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AD

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William Sofield's Model Unit at 111 West 57th Street Gives Depth to Glass and Steel

The Billionaires' Row building may be 91 stories, but the AD100 designer's model unit is anything but imposing

By Katie Chang

Impressions: 1,494,611



*The living room of the model unit that Sofield Studio designed for 111 West 57th Street.
Photo: Peter Murdock*

There are buildings that blend in with their surroundings, and there are those that stand apart from the rest. AD100 designer William Sofield and his firm Studio Sofield saw that 111 West 57th Street, a residential structure by SHoP Architects,

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also known as the Steinway Tower, fell squarely into the latter category. Visually compelling, it pierces the sky at more than 80 stories, defies engineering with a pencil-thin silhouette, and sits on a spendy stretch of West 57th Street overlooking Central Park, frequently dubbed Billionaires' Row.

Though Studio Sofield was responsible for designing all the interiors, it was the first finished model unit that was especially challenging, given the project's highly public nature. Luckily, Sofield didn't mind one bit: "Because we're architects by training, we're excellent problem solvers," he says. AD PRO caught up with Sofield and his firm's vice president, Emma O'Neill, to hear how they made the model unit as compelling as the eye-catching exterior.

AD: How did the incredible views inform your design approach?

William Sofield: Our job was to frame views. Because the layout offers both north and south views, which rarely happens, the city is the star of the show. While the spaces are large and hover high above Manhattan, we wanted to create an intimate, residential, and cozy feel. Every room had to be family-friendly and usable. We were very careful about achieving that kind of balance.



The firm designed each of the spaces to feel lived-in, not soulless.

Photo: Peter Murdock

AD: Did you find any differences between designing a model unit, which is intended to drive sales, and an actual residence?

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WS: We approached this project in the same manner as we would for a private client. Even though I get to stay in some of the world's most beautiful hotels, there's an anonymity in them that can feel soulless. And I find that incredibly inconsiderate. We're giving all the units the same warm quality as one of our residences.

Emma O'Neill: Because this is a glass tower, it can feel a bit insubstantial. We put together a palette of materials that gives substance and context to the design, so owners feel like they're in New York—not just any city.



*Much of the project's focus was framing the sweeping views from the unit, according to Sofield.
Photo: Peter Murdock*

AD: What kind of aesthetic were you trying to achieve for the interiors?

WS: We flexed our muscle to really set us apart. One thing that's very special is the level of the finishes. Every material we chose has a truly unique quality.

EO: We designed things like fixtures, plumbing, even door hinges that people can't knock off next season. Our developers don't want to know that someone else down the street could do this. But the reality is that no one wants to live in a cold, stark building—so we designed spaces where people could hang art, play, and really live.

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Project Details

Name: 111 West 57th Street

Design team: Studio Sofield

Size: 4,492 square feet

Location: Midtown, New York City

Favorite piece in the design: "I'm most proud of the quality of the custom hardware." — William Sofield

Imagined resident: "That would be me. I wanted the feeling that someone is already living there, so there's a lot of quirky stuff to give the space identity and personality." — WS

Biggest-ticket item: "The Nancy Lorenz painting in the master bedroom." — WS

The most interesting thing on the project's mood board: "Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*." — WS

<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/william-sofield-111-west-57th-street-model-unit>