The iconic Clock Tower in DUMBO is as much a symbol of innovation and delight as its new owners, Jean Michele, creative director of Cirque du Soleil, and Jessica, his aerialist wife. The young family has two daughters and are often accompanied by Jean’s parents who love New York and often help with child care. The Michele’s vision for their second home is a “castle in the clouds” with a playful atmosphere and the best amenities. It’s a cozy refuge for relaxation and work as well as an exclusive entertainment space for dinner and fund raising parties with friends and investors.

The large clockface windows, varying floor heights, and open floor plan are all features that, while beautiful, are challenging design problems. A new enclosed entry foyer controls site lines and traffic flow while providing space for storage. Foyer closets are hidden behind panels with magnetic push doors setting up a sense of mystery and personalization. The addition of a ramp from the platform allows the more “public” first level to be accessible while a temporary ramp to the private interior elevator is stowed in nearby built-in storage. Area rugs and furnishings accentuate the curvilinear clock faces and allude to the passage of time from sunrise to sunset through gradation of color.

The living area has many different seating typologies to offer a variety of choice within the environment. It is comfortable for parties of up to 30 people as well as more intimate groups. The area transitions from active to calm through remotely controlled layered lighting. In the evening, lighting effects are implemented through coves and integrated within furniture to avoid glare and help keep the impressive views clear.

In the dining area, an expandable table and custom millwork nearby housing storage for a landing pad allows for easy transformation to a performance space for aerial acts. The lighting program is flexible and transitions for each function ranging from task lighting for homework time to dramatic effects for performances. Silk drapery, acting as a room divider, provides soft vertical lines that accentuate the three-story height and provides a backdrop for aerial performances, where theatrical RBG spotlights cast playful shadows. Smart home technology is used throughout to integrate all systems including audio.

The second level is private, with the large master suite encompassing half the floor plate. A cantilevered bed provides the feeling of suspension that the couple is so drawn to as aerial artists. The harmonious color palette is punctuated by their playful Maison Darre pieces with new upholstery inspired by Cirque du Soleil costume design.

The second level corridor gallery showcases some of the family’s most precious antique furniture. The guest bedroom is fully accessible for Jean’s parents and the girls room has bunkbeds for their slumber parties. The third level includes an office adjacent to a sound-mixing studio for Jean, where he mixes the sound and lighting used in live performances. A training area for the whole family is equipped with an indoor rock climbing cave for grip strength and a yoga area to enhance flexibility. The Solarium houses a small wet bar with a dining and lounge area on the adjacent covered roof terrace.
CONCEPT & INSPIRATION

RGB LIGHTING INSPIRED BY "SATURATED: THE ALLURE & SCIENCE OF COLOR" AT THE COOPER HEWITT.

UNIFYING GRAY WALL TREATMENTS WERE INSPIRED BY BOISERIE ON VIEW AT THE MET, GALLERY 523

A VISIT TO CARLTON & HOBBS PROMPTED THE USE OF A MORE MODERN PARQUET FLOOR PATTERN

THE INCLUSION ON JEAN COCTEAU CERAMICS WAS A RESULT OF A TRIP TO THE WINTER SHOW

THE ABOVE CONCEPT COLLAGE INTRODUCES ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN USED THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

BALANCE
RHYTHM & REPETITION
CONTRAST

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL DINING INSPIRED BY "TABLESCAPES: DESIGN FOR DINING" AT THE COOPER HEWITT

THE INCLUSION ON JEAN COCTEAU CERAMICS WAS A RESULT OF A TRIP TO THE WINTER SHOW

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SITE ANALYSIS

CLOCKTOWER TRIPLEX
FPE ARCHITECTS
IN COLLABORATION WITH OWNER TWO TREES MANAGEMENT
1 MAIN STREET
DUMBO, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

ADJACENCY MATRIX

BLOCK DIAGRAM

PRELIMINARY FLOOR PLANS

FIRST LEVEL
SECOND LEVEL
THIRD LEVEL
FOURTH LEVEL

THE MICHELE FAMILY
EVA
ABIGAIL
JESSICA