





NEW YORK
 COUNTRY USA
 ARCHITECT GLUCK+ YEAR 2009

URBAN TOWNHOUSE

With the Urban Townhouse, architects GLUCK+ adapted the traditional New York residence to enhance its sense of retreat from the urban environment. Its presence is concealed behind a full-height metal screen, with a complex pattern shaped from water-cut aluminum. This urban veil shields a tall, narrow row house with an unconventional plan. To make the most of the site—and to preserve a sense of privacy—the architects placed the staircase at the very front of the plan in a location typically taken up by a parlour or front room.

GLUCK+ describes the approach as akin to that of “open loft living,” but with the practicality of having a row house right on a New York street. Inside, the staircase winds around an elevator core, simultaneously serving as a spectacular vertical four-story library, a towering shelf stack that runs right through to the top of the house. The townhouse is characteristically narrow—38 feet (11.5 m) deep on a 70-foot (21 m) site—and the floors are treated as a series of independent, open-plan spaces, evoking the character and space of a traditional New York loft. The main living room occupies a mezzanine space above a double-height dining area, opening onto a small courtyard garden; there is also a roof terrace on the top floor. Glass floors and balustrades help bring light down the stairwell. The metal facade is perforated by a brick-inspired abstract pattern that allows even more light to filter in and out of the house. At dusk and after dark, it glows from within, supplemented by two thin strips of glazing on either side of the panel.

At the rear, the facade is all glass, filling the open-plan living spaces with light. A simple material palette of brick, stone, and wood is used throughout, even in the courtyard garden. The project was designed to accommodate a relatively low budget and was correspondingly straightforward to build. Slotted in-between two older buildings, it gives little clue as to the invigorating space within.



1 The plan includes a master suite that spans the fourth floor. 2 The main living room is on a mezzanine level. 3 Beneath it sits the kitchen and double-height dining room. 4 The metal facade is cut with a pattern inspired by the surrounding brick buildings.