



LEFT: The SoHo Loft incorporates FSC-certified wood and countertops made of paperstone, a hardened, compressed paper material.

BELOW: The same materials were used in the Marcotte Loft, and both spaces also include LED light fixtures and efficient HVAC systems.

#### MARCOTTE AND SOHO LOFTS

## sleight of hand

Utilizing what other architects might consider liabilities, Sayigh+Duman brings a distinctive and sustainable perspective to several New York residences

by Lynn Russo Whyllly

**Renovating residential spaces in the middle of a crowded, booming metropolis** such as New York or Los Angeles can be trying, but Sayigh+Duman LLC thrives on the challenge. The two-year-old contemporary architecture firm has a way of looking at ordinary or challenging spaces and seeing distinctive possibilities. Principals Laith Sayigh and Koray Duman have turned walls into usable storage spaces, created the illusion of walls where none exist, and created the illusion of open spaces where there are walls. In short, the firm's members are conversion specialists who see opportunities everywhere.

One example is the Marcotte Loft in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. The owner of this 1,200-square-foot property had great eighth-floor views of the New York skyline and wanted to be able to see it no matter where he was in the apartment. "That view was





"We cut the space horizontally and inserted mirrors, ... [which] are reflecting off themselves to create a ricochet of images to give the impression of inside and outside together."

—Laila Sayigh, Principal



TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT: Sayigh+Duman created the SoHo Loft by combining two adjoining 650-square-foot studio spaces. Shown here are the main living space and a bedroom. LEFT, RIGHT: The Marcotte Loft is designed to take advantage of its owner's eighth-floor view from any room, so the bedroom doors are now transparent, and the fireplace is open on both its living room and bedroom sides.



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—Koray Duman, Principal

the driver behind the design," Duman says. "We replaced the bedroom door with one that is transparent and built a fireplace between the living room and bedroom that was open on both sides."

For the SoHo Loft, the client charged the firm with combining two 650-square-foot studios into a 1,200-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath loft. "There was one big wall that separates the main bedroom from the living room," Duman says. "The wall was so thick that we were able to build storage units into it, including a closet and a space for A/V equipment and a TV. Everything else around the wall we left as clean open space."

Sayigh, born in the United Kingdom but raised in Kuwait, came to the United States to work after earning bachelor's and master's degrees in England. Duman emigrated from Turkey to pursue his master's degree in architecture at UCLA. When the pair met in 2009, Duman was already running his own studio, Ur+Node, in New York. "We did a competition together, then he decided to join me as a partner," Duman says. They changed the name of the company to Sayigh+Duman later that year.

Together and separately, their work has been shown nationally and abroad, and it has appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Architectural Record*, among others. After two short years, Sayigh+Duman has garnered a reputation as a contemporary multidisciplinary architectural firm with a diverse commercial and residential portfolio. In January 2010, the architects won a contest to design the 6,500-square-foot flagship outlet for Design Within Reach, a Stamford, Connecticut-based furniture store. They are also currently working on a new residence in Los Angeles, and penthouse and interior-design projects in the Tribeca and Chelsea neighborhoods of New York City.

Sustainable design is a core value for the firm, and it is committed to completing as many LEED-certified projects as possible. "We like to approach all of our projects in a way that incorporates both green and smart technology," Sayigh says, adding that he hopes to offer up solutions that bring together a marriage of both design and cutting-edge materials and are produced with sustainability in mind. Often, Duman says, clients with a single project think they can't make an environmental impact, but the forward-thinking architects believe otherwise. In both the Marcotte and SoHo lofts, tile flooring was made from recycled ceramic, and the countertops were built from a compressed paper called paperstone. All the wood used was FSC-certified, the lighting was converted to LED fixtures, and window air-conditioners were replaced with more efficient HVAC systems.

In the lobby of a five-story Fifth Avenue office building, Sayigh+Duman created the illusion of open spaces to combat several difficult walls. "We cut the space horizontally and inserted mirrors," Sayigh says. "Some of the imagery is from the outside coming in. The mirrors are reflecting off themselves to create a ricochet of images to give the impression of inside and outside together."

And the designers aren't afraid to try something new, either. Outside a 19<sup>th</sup> Street residential building, the firm created a one-of-a-kind canopy. "We wanted it to appear to be floating and not have any structural components holding it," Sayigh says. "We worked with structural engineers Silman Associates to produce a stressed-skin membrane, which means the metal canopy is folded. By folding the metal planes, it created structural integrity and allowed us to span large distances without any support." The forward-looking design reduced the amount of metal in the construction, making it environmentally friendly.

To keep ideas fresh, the studio often collaborates with artists and engineers. "A lot of the work we do is derived from thinking out of the box," Duman says, "and we look to different disciplines for inspiration—as well as to some of the latest technologies, such as computer-aided design." Moving forward, Sayigh+Duman would like to take its talent home to the Middle East as well as to other emerging markets around the world, where it can see the distinctive possibilities in larger projects. **gb&d**




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