

August 9, 2021  
Fast Company

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## Everyone gets a stoop in this inside-out apartment building

The Brooklyn brownstone comes to apartment living.

By Nate Berg

Impressions: 741428



[Image: Darcstudio/Tankhouse/ SO—IL]

Social life in a typical apartment building is limited. Aside from a few common areas or the infrequent passing-by of a neighbor in the hallway, apartment dwellers can sometimes feel as if they're living alone in large buildings full of other people they rarely see.

Brooklyn-based developer [Tankhouse](#) is hoping to shift that paradigm with a series of new residential buildings in the borough that reimagine the way that people move into and through apartment buildings. The buildings take cues from a classic element of New York architecture: the apartment building stoop.

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*[Image: Darcstudio/Tankhouse/SO—IL]*

“One of the things that people associate with Brooklyn is the predominant building type, which is brownstones. And the way that brownstones relate to the street is through the hybrid space of the stoop,” says Tankhouse co-founder Sebastian Mendez. “It’s private but it also has this important public component because it’s where people interact with their neighbors.”

For [a new 18-unit condo project](#) that’s nearing completion, Tankhouse teamed with Brooklyn-based architects [SO—IL](#), which is known for modern and minimal designs for buildings including a [social housing project](#) in Leon, Mexico, and [art galleries](#) around the world. SO—IL’s approach was to bring the public-private hybrid of the stoop inside the building, and inject it into the space in front of every unit.

Instead of the typical building layout with apartment doors lining a narrow hallway, SO—IL’s design turns the building inside out, dividing it into three buildings that are separated by courtyards. Each is ringed with exterior walkways on each level that lead to the units and look out across the courtyards at the other walkways. In front of each unit, a small semi-covered room serves as a mini-stoop, neither fully private nor fully public.

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*[Image: Darcstudio/Tankhouse/ SO—IL]*

Architect Florian Idenburg of SO—IL's says the idea is to make "the journey from the street to your home a joyous experience and not a dreadful one."

"We believe that when you live in a neighborhood and in a city you want to be connected to that environment," Idenburg says. "Specifically in this part of Brooklyn the street itself with the stoops and the relationship to the outside is very much part of the living experience."

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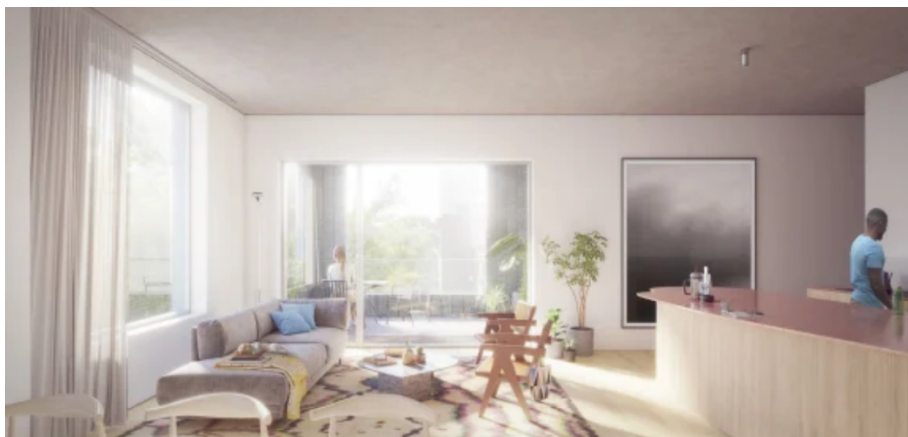


[Image: Darcstudio/Tankhouse/ SO—IL]

Turning the interior space of a building into this kind of hybrid environment isn't cheap. "The exterior wall as a percentage of interior floor area more or less doubled, which became a problem that needed to be solved," says Tankhouse co-founder Sam Alison-Mayne. Material choices and window sizes helped ensure the added facade expenses didn't wreck the budget.

Idenburg says most developers in New York aren't interested in doing something like this because, in addition to costing more, it raises questions about the maintenance and care of the shared spaces.

"Often this space is squeezed to be the absolute minimum, and we feel that it's exactly in that space where we can gain a lot," Idenburg says.



[Image: Darcstudio/Tankhouse/ SO—IL]

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The design of the exterior spaces and the separation of the project into three separate buildings also meant that every unit has more windows, bringing in more natural light than is normal for a New York City apartment, and also adding to the sense of connection between residents who can more easily see each other when looking out at their shared spaces. “There is literally visual, auditory, and other connections that exist from the public sphere to the internal guts of the project, and that was super important to us,” says Alison-Mayne.

Idenburg says he was cautious about not making the project too porous. “We have a careful calibration between exposure and giving up privacy,” says Idenburg. “But the idea that every single room in your home has daylight is pretty unique.”



*[Image: Darcstudio/Tankhouse/ SO—IL]*

The small porch-like spaces at the entrance to each unit raised some challenges, though. Building and energy codes would typically require indoor spaces to meet a certain level of insulation and the ability to be heated and cooled. But the point of these spaces, Idenburg argues, is that they’re neither in nor out, and should be treated more like mud rooms, which are used mainly for taking off wet shoes and jackets.

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“They’re very hard within the building code to identify. Do you count them as inside the house or are they exterior spaces?” says Idenburg. “We’re working now with the city and New York state’s energy department on figuring out where can we make non-climatized space part of the home as well so you can live a little bit more outdoors.”

These types of spaces are common in Southern Europe and Tokyo, Idenburg says, and he’s hoping that this project can help persuade regulators in New York to think differently about how to integrate them into buildings.



[Image: Darcstudio/Tankhouse/ SO—IL]

“I think what is going to be very interesting, [though] it will take time because the city works very slow and code works slower than anything else, is figuring out how some of the spaces of our homes don’t necessarily need to be kept at that same 72 degrees comfort zone,” Idenburg says. “That’s what we’re trying to do here, and it’s maybe a first step.”

Tankhouse and SO—IL’s have two other projects in the works, and both build on the circulation and outdoor space ideas explored in the Brooklyn condos. For one, [a 13-story tower](#) that will break ground later this year, Tankhouse is taking a similar approach to creating porch-like foyers at the entrance of the units and using

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corridors on the building's exterior to add more opportunity for light to enter the building. Moving away from the interior corridor is becoming a key element in Tankhouse's work.

"Interior circulation forces a certain structure in a building which is incredibly limiting. It's one of those things that as soon as you liberate yourself from the need or the perception that circulation needs to be interior, the amount of architectural solutions that present themselves are kind of infinite," says Alison-Mayne. "There's a real excitement from one project to the next to see how these ideas manifest."

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