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## Checking In With Aero

Building on the success of his SoHo hotel, 60 Thompson,  
Thomas O'Brien tops it off with a penthouse





rights, and resistance from neighbors who, let's face it, had no reason to believe that the Pomerancs weren't a bunch of real-estate developers out to destroy the neighborhood. Much, much later, the hotel's 12-story, 100-room interior was ready for the services of Thomas O'Brien, the cofounder of Aero Studios and designer of both residential and retail spaces for Giorgio Armani and Ralph Lauren. (O'Brien was suggested by night-club impresario Randi Gerber, who'd enlisted the master of "warm modernism" to design two of his Whiskey Bars.)

For his first foray into the world of hotel design, O'Brien drew inspiration from a number of images. A photo of Piet Mondrian's studio played out in the staircase to 60 Thompson's second-floor lobby, while the banquette that runs the length of the lobby derives from a 1940s photograph of Burt Lancaster lounging on a sofa at home in Palm Springs, California. A marble-floored pool in ancient Pompeii found an interpretation in the foyer and again in the marble bathrooms. And the 1930s French minimalism of Jean-Michel Frank comes through in the clean proportions and subdued colors everywhere: from the restaurant, Thom, to the Thompson Loft, as the 1,100-square-foot duplex penthouse is known.

The last part of the hotel to be completed, the penthouse—like any other hotel penthouse—is the largest, most expensive suite in the building. Unlike a standard hotel →

*Previous spread, left: Retro-hip luxury pervades every aspect of SoHo hotel 60 Thompson's interior by Aero Studios cofounder Thomas O'Brien.*

*Previous spread, right: In the duplex penthouse, stairs with painted steel handrails lead up to the master bedroom. The oak floor was polyurethaned three times for a "residential" look, completed by a cowhide rug. O'Brien designed the leather-cowled Thompson slipper chair.*

*Top, left: A fireplace of walnut and slate warms the master bedroom.*

*Above, left: In the master bedroom, two of O'Brien's chenille-cowled Modern ottomans sit at the foot of his Jefferson bed.*

*Opposite: O'Brien chose simple silk draperies and deployed his own Studio sofa, Wooster tray table, Modern ottoman, and Bennet storage box, doubling here as a cocktail table. The Artichoke pendant is a Paul Henningsen design.*

PHOTOGRAPH: LAURA RESEN

FOUR YEARS AGO, nothing suggested that 60 Thompson Street would one day become 60 Thompson. Back then, an old metalwork shop held claim to the address. But when members of the Pomeranc Group, a family-run New Jersey real-estate development firm, glimpsed a "for sale" sign in the building's window, they saw nothing but boutique-hotel possibility. "Thompson Street is inherently unique," says partner Jason Pomeranc. "Within 100 feet, you have the epicenter of SoHo nightlife and retail. But you also have Thompson itself, a little bohemian oasis."

For the design of the future hotel, the Pomeranc Group hired York Hunter Construction Services and embarked on an extremely lengthy building process. Stumbling blocks included SoHo zoning, negotiations over air





Virtually all the furniture comes from the collection that O'Brien designs for Hickory Chair. In the downstairs seating area, he deployed his own slipper chair, ottoman, sofa, and tray table. His storage box in mahogany with railroad-silver hardware doubles here as a cocktail table.

A stairway with 1930s-inspired painted steel handrails leads to the upper-floor master bedroom, with its asymmetrical fireplace of walnut and slate. Two chenille-covered ottomans sit at the foot of the mahogany four-poster, and O'Brien paired his side chair and a sleek desk with metal legs. The master bath combines Levanto and Carrara marble tiles with glass-and-chrome custom towel bars to set a jazz-age mood. In the second bedroom, leather wall panels and a walnut headboard epitomize O'Brien's penchant for "warm modernism." It all adds up, says Pomeranc, to "forward but timeless."

Given the A-list celebrities and VIPs who have passed through 60 Thompson in the past year, you'd think that hotelier Pomeranc would be confident in his success. But not until Russell Crowe, a frequent guest, asked if he could purchase the penthouse did Pomeranc feel he'd accomplished his goal: "When someone walks in, he should feel like he's walking into a great Sodlo apartment." And anyone who questions O'Brien's execution of that concept should just try making a reservation.

—Kimberly Good

*Above, left:* O'Brien chose Levanto marble walls and a Carrara marble floor for the master bath. The glass-and-chrome towel bars are custom.

*Left:* In the second bedroom, leather wall panels and a walnut headboard epitomize the designer's talent for "warm modernism."

*Opposite:* Teak seating occupies a terrace overlooking Sixth Avenue.

PROJECT TEAM: LEO MASCOTTE, MARI BAILESTRAZZI

BATHROBE: FRETTE. SLIPPER-CHAIR, SOFA, COCKTAIL TABLE, OTTOMAN, TRAY TABLE (DOWNSTAIRS); MIRROR, TABLES, CHAIRS, DESK, OTTOMAN; BED, BEDSIDE TABLE (MASTER BEDROOM). HICKORY CHAIR COMPANY. PILLOW FABRICATION (DOWNSTAIRS, BEDROOMS). DOWN DECOR. OTTOMAN FABRIC (MASTER BEDROOM). KRAFET. CUSTOM LAMPS (MASTER BEDROOM, DOWNSTAIRS). SIDE TABLE (DOWNSTAIRS). LEATHER WALL PANELS. CUSTOM HEADBOARD (SECOND BEDROOM). ERRE STUDIOS. PENDANT (DOWNSTAIRS). LOUIS POULSEN LIGHTING. SINK (BATHROOM). C.P. HART. TILE: WALKER ZINGER. SURFING (TERRACES SMITH & HAWKEN). PILLOWS, CAMP STOOL, TABLE CONSTRUCTION: GENERAL CONTRACTOR: YORK HUNTER CONSTRUCTION SERVICES.

penthouse, this one offers a 360-degree view of Manhattan, by virtue of lushly planted terraces on three sides, and fulfills Pomeranc's request that the space be "un-hotel-like." Applying residential standards involved a number of impractical decisions, however. In a business where every square foot has a dollar sign attached, the double-height residential-loft concept was considered an inefficient use of space. O'Brien's choice of cool greens, browns, and eggplant tones also went against conventional wisdom. "The tendency in commercial projects is to turn it all brown, so it doesn't show dirt," says the designer. He chose simple ecru silk draperies, allowing natural light from double-height windows to pour in, and had oak floors polyurethaned three times to achieve a walnut-colored "residential" gleam.

