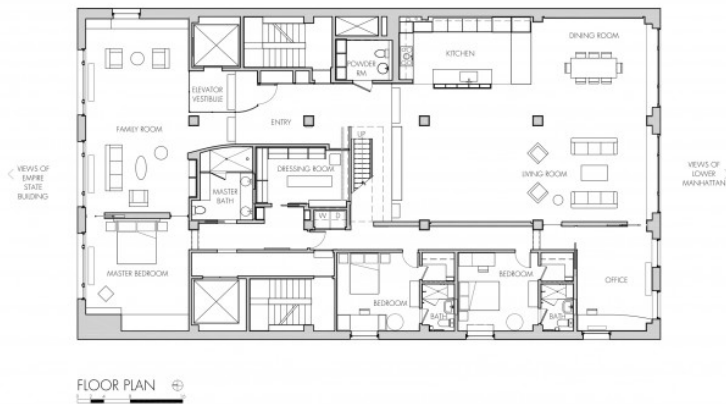


Above: The walls of the powder room are a combination of custom back-painted glass, mirror and stainless steel panels.





Above: In the loft's original layout, there was a closer connection between the adult and children's spaces. "As a natural evolution of family dynamics, we have created more private space that allows for a greater separation between adult and children's activities," Burham says. An example of this is the former children's game room; now an extension of the master bedroom suite, shown here, it takes full advantage of the views of the Empire State Building.



Above: A plan of the loft shows the office space next to the twins' bedrooms, which has become their new hangout room where they can watch television and socialize with friends.

Want to live in a loft but contrained by your architecture and budget? London architect Jennifer Beningfield offers some useful tips in [Loft Living in a Victorian House](http://www.remodelista.com/posts/the-architect-is-in-loft-living-in-a-london-victorian) (<http://www.remodelista.com/posts/the-architect-is-in-loft-living-in-a-london-victorian>). For inspiration, view our photo gallery of [loft spaces](http://www.remodelista.com/gallery?rooms=Loft+Spaces) (<http://www.remodelista.com/gallery?rooms=Loft+Spaces>).

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By Christine Chang Hanway

## Contributions

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PoggenpohlHawaii · a year ago





 This was very inspiring. Thank you for sharing it.  
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 **Christine Chang Hanway** Remodelista · a year ago  
Dear Remodelistas  
Thank you for your questions and many thanks to Jeff and Mary for their detailed answers including everything we ever wanted to know about stainless steel! Jeff and Mary are no longer available to answer questions but please do contact them directly if you have any more. They can be reached through the following email address. jansuini(at)mbbarch(dot)com.  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >


 **LSH** · a year ago  
Wow - what a beautiful, well-appointed space. The kitchen ceiling lights are great - are they custom-made?  
1 [^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >


 **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **LSH** · a year ago  
LSH  
Those lights were from 'Shaper' lights (now a subsidiary of Cooper Industries). However, they were installed 11 years ago in our first renovation of the space and it appears they are no longer in production. I wish it were not so!  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >


 **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** · a year ago  
It has been a pleasure to share this project with you all- Thank you for all your great questions. Please feel free to contact us if you have any more questions.  
Mary and Jeff  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >


 **Tara R.** · a year ago  
How did you fabricate the glass panels in the bathroom? I see the comments below on using Starphire glass or the Bendheim that is pre-backpainted. You then adhere this to the wall with glue or some other type of adhesive? I assume the paint is opaque and you would not see this adhesive? what about water spotting in the shower, has this been a problem? Have you ever painted your own glass on a lower budget project? I've looked into the colored laminated glass from Saflex but is expensive and the project is small. I like the idea of using a solid surface in bathrooms and avoiding grout and the cleaning of. I've used white Corian sheets inset flush with drywall and like the all-white-walls but seeing the glass in this project is lovely.  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >

 **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **Tara R.** · a year ago  
Tara  
That would be an interesting technique to figure out. I would not know how to get the paint to adhere to the glass. The custom panels appear to have many layers of paint and are totally opaque on the back side. There are various fabricators in the New York area capable of producing back painted glass panels, but we are not aware of any off-the-shelf-products that are of the scale of these panels. To install we siliconed to panels on to the Durock substrate. Like with any glass surface, there can be water spotting, but it is less visible than on a clear surface and we have never had a problem with it.  
Good luck with that!  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >

 **lisam** · a year ago  
Hello! Did you have the oak floors bleached, or were they installed pre finished? Thank you  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >

 **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **lisam** · a year ago  
Lisa M  
The white oak floors were bleached and sealed after they were installed. We did numerous tests with bleach and stains to get the right tone, and settled on a bleach process.  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >

 **zoe99** · a year ago  
Love the lav faucet in the powder room; whose is it?  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >

 **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **zoe99** · a year ago  
Zoe99  
The bathroom faucet is the 'Tara' line, by Dornbracht. These are good quality fixtures that are reliable and last well.  
1 [^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >

 **Zoe** → **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** · a year ago  
Should've known that - the kitchen faucet is from the same line, isn't it?  
[^](#) | [v](#) · [Reply](#) · [Share](#) >

 **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **Zoe** · a year ago  
Zoe

yes it is!

