

ARCHITECTURE

# An Exclusive Tour of Brooklyn's Most Expensive Condo Building

At more than \$2,400 per square foot, the nautically inspired Olympia sets a new high-water mark at the top end of Brooklyn's real estate market

By Tim Nelson

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The 270 foot-tall condo building features stunning views of the East River, several bridges, as well as Manhattan skyline. Photo: Pavel Bendov

Back in the 1780s, brothers Joshua and Comfort Sands established a village on the parcel they purchased in Brooklyn by the East River, naming the neighborhood Olympia. Although that same area goes by the name of Dumbo in 2023, a newly opened residential high-rise harkens back to the neighborhood's former name and nautical, industrious past... all while upping the ante on its pricey present. In February, residents began moving into the 76 luxury residences that make up the 33 stories of Olympia Dumbo, the latest in a recent string of high-rises to reshape the Brooklyn skyline. Developed by Fortis Property Group, the 401-foot tower's architecture was envisioned by Hill West Architects, with interiors by AD100 firm Workstead.

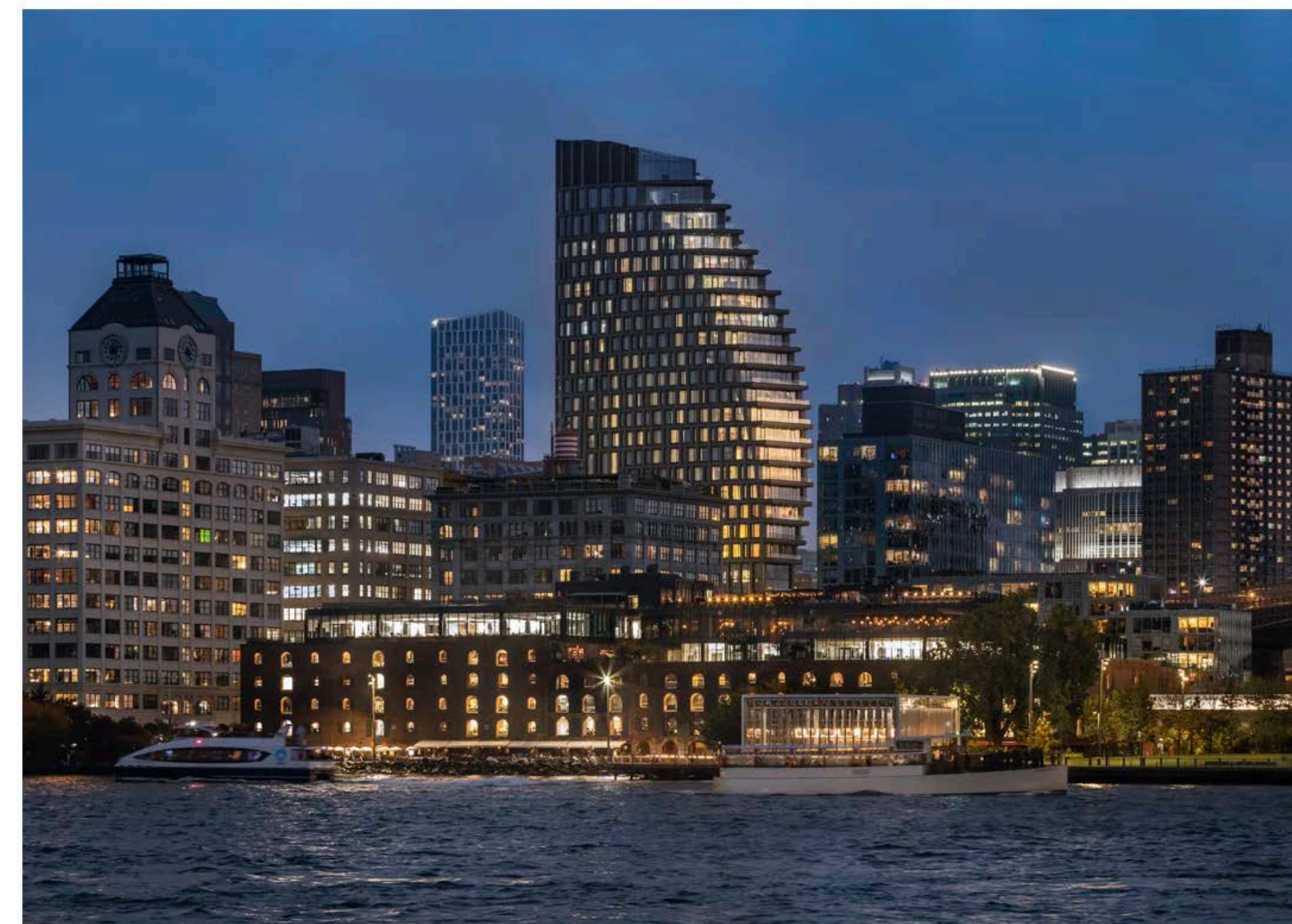
Featuring floor plans ranging from one to five bedrooms, significantly sized outdoor terraces with sweeping harbor and Manhattan views, and 38,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenity space, snagging an address at Olympia doesn't come cheap. In fact, the project registers as Brooklyn's new most expensive condo building: the average price per square foot in the 24 units sold so far comes in at an eye-popping \$2,457, with units on the market coming in even higher, at \$2,503. That latter figure beats Brooklyn's next-priciest address (Quay Tower), by nearly \$400 per square foot.

