

Watch A New Prefab Building Rise In NYC, Stack By Stack

GLUCK+ WILL SOON COMPLETE THE MOST CHALLENGING CONSTRUCTION PHASE OF THEIR NEW MODULAR RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURE, THE STACK. TURNS OUT, IT WASN'T ALL THAT DIFFICULT.

In the 1920s, modular, prefabricated housing was at the forefront of modernism's cause, the clarion call that galvanized avant-garde architects to action. They developed innovative construction techniques that promised to standardize the construction of the house (or more accurately, the apartment unit) and make it reproducible like a car or radiator. Needless to say, their efforts never went mainstream.

A century later, modular housing is only now getting on its legs—in New York, at least. A Bloomberg-sponsored competition earlier this year asked architects to design the "micro-units" that some say could cure the city's housing shortage. The submissions made use of prefab construction methods, with modules being built then shipped to the site and hoisted into place. The winning design will be built as a case study next

year, but if anyone is wondering what the future looks like, then take the A train to 4857 Broadway in Manhattan.



The whole process is more assemblage than construction, as evidenced by the remarkably "dry" stacking procedure (see the time-lapse video above). The modules are built off-site, inside a hangar-like factory in rural Pennsylvania, whose controlled, lab-like conditions are repeatedly praised by the project's chief architect, Peter Gluck. "Normal construction is a nightmare," he tells Co.Design. But by building indoors, away from the elements and with a concentrated group of crew members, "you can easily supervise what's being done, whereas in normal construction, that's really hard to maintain."

The modular construction forces the architects to make all design decisions ahead of time, meaning that the building blocks are shipped to the site with all their features and interior partitions preconfigured. This cuts down on on-site operations and the many mistakes that inevitably arise from them.



The video captures the last few months or so of construction, but mostly spotlights the stacking process, which make the modules look like giant Jenga pieces neatly filed into rows. For the time being, the units are shrouded with protective coverings, masking the pixelated facade underneath. When it's unveiled, though, the neighborhood will welcome a dynamic new street front, while the city will have ushered in a new chapter of its building tradition. Maybe.



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