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**pollybydesign** · a year ago

Hello. I really like the back painted glass in the cloakroom. I have a back painted splashback in my kitchen. For a much larger space like the cloakroom is there anything in particular I should be wary of when specifying? Any pitfalls. I'd love to try it.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**Murphy Burnham & Buttrick**

Thank you for your comments - We are also big fans of back painted glass and have used it in various applications, such as for kitchen backsplashes, on bathroom walls, and in custom cabinetry. The saturated quality of the color you can get from a backpainted glass surface is stunning. This richness of color can also be found in glass tiles that are commercially available.

For this project we used 3/8 inch Bendheim glass panels, the largest of which was approximately 3 feet wide by 6 feet high. When specifying the glass we typically use tempered low-iron glass (Starphire) to eliminate the green tint that exists in normal glass. There are certainly limitations to the size of panels, but otherwise we can't think of a reason not to use it for a larger wall surface.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**M808** · a year ago

Beautiful work! Such a very lucky family. Would you have any advice for a small loft like space on a budget?

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **M808** · a year ago

Thank you! There are a few things you can do to maximize the potential of a small loft. One is to minimize clutter by designing enough good storage. Another is to keep your materials palette to a minimal number of different architectural components. While in this loft we used stainless steel extensively in the kitchen, a less expensive material used consistently would also give a similar effect. We intentionally kept the palette consistent (beached floors, neutral wall color, stainless steel, translucent glass) throughout the loft so the architecture serves as a backdrop for the art and objects our clients' collection.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**GBannis** · a year ago

I noticed the glass cupboard doors above the sink open outward and a vase is blocking one of them. Since things do accumulate around the sink, did you consider sliding glass doors instead?

The stainless steel cladding on everything in the kitchen is impressive.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **GBannis** · a year ago

Thank you for your comments about the stainless steel cabinetry. We had to work hard to make sure all of the panels were sized and fabricated properly and that corners were perfectly square and consistent so that all panels would fit tightly together. Because this is a custom welded stainless steel system, several of the panels had to be remade in order to meet the requirements of the specification.

With regard to the glass cabinetry doors, the benefit to having hinged glass panels instead of sliding panels is that it provides a perfectly flat surface of glass. The two doors that open above the sink contain the everyday glassware. These are not obstructed by objects placed on the flanking counters. The two outer doors above the counter house decorative glassware that does not require regular access.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**GBannis**

Specifying the stainless steel work sounds like an extremely meticulous enterprise.

I'm curious about how you call out that the steel must be (fingerprint) smudge proof? Is that a kind of steel or a kind of finish on the steel? TIA.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** → **GBannis** · a year ago

**GBannis**

Specifying the correct gauge and finish on any stainless steel element is well worth it. Because we had so much of it in this particular space, on both horizontal and vertical surfaces, it was important that it all be consistent. We wish there was a way to eliminate fingerprints and smudges entirely, but in an effort to minimize the problem we did test a chemical coating. However, the stainless becomes darker with the coating, so we agreed with our clients that the coating was too much of a compromise.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** · a year ago



Great question. There are 3 joint conditions. In the living space the joints are open; at the dressing room they have a single clear silicon bead and at the 2nd floor where the wall becomes an exterior wall there are 2 beads of clear silicon with back rods in between.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**NYLON Arch** · a year ago

Jeff and Mary: Congratulations on a beautifully crafted project. I really appreciate the consistency of the materials and the finish. On the structural glazing behind the staircase, what is the joint finish? It is hard to tell from the photos.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**jane\_canada** · a year ago

there is something vaguely 1980s about this space...

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**Benoit Balz** → jane\_canada · a year ago

80s is the new steampunk, duh!

^ | v · Reply · Share >



**Murphy Burnham & Buttrick** · a year ago

Hello, We are delighted to have the NY Loft featured on Remodelista. We welcome any questions you may have about the project.

Jeff

^ | v · Reply · Share >

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**Natalie** — Love these pieces. A nice companion to the vinegar pot would be a cookie jar, using the same shape, but ...

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2 comments · 7 hours ago

**Gaylen** — ...and they're a hundred bucks.....each.