So what does that kind of price get you? Beyond access to both New York's highest-elevated private outdoor tennis court and a subterranean bowling alley (among countless other common spaces), the value of Olympia lies in the thoughtful touches and exquisite attention to detail, many of which exist to accentuate the grandeur of its backdrop.

Despite its prime location—close to both the Brooklyn bridge and the waterfront—developing anything on the lot where Olympia now rises didn't always seem like an attractive proposition. Stephen Hill of Hill West architects recalls that the triangular shape of the site and its multiple sky exposure planes (a zoning regulation meant to ensure the streets surrounding tall buildings have access to enough light and air) posed challenges. But the developers believed in Hill's ability to bring something special to life.



The new building includes 76 units, each of which features its own unique view of the surrounding city. Photo: Pavel Bendov



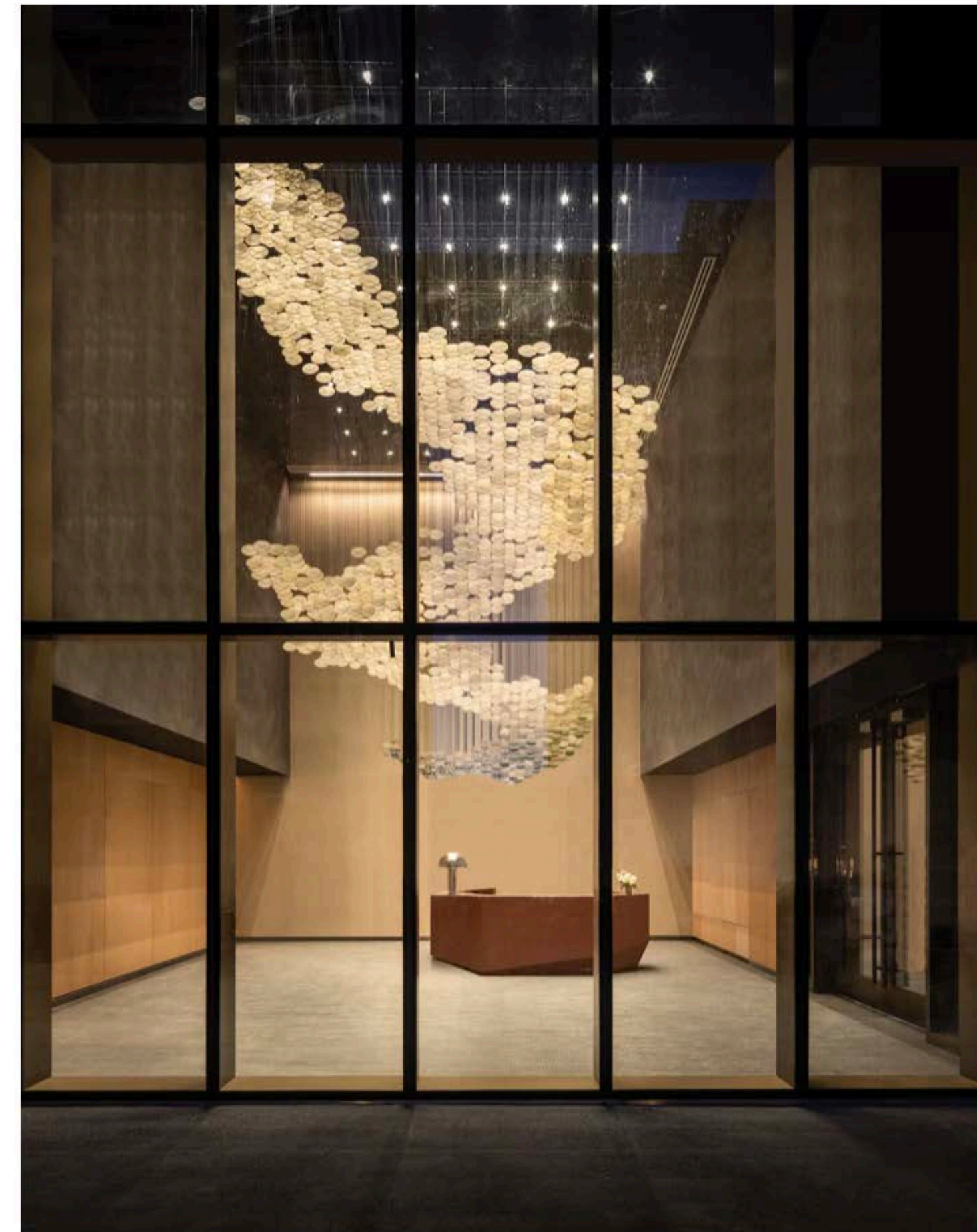
Olympia took roughly three years of construction to be completed, with the first residents moving into the building in February 2023. Photo: Pavel Bendov

