

The New York Times

Big Deal *They Love New York*

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By JOSH BARBANEL

EVER wonder who is buying the new glass-walled penthouses floating above Manhattan, where the roar of traffic fades, and clouds scud across the New Jersey skyline?

On the 37th and 38th floor of the Ariel East, at Broadway and West 99th Street, Jeff Grady of Charleston, S.C., and his family have created a modernist “I Love New York” getaway, with curtains of silk-screened images of New York City landmarks. A bathroom is wallpapered with covers from Rolling Stone magazine. Chair backs have silk-screened faces of famous people.

Mr. Grady was a recently divorced dot-com casualty back in 2001 when he bought one of the first Apple iPods and discovered it came without a case. He created, he said, the first company to market iPod accessories, Digital Lifestyle Outfitters. Last year, he sold out to Royal Philips Electronics. At the time, the company had annual sales of \$100 million.

With newfound wealth, Mr. Grady joined a group called Tiger 21, for wealthy investors wanting to share their experiences with one another. Since his remarriage, he and his family have begun making monthly trips to New York, to attend group meetings, concerts and the theater.

“We would get a \$10,000 bill from the Ritz,” he said. “After I got a couple of those, I said, ‘Let’s look for a little apartment somewhere.’”

Through a friend, Mr. Grady was introduced to Amelia S. Gewirtz, a broker at Halstead Property, and began looking at “everything on the market up to \$12 million and down to \$2 million to \$3 million,” he said. He and his wife, though, fell in love with Ariel East, a narrow glass tower, which, like the nearby Ariel West, rises so far above the neighborhood that it provoked neighborhood outrage and a ban on similar buildings.

But when you’re living in the clouds, such noisy concerns seem so far away. The duplex has 4,130 square feet, with three bedrooms (though a library and family room can easily be converted to extra bedrooms) as well as a fireplace and an 88-square-foot terrace.



Mr. Grady paid \$6 million, about 12 percent below the original asking price of nearly \$6.8 million. That makes his apartment one of the most expensive condominiums above West 96th Street. The deal was closed in late May.

Mr. Grady said it was his love of music that had drawn him to the iPod and accessories, and turned his career around.

But his neighbors need not worry. Mr. Grady has no plans to put a recording studio in his duplex. He is working on plans to put one in a finished barn next to a home he bought in northern Idaho.

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