



March 10, 2011



The Constable, a new 18-unit rental conversion opening in May, is hitting the market running with apartments starting at \$5,000 per month. And did we mention it's on Canal Street?

GUNG SOHO

Canal Street gets a snazzy new look to its north

By MAX GROSS

YOU never had to trek too far along Canal Street to find a decent Rolex knockoff. What's interesting these days, though, is that you're starting to see real Rolexes here, too. Not on Canal Street,

exactly. A block or two north.

And these Rolexes aren't for sale; rather, they're on the wrists of well-beeled guests at Mondrian SoHo, the new luxe hotel at Crosby Street, between Howard and Grand, which, at 26 stories, claims to be the tallest structure in SoHo proper. (Don't say the words "Hudson Square" in front

of Donald Trump; Trump SoHo is technically west of SoHo.)

Or, you might spot a Rolex owner at Grand Street and Sixth Avenue: That site, where the Moondance Diner once stood, is now the fancy James hotel.

Both hotels have the requisite celebrity chefs: Mondrian SoHo nabbed former "Top Chef" contestant Sam Talbot for its restaurant, Imperial No. 9, and Talbot's menu consists of goodies like king crab a la plancha, fried oysters and crispy lamb belly. David

Burke Kitchen landed at the James, where Burke is whipping up dishes like oxtail with steak and cuttlefish salad with shrimp.

Indeed, lower SoHo finally seems to have attained the hotness that always eluded it.

"Historically speaking, Spring Street was always the southern border of SoHo," says RKF executive vice president Ariel Schuster. But that's changed. Commercial rents that were \$50 to \$75 [per

See **SOHO** on Page 44

SOHO IT GOES

SOHO from Page 37

square foot per year] 10 years ago are now \$400 to \$500."

And residential real estate has seen a similar climb.

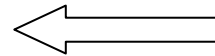
"If you had told me 10 years ago that I would be bringing in these types of rents, I probably wouldn't believe you," says Hugh Lippman, a landlord in lower SoHo who owns the company Canal Space and whose family has owned buildings in the neighborhood since 1947.

Indeed, business for landlords has been booming. Lippman had a 1,400-square-foot loft rental (with a 900-square-foot private roof terrace) at Mercer and Howard streets that he was about to put on the market with Linda Ho of Core for \$7,700. But buzz was so strong they raised the price to \$7,900. They already have an offer.

"As risky as it was, we felt that close proximity to TriBeCa" would make the area a success, says United American Land principal Albert Laboz, who developed SoHo Mews on lower West Broadway, just north of Canal.

Laboz is also opening the Constable, an 18-unit rental that spans from Canal to Howard on Mercer. (He says the one- and two-bedrooms will come to market in May and run between \$5,000 and \$7,000 per month.)

SoHo Mews was, in many ways, one of the last projects of its kind; it was designed before the recession hit and boasts a starchitect (the late Charles Gwathmey), as well as family-sized condos. The 68-unit building is 75 percent sold. And while prices dropped (they started at more than \$2,000 per square



ON THE MARKET



SOHO MEWS: Three bedrooms, 3½ baths, 2,195 square feet, with gallery, floor-to-ceiling windows, cast-iron tub and open kitchen with Jet Mist granite and Sub-Zero and Miele appliances. Agent: Shelley O'Keefe, Corcoran, 212-634-6515

261 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor ♦ New York, NY 10016
Telephone: (212) 685-4300 ♦ Fax: (212) 685-9024

www.DKCnews.com



JIMMY JAZZ: The rooftop lounge at the James hotel, Jimmy, features \$16 drinks and a more grown-up vibe than typical downtown club scenes. David Burke plans to serve finger food here.

foot), SoHo Mews averaged a respectable \$1,700 per square foot and attracted celebs like Justin Timberlake, who picked up a 2,598-square-foot penthouse late last year for nearly \$6.6 million.

And, Laboz proudly notes, construction loans have been paid back and the building closed on a deal for a \$6.5 million apartment last week.

But SoHo Mews is far from the most ambitious kid on the block when it comes to pricing. Aby Rosen's seven-unit 350 West Broadway has prices starting at \$8.65 million for a 2,902-square-foot two-bedroom (\$2,980 per square foot), and going

up to \$26 million for the 5,912-square-foot three-bedroom penthouse (\$4,397 per square foot). But this ambition hasn't been realized yet; none of the units have sold.

Over at the seven-unit 34 Greene St., between Canal and Grand, prices of the in-contract units are more than \$1,800 per square foot, and the building has just two apartments remaining.

"Traffic, in general, has increased, and confidence has been restored even more than early last year," when 34 Greene first went on the market, says broker Jason Karadus of Prudential Douglas Elliman, who is

selling the building.

In fact, Karadus says, the area has done so well that the Sorgente Group, the developer of 34 Greene, just closed on three buildings on White Street, three blocks south of 34 Greene. The company is planning on turning them into another condo project.

For an area with strict height and landmarking restrictions, there's a surprising amount of buzz among developers. At 325 West Broadway (a.k.a. the Chocolate Factory), a conversion that was shelved in the wake of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, a condo plan is currently being put together.

Sources say it will be similar to the original 28-unit project, and the plan should be ready by the fall.

And there has been talk that Stawski Partners, which owns the lot at 27 Wooster St., is toying with the idea of building luxury lofts.

For residential developers, the rise of sleek new hotels with their hip restaurants and bars can only make the area more inviting.

Armin Amiri's cozy Mr. H at the Mondrian SoHo — where Kanye West hung out during Fashion Week after he shot dollar bills out of confetti cannons before the hotel was technically open — is already one of downtown's most impenetrable nightspots. (Knowing Amiri and his door dude, Disco, from Bungalow 8 can help.)

The James has a lounge on its roof called Jimmy, which is being run by nightlife/restaurant veterans David Rabin, Larry Poston and Johnny Swet, and features \$16 drinks and a pool.

"It's like a baby nightclub," says Burke, who will cater Jimmy. "I think it's comfortable for a guy my age [49] to have a couple of drinks without getting knocked into" by mobs of people.

And when the weather gets better, Burke hopes to set up a mini-farmers market in the hotel's outdoor space.

"We're going to do stuff on the patio [on weekends] where we'll have someone talking about cheeses, someone talking about coffee. It'll be very casual — just three or four or five [vendors]. Something open for the public, very simple."

Alas, no Rolexes.

