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Mr. Hensen and his designers found old city photos of the original 1910 façade in order to authentically restore it.

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NEW YORK CITY | LISTING OF THE DAY

# A Modern Makeover for a Former Monastery in Hell's Kitchen

Extensive renovations have transformed a New York townhouse from a monk's life to the high life

BY HADLEY FREL | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 6, 2016

Listing of the Day

**Location:** West 51st Street, New York, New York **Price:** \$14 million



After 20 years of being "a Wall Street guy," Mr. Hansen, was ready to have some fun transforming the property into a single-family home. His goal was to make it into a paradoxical house of wonders—one whose façade took you back to 1910, when the home was built, while the inside would feature modern luxury, stripped of the "overly ornate" vibe of so many old New York townhouses.

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That an owner would call the renovation of his townhouse "fun" might seem like a joke—all the more so when you learn that the home used to be a veritable monastery. Before Mr. Hansen purchased the property from the Archdiocese of New York, the monks had lived, trained, and slept there, while focusing their community work on the surrounding Hell's Kitchen neighborhood.

But talking with Mr. Hansen can't hide his cheerful enthusiasm as he rattles off a list of impressive tasks carried out: They restored the scroll work, and put the stoop back on the building to replicate the look it originally had through the 1930s. They installed smart technology into everything from the entertainment center to the blinds on the windows.

Most impressively, in order to expand the master bedroom suite, which is a duplex on the fifth and sixth floors, they cantilevered the addition over the backyard.

The real luxury, according to listing agent Brian Meier, is in the quality of the details: "The plumbing is like that of a 40-unit condo building; they've got the whole house backed up with a generator." Though in "total disrepair" when Mr. Hansen purchased it in 2011, the house was blessed with good bones—namely, a width of 25 feet. "A single-family 25 feet wide?" Mr. Meier says, "They barely exist!" And because the house has an old-school poured-concrete foundation, its width didn't have to be supported by a beam in the middle that "chops it up," Mr. Meier explains, "so it's open; it feels like a loft, even."

## The Stats

The six-floor townhouse has six bedrooms, five full and three partial bathrooms, and clocks in at 7,003 square feet.

## Design Pedigree

Mr. Hansen worked with Bill Suk of Suk Design Group for the renovation.