



Private Property, Washington Heights

Architect: RMF Bryant
Client: Private Client

Located in the Jumel Terrace Historic District of Washington Heights in north Manhattan, this late 19th century 3 storey apartment house has not only been returned to its former glory, but has been beautifully enhanced with a state-of-the-art kitchen, stunning contemporary bathrooms and rooftop space.

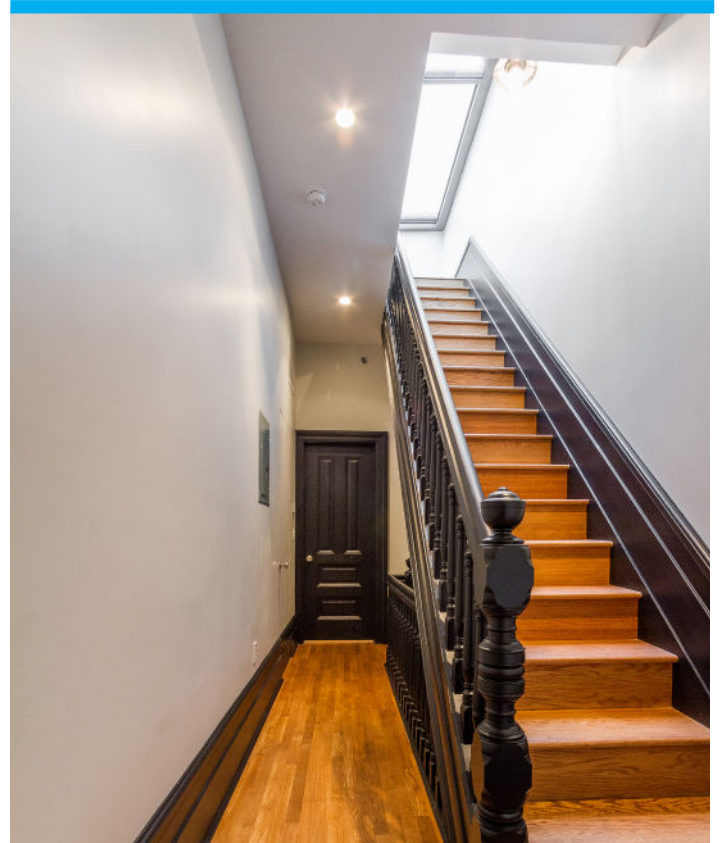
The glazed three-wall box rooflight supplied by Glazing Vision is a stunning 21st century addition to this property, helping to successfully unlock that all-important roof top space in this metropolitan city. Dixon Projects, a real estate company with a substantial portfolio of property around New York and New Jersey, were keen to realise the huge potential of this attractive old colonial townhouse.

Built in 1899, set on a plot of 1,911 sqft and offering almost 3600 sqft of internal space, it presented an eclectic mix of original features – very high ceilings complete with decorative moldings, huge windows, as well as a plethora of rich historical fittings and fixtures. This included dark hardwood floors and doors, elegant tiled fireplaces, wood paneling to the stairwell to complement the ornately carved balustrade, and exquisite cornices and architraves. The impressive front entrance, reached from the pavement by imposing stone stairs, looked out onto a wide avenue with established trees. The location itself was also superb: just around the corner from Manhattan's oldest house, the Morris Jumel Mansion and a stone's throw from the lush playgrounds of Highbridge Park on the River Harlem and Roger Morris Park.

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Dixon Projects, together with the local architect RMF Bryant, have succeeded in combining the old with the new in this grandiose house right from the basement to the roof. A floor-to-ceiling glass wall opens up the innovative wet-bar and relaxing lounge area on the basement level to the garden and patio. The parlour level exudes grandeur thanks to the top-of-the-range gourmet kitchen and renovated dining room, complete with a large decking space for outdoor dinner parties. The impressive hardwood staircase has been retained and painstakingly restored, and this elegantly links the parlour floor to the upper floors where the luxurious finishes continue into bright rooms that accommodate additional living areas and ultra-modern bathrooms.

It is on the roof that Dixon Projects were especially ambitious and forward thinking. Keen to utilise the huge space on the flat roof top as well as to add further value to the property, Dixon were looking for an innovative and contemporary “glass box”.



