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GREATER NEW YORK

Buildings Get Graffiti Chic

Residences in Queens and Brooklyn amp up their quotient of cool; struggling artists roam

By JOSH BARBANEL

In the hipster-rich outer boroughs, the latest residential amenity isn't a swank gym, dog salon or movie room.

It is graffiti.

A few apartment buildings in Brooklyn and Queens have incorporated graffiti and street art in hopes of upping their quotient of cool.

PROPERTY The latest entry: Graffiti House, an otherwise stately, seven-story limestone rental building on the industrial edge of Astoria, in Queens.

Permanent work from 19 street artists adorns cinder-block walls that surround the ground-level parking lot. And the elevator has been turned into a vertical exhibition. A floor-to-ceiling interior window in the elevator cab opens on a wall painted by a different artist on each floor.

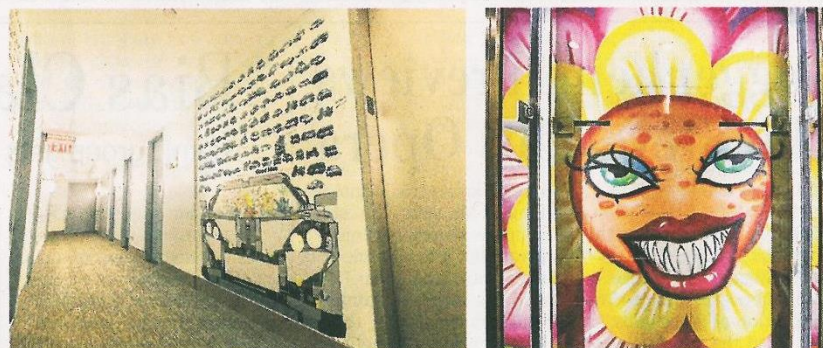
"It is definitely out-of-the-box thinking," said Garrison Buxton, who curated the art at Graffiti House.

Graffiti and street art long ago seeped into mainstream fashion and marketing. Now a few residential-building owners are embracing it in hopes of appealing to the growing ranks of young renters who no longer yearn for a home in a Manhattan high-rise and want to steep themselves in the mystique of neighborhoods where struggling artists still roam.

At a four-unit walk-up condominium building at 1257 DeKalb Ave. in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, where neighborhood graffiti abounds, Corcoran broker Daniel Cohen brought in local artists to dress up bare-white stairway landings.



The Graffiti House in Queens, above, and below right. Artwork inside a Brooklyn building, below left.



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The artists sketched on the walls and used graffiti paint markers to depict Brooklyn scenes, including a graffiti-filled building.

At 66 Rockwell, a 44-story rental building that opened in 2014 in the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District, the white hallways were a challenge, said Andrew Levison, a principal and director of acquisitions and asset management at Dermot Co. After spending heavily on amenities, the budget for decoration was limited.

So earlier this year, when competing rental towers were getting ready to come on the market, the company commissioned 19 artists to create an exhibition and permanent art installations along 18 long corridors in the building. It was called Hallway Hijack.

Some pieces were graffiti-like and others more abstract. On the 33rd floor, Xu Wang, an artist who lives in China and in Queens, created a large taxicab with radiant flowers growing out of the front seat. Nearby

were his small drawings of many taxis cabs from around the world, a homage to his father, who was a taxi driver in China.

The idea for Graffiti House grew out of the neighborhood. The building is on Welling Court, a small, elbow-shaped street near the East River and the center of a large street-art project organized by Mr. Buxton. Each June, artists paint or repaint 150 murals on building walls and other surfaces throughout the area.