“It was going to take a little bit of time and coaxing to see what could really come out of that site,” Hill says. “It’s a location that I’m sure many people looked at and scratched their heads and walked away from, [but] I was lucky to have the right client at the right time.”

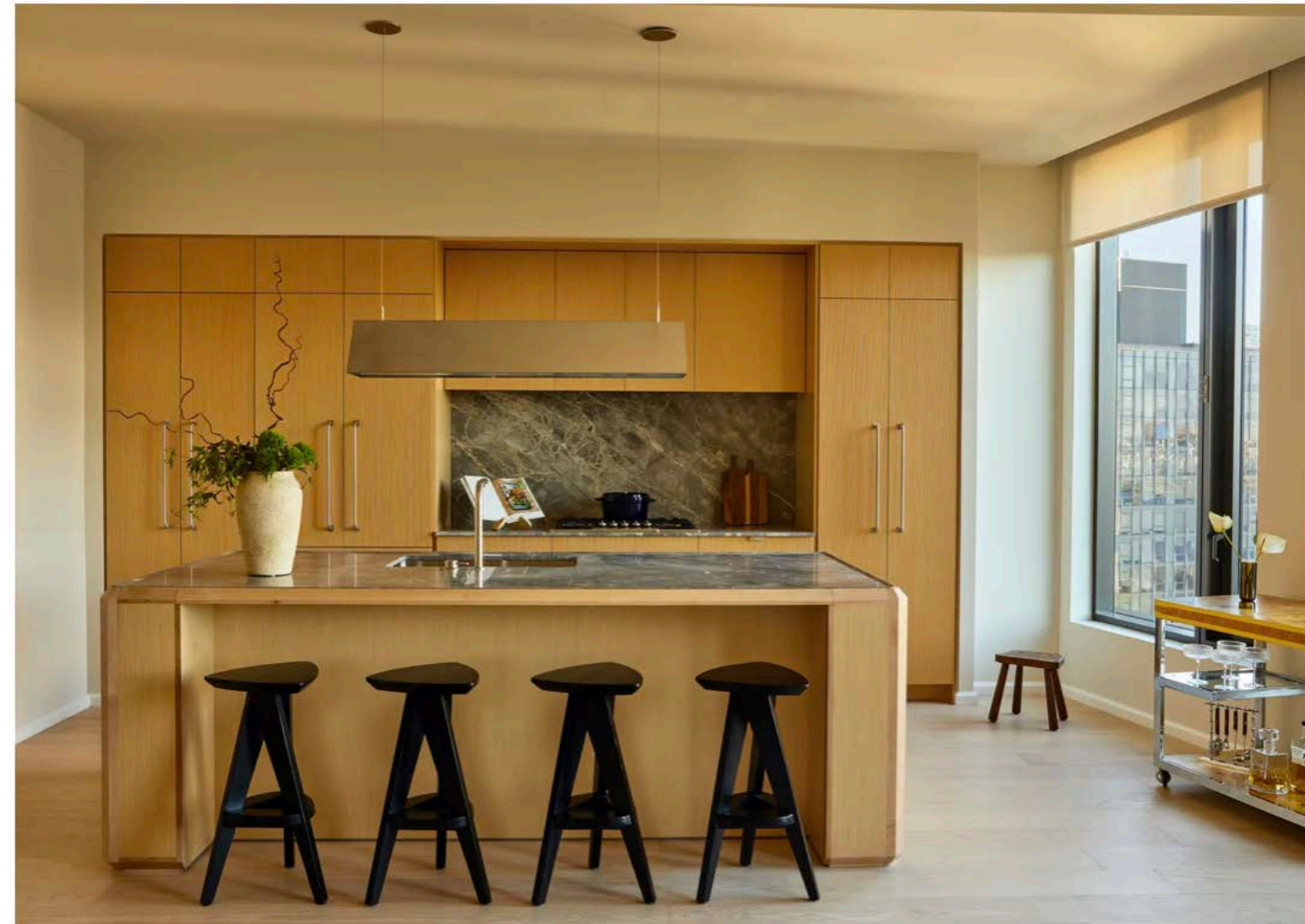
Out of those sky exposure constraints came a remarkable spiral shape for the building, which starts with five or six units per floor lower down before tapering all the way to a single unit per floor as it rises. When glimpsed from the outside, especially from across the East River in Manhattan, Olympia resembles an unfurled sail, a dynamic homage to the neighborhood’s maritime past.

But for residents, Hill says the use of a “floor plan [that] is morphing in multiple dimensions at the same time” serves to maximize the quantity of outdoor terrace space and quality of views on each floor of the building. On lower levels, a west-facing view of the waterfront, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the lower tip of Manhattan. As a result of floors sometimes shifting by just a matter of inches, Olympia seemingly twists as it rises, bringing the broader Manhattan skyline into view.

That appreciation for Dumbo’s seafaring history and the neighborhood’s enviable views extends to how Workstead approached Olympia’s interior design. Alongside abstract renditions of the Manhattan skyline by painters including Georgia O’Keeffe, Workstead senior designer Nadine Lynch explained that “a photograph of a sailboat that was in this very dark and stormy sea” was an important aesthetic touchstone for the project. That steered Workstead in the direction of warm parchment tones, light timber, and moody, oceanic marbles, which show up in kitchen backsplashes and elsewhere.



