





ABOVE: The super-chic interior of Aby Rosen's new W South Beach hotel in Miami. BELOW: Examples of the dramatic interiors and exterior of the 40 Bond residences in New York, created with Ian Schrager



PRIVATE VIEW

Legendary property mogul Aby Rosen collects New York landmarks the way he collects works of art. So what's next on his shopping list?

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Standing in his art-packed office in the prestigious Lever House (he owns the building), Aby Rosen takes in the Manhattan skyline. There are many spectacular terraces in New York, but standing on his feels like looking out at a private kingdom, with sweeping views of Park Avenue and the Seagram building, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (and also owned by Rosen). New York is clearly this superstar developer's playground.

Rosen, 49, is dressed in black (black polo shirt, black trousers and dark loafers), and his demeanor is both New York aristocrat and 'billionaire casual Friday'. 'I don't like to wear suits unless I have meetings,' he says.

His signature silver hair frames a tanned, mostly serious face that only occasionally relaxes to a smile, usually when talking about the subjects of dearth, his prolific art collection, and his gorgeous wife, the psychiatrist and socialite Samantha Boardman.

Yes, there is a recession, of course, and property has been hit hard. Some developers in this city are falling by the wayside. At Lever House, which is favoured by hedge-fund and financial firms, some tenants are crying for rent reductions, but overall Rosen is feeling optimistic.

'Basically, I'm very opportunistic,' he says. 'Whenever the market is slow, we take control of something. I want to work with office buildings and hotels. And retail. Shoppers do not know where they are right now,' he adds, noting that even he stopped shopping, briefly, but is back. 'I get my fix from buying art and furniture, 20th-century stuff.'

He is also shopping for existing hotels. 'We are looking to buy 10 to 12 assets to rework and rebrand them.'

Rosen's offices are a showcase for art, as is his Hampton estate and his Upper East Side townhouse (and another townhouse which, if it sells for the asking price of \$75 million, will be the most expensive Manhattan property ever). Lever House is adorned with Warhols and Basquats. Rosen admires a recent addition, Marc Newson's Voronoi Shelf, made of white Carrera marble. At the last count, he had more than 450 works. 'I love photography and have a huge collection of American art from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. I believe you have to have great art in buildings.'

Rosen, who was born in Frankfurt in 1960, moved to New York in 1987 where he apprenticed at a real-estate/brokerage firm. He co-founded RFR in 1991, which now

has an impressive portfolio of hotels, 21 office buildings and nine residential buildings, mostly in New York. He also has projects in Miami and Tel Aviv.

Not bad for a kid who started working for his father's small property firm in Frankfurt when he was 16, while he went to law school.

Rosen has worked on several collaborations with longtime friend and hotelier-nursed-developer Ian Schrager, including 40 Bond, a smart residential building, plus the chic Gramercy Park Hotel in New York. The two met in 1991, and Rosen became a silent partner in the Delano hotel in Miami. Then, 15 years on, they

decided to work together again. They are planning two hotels in the area of the High Line, the elevated railway line reborn as a garden, bordering the Meatpacking District and Chelsea. Rosen is also working on a Shangri-La hotel project on Lexington and 53rd Street, but currently everything is on hold. 'No one wants to pull the trigger. I think by spring next year, it will all be a lot better.'

In Miami, he has just finished the W South Beach, a stylish 408-unit condo hotel – every room with a beach view – and W's first property in Miami. They are, he says, selling in spite of a soft market.

His next big project is an entertainment centre in Germany which will include a residential hotel. 'We are doing lots of prototype ideas where I can take something and make it into something new, and try to replicate it. Something that can be branded. He also just opened a business hotel in Frankfurt. But it's cool. The city didn't have that.'

Did Rosen ever think he'd be so successful? 'I am really ballsy and very determined,' he says. 'Greed is the challenge. You don't want to be carried away by ambition. You know in hindsight the projects you ought to be in, and those you ought to be out of.'

So what does Rosen consider crucial for beautiful residential design? 'High quality.' In New York this means uptown design in downtown buildings. 'I like things the way Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue used to be, with high ceilings and powder rooms, and beautiful bathrooms. If the apartment ages you still want to have classic.'

The most important room? 'Every residence must have very beautiful bathrooms – spacious, marble and well designed. I take a bubble bath every day.'



ABOVE: The bar at W South Beach hotel where 'Run Dog Eat Dog' by Christopher Wool is just one of the carefully chosen artworks on display