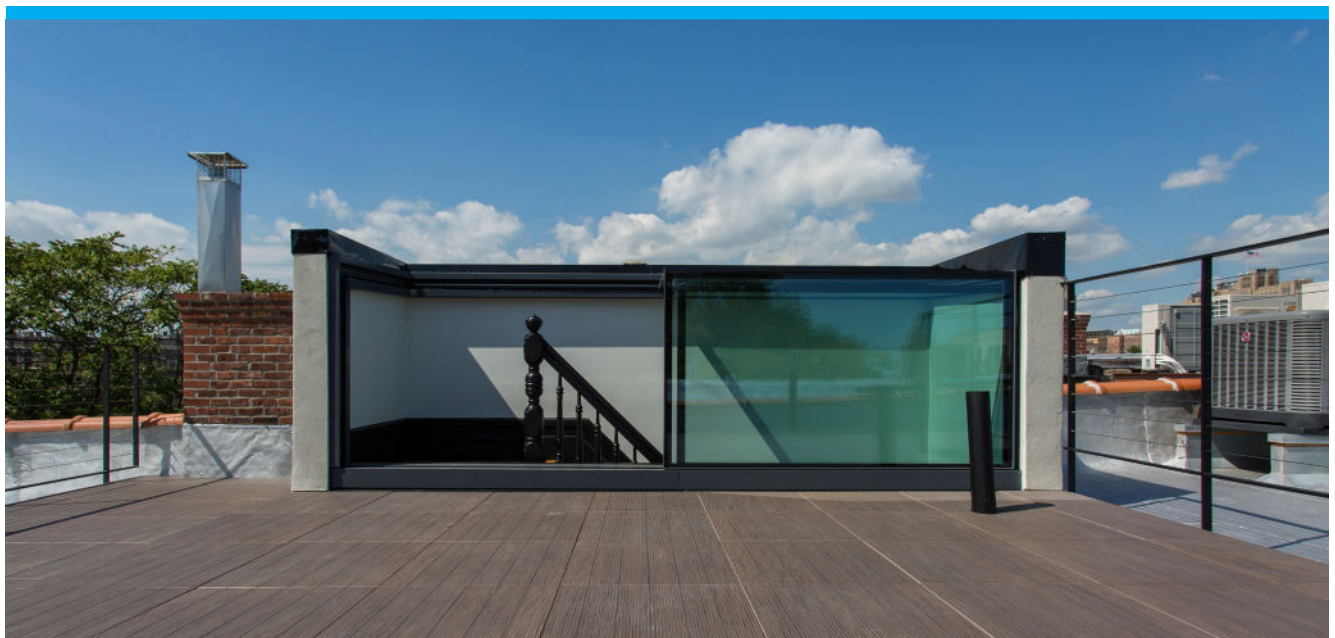
This needed to maximise the amount of natural daylight coming into the floor below whilst offering easy access to the terrace. A lack of suitable options from American glazing suppliers led Dixon Projects to look abroad. Following extensive research and an on-site meeting with Glazing Vision's senior management, Dixon Projects decided upon Glazing Vision's three-wall box rooflight, which offered both the high quality and technical features that they were seeking.

Approval from the “Landmarks Preservation Committee (LPC)” had to be secured for the box rooflight as the house was a listed property; a critical requirement to this was that it should not be visible from the roadside/pathways. Once approved, the box rooflight was then precision-engineered to the size required by the client, manufactured entirely at Glazing Vision's factory in Suffolk, England, pre-assembled, crated and finally shipped to Dixon Projects in NYC. In addition, the installation of the box rooflight including pre-install surveys and remedial building work to ensure the surrounding walls on the roof top were straight were all supervised by Glazing Vision's own office in the US.

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The box rooflight was fixed onto 3 walls without the need for additional balustrading, thereby facilitating the full use of the roof top terrace. The lack of visible kerb fixings through the use of an extruded external clip-on cover, together with the sleek aluminium framework in a classic slate grey exterior finish and the perfectly edged glass-to-glass joints combined to create a stunning, contemporary “glass sculpture” to the top of this grand property. The decorative balustrade used on the small stairwell up to the box rooflight mirrored the interior design and gave a nod to the history of the house.



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A critical consideration for Dixon Projects was that the box roof light should be simple and safe to operate. The retractable glazed section, which slides over the fixed section of glass, is operated at the touch of a button. This provides a clear 50% opening and sufficient head height for easy access. Thus the resident can climb the stairwell whilst the rooflight is retracting into its open position, without having to “bow their head”. The secure manual override also detects movement during the open/close operation to provide the essential safety features.

As with the floor-to-ceiling windows on the lower floors, so too the large glazed sections of the box roof light were in keeping with the airy aesthetic that Dixon Projects had created throughout the house. The box rooflight ensured that the interior of the upper floor of the house was flooded with natural daylight during the day. At night the resident could enjoy an unadulterated view of the night sky.

The box rooflight provided the prerequisite easy access to the new roof top terrace, which had been fitted with complimentary decking and a minimal, steel parameter balustrade that added to the sense of openness and light. The full expanse of the roof top now provided the resident with an additional “room with a view”: an enviable place to entertain guests, to dine in the open and to relax. Most impressively, occupants can enjoy the amazing 360 degree views towards the beautifully restored iron High Bridge, the adjacent parklands running alongside the Harlem River, and ultimately towards the iconic skyline of downtown Manhattan.

To find out more about specifying rooflights for access, contact us on 01379 658 300 or request a cpd.