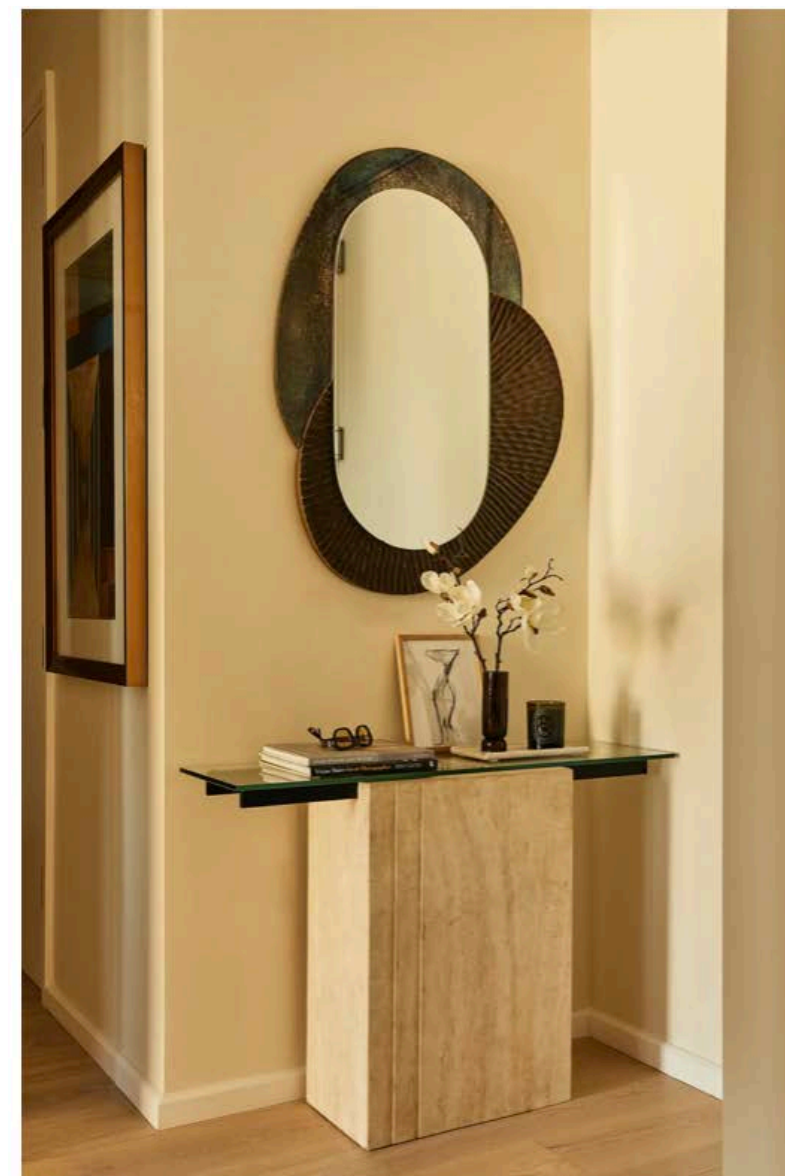
A look inside the lobby shows a minimal yet highly ornate design aesthetic. Photo: Pavel Bendov



The largest unit inside of the building is a whopping 4,928 square feet. Photo: Christian Harder

The area's history is subtly woven into Olympia's elements in other ways. That starts with the use of gray tiling in the lobby that subtly suggests Dumbo's cobblestone streets, blurring the distinction between interior and exterior beneath a kinetic Jacob Hashimoto sculpture, whose swaying motion evokes passing clouds or a boat's wake. Ryan Mahoney, Workstead's creative director of buildings and interiors, also referenced the desire to establish a rhythm that "brings a sort of rigorous texture" through the use of hand troweling and grooved wooden cabinets, just to name a few touches that draw out Dumbo's past as a site of manufacturing.

The purpose of these history-honoring details is to endear Olympia to a design-savvy audience, helping it stand out from other high-end high rises that've popped up in the greater Downtown Brooklyn area in recent years.



The average square footage for the units inside the building is 2,023. Photo: Christian Harder

