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THE UNSUNG POSTWAR APARTMENT

Too old to be cool, too new to charm, midcentury living still offers plenty.

By Stefanos Chen | November 10, 2017



Postwar Chic, Revisited. The Sovereign, a 1970s apartment building in the Sutton area that was once home to the rock star Freddie Mercury.

The postwar pedigree is a lure for others as well. The Sovereign, a 47-story tower in Sutton Place built in 1974, was designed by Emery Roth & Sons, an architecture firm known for prewar developments like the San Remo towers. Its International-style lobby — complete with Venini crystal chandeliers, iron-mesh curtains and rosewood paneling — remains largely unchanged.

In the building's heyday, celebrities like Freddie Mercury and Calvin Klein lived there, said Jessica G. Ushan, an associate broker with Brown Harris Stevens who has sold more than 200 apartments in the Sovereign since the 1990s. The rock-star edge has dulled a bit in recent years, with more empty nesters than pop artists calling it home. But the building's staying power is in its design.

Half the units have floor plans resembling the Classic Six or Classic Seven layouts of prewar apartments, with distinct living and dining areas and a maid's room, Ms. Ushan said, while the other half are L-shaped, with a more modern, open floor plan. The under-nine-foot ceilings may be lower than those in most new development, but they are offset in part by the private balconies — and by the prices. As Ms. Ushan said, "It's about half the price of a new condo."

husband, Neal Prince, who died in April and was an architect known for his interior design of the InterContinental Hotels, bought the unit in 1978. Mr. Prince kept the original Classic Six floor plan intact because he thought the formal dining and living rooms were ideal for entertaining. The space still has the designer's antique-green marble flooring, mirrored walls and custom-built glass-and-metal dining table that seats at least 12, which will stay with the apartment.

Ms. Ushan said the buyer will likely want to renovate the kitchen, which is dated by today's standards, and possibly open the adjacent pantry and maid's room to create a larger open space. But she is not discounting the vintage appeal.

"Some things get so old, they get new again," she said, noting that some buyers seek out retro décor with an eye to giving it a modern spin.

H.R. Vanoosten Morris, 52, a retired asset fund manager, is selling a two-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath unit in the building for \$2.295 million. His



Apartment 10D at The Sovereign, 425 East 58th Street. Listed at \$2,295,000.



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