

MURRAY MOSS LOOKS BEYOND MANHATTAN



Consider where he has lived for 10 years: a Manhattan condo apartment in the Olympic Tower at 641 Fifth Avenue. The building's white-glove service undeniably would be considered a luxury by anyone, yet for Moss, luxury is more about the experience of being in the middle of the city from the viewpoint of being both high up and in the comfort of his own home.

Moss says of the corner unit on the 29th floor, which has northern and western exposures: "I never appreciated a view before. If I was inside, it meant I was inside. If I was outside, it meant I was outdoors in the wild. For the first time [for me] the outdoors [was] pervasive inside [my] apartment." Moss says that looking down from the windows in the living room to see a parade along Fifth Avenue, or across the way toward Sixth Avenue from his kitchen window to see camels taking a break in the street during a Radio City Christmas show "are luxuries I didn't understand until I moved here."

Moss says how we define luxury changes over time, depending on who we are and where we are at any given moment.

When he came to New York 47 years ago, Moss didn't want to be in the clouds, but rather in the middle of the city, experiencing the hustle and bustle. Just before moving to the Olympic Tower, he was living in a loft. "There were four views, and two sides were of brick. The other two sides faced north and south. But the building wasn't so nice and I didn't like the neighborhood," he says, remembering the days when he would leave his apartment and keep his head down so as not to attract anyone's attention.

Then came the views from the Olympic Tower. "For me, this is luxury. It feels as if there are two sunrises and two sunsets." That's because surrounding towers have glass on the outside that reflect the sunrise in the east and the sunset in the west. "It makes me feel as if [the sunrise or sunset] was coming from both directions. It's like light being refracted in a chandelier," Moss says.

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That Moss would compare the light refraction from a chandelier shouldn't come as a surprise, given his design background. Moss — the son of Russian immigrants, he was born in Chicago — received a B.F.A. in theater from New York University. After spending a few years as an actor, he was introduced to fashion designer Ronaldus Shamask, who was trained as an architect. In 1978, at age 28, Moss began the Shamask fashion brand for men and women, which became known for its structural aesthetic.

"The first thing we did was open a shop, an atelier, on Madison Avenue, across from Saint Laurent. There were no clothes in the window, only a sign and a vase, some Art Deco work," Moss recalls. That austere sensibility in the window display of not going to excess was perhaps an influence from his mom. "My mother would only wear fur on the weekend. She thought it was poor taste to wear it on a weekday."

Moss sold Shamask in 1990, and his time going back and forth to Italy led him to industrial design. "I noticed all these other kinds of design. They were making the objects in Europe, but they were not making it here," Moss says. He decided to bring some objects to the U.S. With help from Jon Weiser, whose mother started the fashion boutique Charivari, Moss set up a small space inside the Charivari store on Madison and 78th Street, in 1993, to showcase the designs.

After a short time, Moss decided it was time to open his own design shop. His background in theater and fashion helped elevate the presentation of the objects in his store. Over the years, the shop expanded and after a second expansion became an art design gallery known as Moss Gallery. That space closed in early 2012, and Moss and his business and life partner, Franklin Edward Getchell, began Moss Bureau, a consulting firm.

Despite his fashion background, Moss — "I never really wanted to be in fashion....I was young then" — is more at home with art objects. He takes pride in showing off a frieze along two walls in his apartment, the foyer area and the living room. Moss got the inspiration for the frieze from St. Patrick's Cathedral, which is across the street from the Olympic Tower.

Now Moss is eyeing a life change, and a different set of luxuries. The 1,792-square-foot, two-bedroom and two-and-a-half-bath apartment is listed with Brown Harris Stevens. Susan Greenfield and Daniela Rivoir are the brokers handling the listing, which has a \$4.4 million asking price.

"There are over 40 people here taking care of us. There is someone to put your laundry away and your dry cleaning. When I have a food delivery, there is someone who puts it in my cupboards," says Moss, who adds that he's selling because "our business lives have changed, and our personal lives, too."

Moss, who has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, wants a different lifestyle. "I want a new situation where I am out of my depth. I'm too damn comfortable here," he says.

Because he's working mostly with museums, advising on how to improve their shops, "I don't need to be someplace at 8 a.m. anymore. I came here driven; I don't need to be driven. I don't need to be in New York." His consultancy business allows him to do most of his work by computer, and he only needs to be in the city once a week.

Moss likes the idea of a house — he's never had one before "and I want to experience that." He's already planning for, and dreaming about, life in his new home.

He's considering New Jersey or Pennsylvania. Moss is seriously contemplating one place that's "about 10 acres in size. It's very private, more like a beach house, where there's room for an elevator and for me to create a boardwalk and an Elizabethan garden."

The designer also wants to experience the joys of being a pet parent.

"I'm going to get a dog. His name will be Stanley — a medium, chocolate brown labradoodle who's not too cute. The dog [will be] my exercise, since I will need to take him out for his exercise. Stanley [will be] my StairMaster," Moss says emphatically.



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