

Along the High Line: Top this!

Condos With Pools and Huge Art Along the High Line



Condos With a Watery Theme

SCDA Architects

By C.J. HUGHES

Soo K. Chan, an architect and developer from Singapore who has designed and built residences, hotels and museums around the world, is launching his first two projects in the United States in New York City. And it seems as if Mr. Chan and his company, SCDA Architects, intend to come on strong, with two condominiums along that magnet for brand-name architects, the High Line.

Both projects will have a watery theme. The facades of his 515 Highline, a 12-unit condo at 515 West 29th Street in West Chelsea that will almost touch the elevated park, will be rippled like the surface of a sea.

And Soori High Line, a 27-unit condo across the street at 522 West 29th, will have not only rooftop pools for residents of its triplex penthouses. More than a dozen lower-floor apartments will also come with private pools to allow residents to float above it all while contemplating the brash buildings that increasingly populate the surrounding blocks.

"There are a lot of attention-grabbing attempts here, and if they become gimmicky, it's unfortunate," said Cary Tamarkin, another architect-developer, whose 508 West 24th Street, a 15-unit condo with a giant clock facing the High Line, is nearly complete. "But I think these kinds of buildings are only good for a neighborhood that's becoming a museum of architecture."

Soori High Line, which has a boxy 11-story shape

that could be considered subdued for the area, was developed by a team that includes Singapore-based Oriel, of which Mr. Chan is a managing principal, and the New York-based Siras Development. The interiors of the two- to five-bedroom units have ceilings that soar as high as 18 feet, and some walls made of a single sheet of glass.

But the pool-packed Soori High Line may steal the show. The \$125 million project, between 10th and 11th Avenues, promises to provide the hard-to-beat thrill of allowing residents to take a dip without having to leave their apartments. Rectangular pools are tucked into alcoves with just one end exposed — in all seasons — to the open air. At most 24 feet long, the 4-foot-deep cubbyhole pools are not intended for serious swimmers.

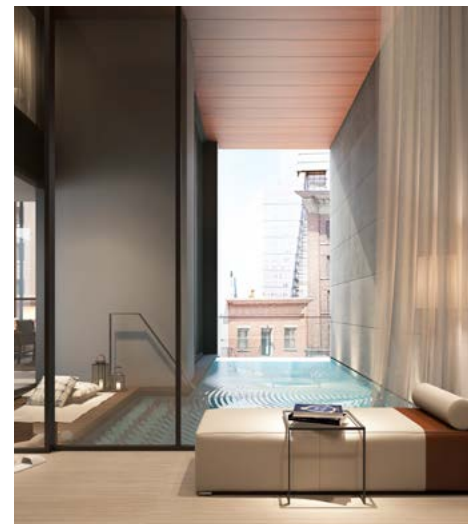
"Most of the time, it will be a focal point for people to enjoy," said Mr. Chan, who compared the project to Alila Villas Soori, the pool-adorned beachside resort he built in Bali. At the luxury villas, indoor and outdoor spaces can seem indistinguishable.

New Yorkers might be loath to don swim trunks after Labor Day, so Soori High Line buyers will have the option of purchasing panels to cover the pool and turn it into a different kind of outdoor space, like a terrace, Mr. Chan explained. But because the pools can be heated to 80 degrees year round, an intrepid owner could soak while watching the snow fall.

The pools will definitely be a cornerstone of marketing efforts, said John Gomes, a broker with

Douglas Elliman and a leader of the sales team. "They're so cool, whether you take a dip every day or not."

Since marketing began in Singapore this summer, five units have sold at the building; prices start at about \$3,000 a square foot, or \$3.7 million for two-bedrooms. The project is scheduled to open in spring 2016.



Sixteen of the units in the condo will have private pools. SCDA Architects



The Alcove pools, at most 24 feet long, will be more submerged contemplation of the cityscape than for serious laps.

SCDA Architects

“We’re definitely going after buyers from that part of the world,” said Ashwin Verma, a Siras managing partner and a developer who has been active in the High Line area, though through Blackhouse Development.

While many buildings in Manhattan have swimming pools, they tend to be of the shared indoor or rooftop variety. According to a mid-August search of StreetEasy, the real estate website, 705 co-ops and condos for sale advertised pool access, with a few private pools existing in townhouses.

At 515 Highline, meanwhile, Mr. Chan went with a more exuberant exterior, covering the northern and southern sides with curvy glass fins, a treatment similar to one he used on the toy museum he designed in Singapore.

Mr. Chan is an investor in the 11-story project, which will have 12 apartments, most floor-throughs; its developer is the Bauhouse Group of New York.

The \$70 million project broke ground this summer and will be completed at the end of 2015.

The building’s ribbed facade is not its only unusual feature. It sits at a place where the High Line takes a sharp turn, which will give every apartment a view of the High Line, developers say.

And, a dumbwaiter will run from each home to a large kitchen in the basement, so residents can have extra space to prepare large feasts, said Joseph P. Beninati, the managing member of Bauhouse, which was formed in 2012.

In addition, a towering 65-by-45-foot space on the building’s flat eastern wall, which faces the High Line, will be dedicated to the display of large artworks. “There can never be a Nike swoosh or a Budweiser Clydesdale on it,” Mr. Beninati said.

In terms of development, the site is also unusual. Had the developers torn down the existing six-story brick building, which was used to store wire hangers for garment district businesses, they would have been forced to build a much smaller structure, since zoning laws have changed over the years.

So, Bauhouse is constructing its tower inside the brick building, as if putting a hand in a glove, so the project can be counted as a conversion and not new construction, said Chris Jones, a Bauhouse co-founder. When the glass portion reaches a certain height later this year, the brick walls will be peeled back and, “Hey, presto, this sort of new building will emerge,” Mr. Jones said.

The only original brick that will remain will serve as space for the artwork. Sales are to begin this fall,

after the condo’s offering plan is approved; prices are expected to start at \$5 million.

The High Line area is full of inventive projects, like 200 Eleventh Avenue, a high-rise where residents can park their cars next to their apartments. And a condo by Zaha Hadid, underway on West 28th Street, has curvaceous walls that recall a midcentury car.

Mr. Chan will find himself in good company, Mr. Beninati said. “Twenty years from now, the students from Yale School of Architecture will be taking field trips down here to go and see some of this generation’s best talents.”