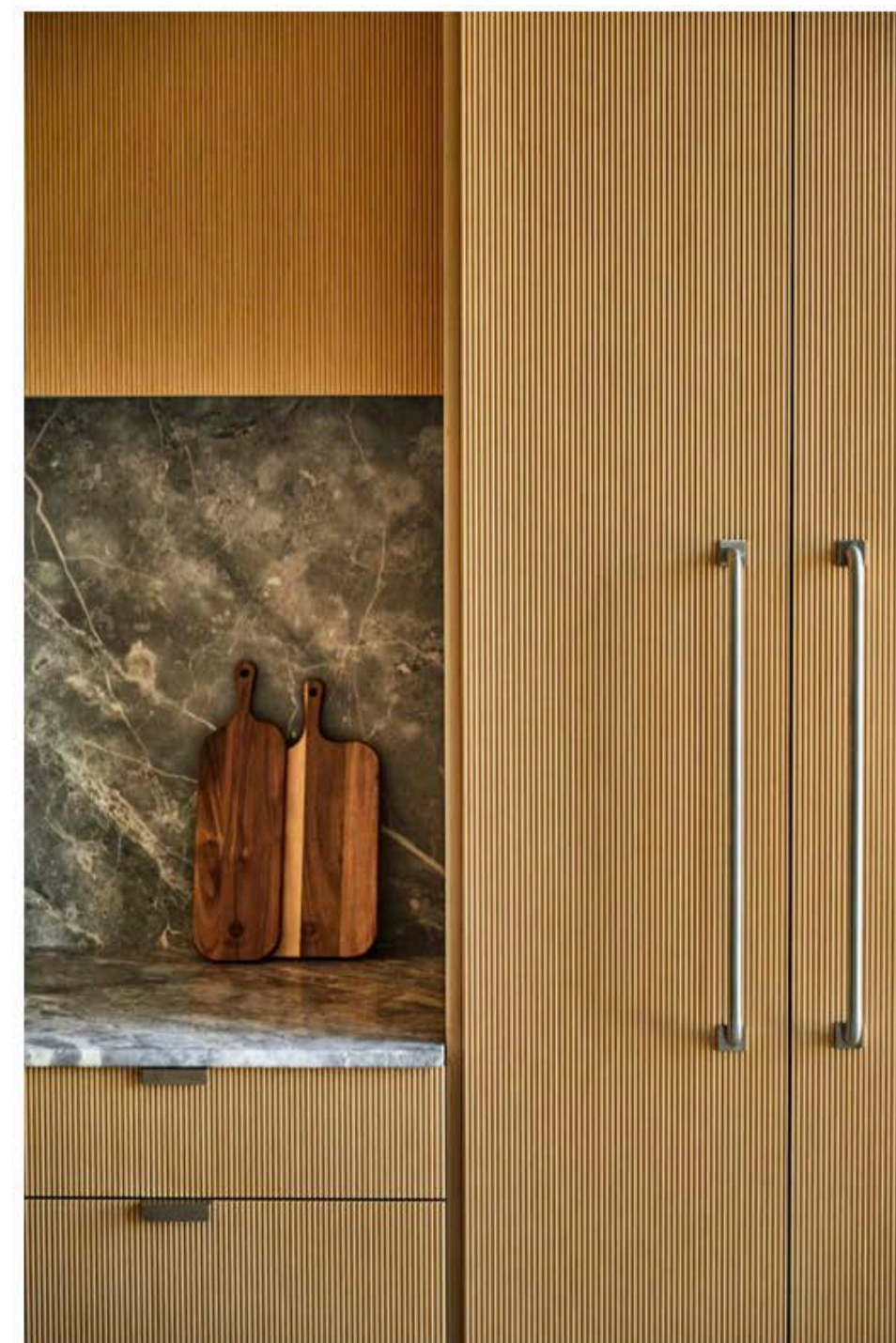


The smallest unit inside the building is 782 square feet. Photo: Christian Harder

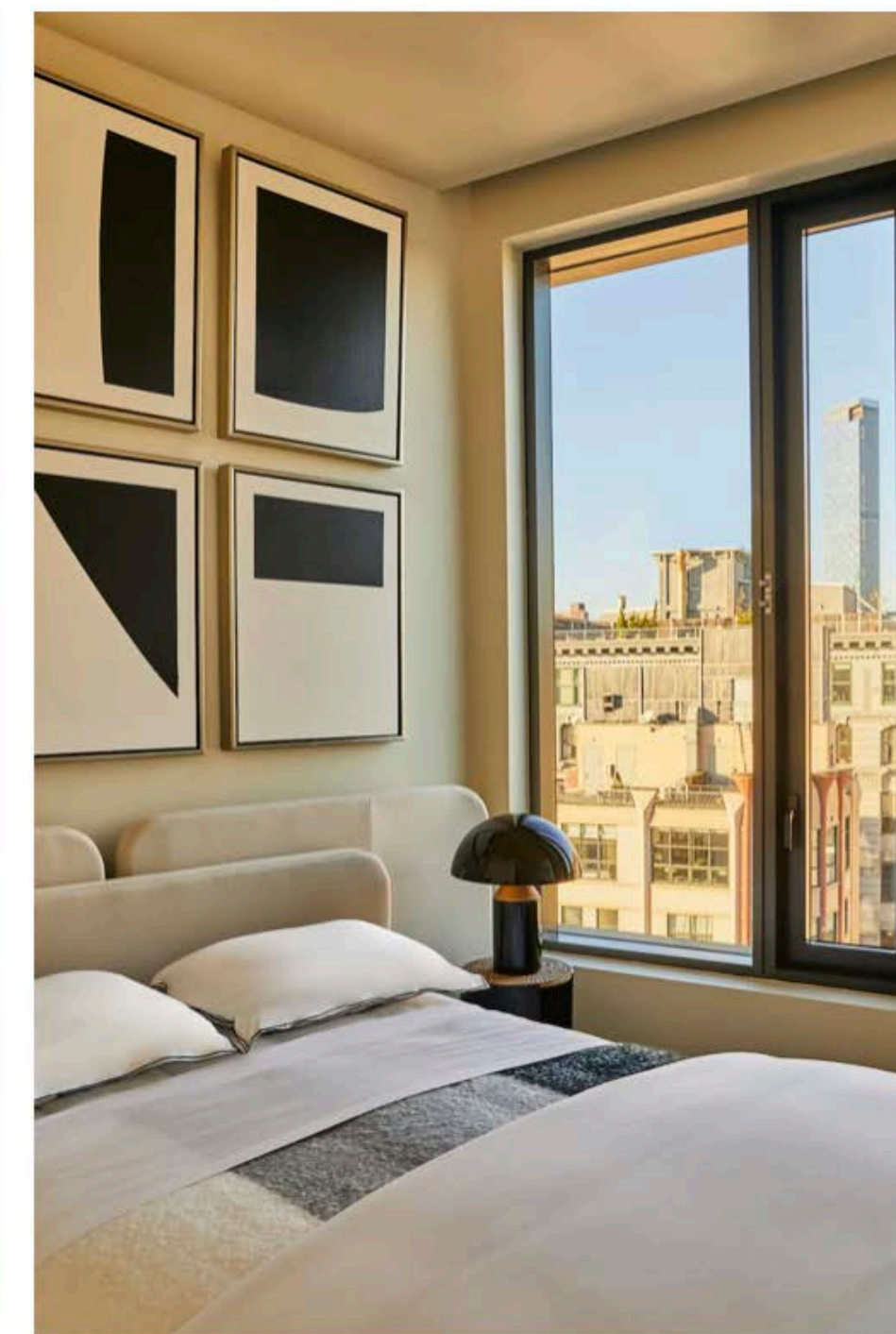
“Some of these buildings sometimes feel a bit like a white box. We were very fortunate to have a client who allowed us to push the envelope a bit,” Lynch says. “That shows in some of the execution that we were able to do with some of the details and materials, making it almost feel more like a one-off residential project.”

Workstead’s emphasis on standout design is mirrored by fellow AD100 firm ASH’s work in a model apartment located on Olympia’s 16th floor. Emphasizing texture, rounded lines, earthier tones, and a retreat from excessive patterning, it’s a bit of on-trend inspiration for what one can dream up against the backdrop of Workstead’s appropriately parchment-hued canvas.

“After eons of gray washed spaces followed by crisp white walls, we’re seeing a near-universal penchant for increased warmth,” Andrew Bowen, partner and head of staging at ASH, says of the thinking that informed the firm’s approach. While the price for a square foot of space in Olympia is on par with what it’d cost to rent a modest Brooklyn studio apartment for a month, the care with which Hill West and Workstead have approached the design means there’s far more going on here than luxury for the sake of luxury. And while few can afford to buy into the building, Stephen Hill believes Olympia’s value isn’t only for those who live there. “I want the residents of Dumbo surrounding that building to feel proud that it’s now part of their neighborhood,” Hill remarked. “I want it to be a touchstone that people real feel a bond with.”



A look at the beautiful details that make up the kitchen inside a unit. Photo: Christian Harder



The bedroom window offers stunning views of the city. Photo: Christian Harder