

# Trading Spaces

RUSSIAN DEVELOPER JANNA BULLOCK STANDS FOR MORE THAN EXCELLENCE IN ART, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN. BY **JEFF GOLDMAN**

**I**n an industry dominated by men, Janna Bullock stands out. Not that the Russian-born real estate developer and mother of two wants to be seen any differently, mind you. "I think that in your professional life, gender does not really matter," Bullock says from the heights of the penthouse in her Upper East Side building. "It's all about how skilled you are. If I can inspire other women, I'll be very glad but it's all about professional skills and your ability to fill the demands of the market. If you put a good effort together and build a team, whether you're a man or woman doesn't matter."

There's no denying that the road traveled by Bullock is different than that of the typical New York real-estate developer. Bullock migrated from Russia nearly two decades ago, worked at a Manhattan law firm and eventually obtained an M.B.A from Duke University before founding her own company in 2003. Since then, the dedicated art collector, patron and philanthropist has devoted much energy toward acquiring and renovating old mansions while taking great care to preserve the historic nature of the properties and make the buildings environmentally friendly.

Bullock's top real estate priorities now are the three Upper East Side properties she is collaborating on with Bridgehampton architect Preston Phillips: a townhouse at 34 East 62nd Street and adjacent townhouses at 12 and 14 East 82nd Street.

Twelve East 82nd Street is a four-bedroom, four-bathroom, 8,200 square-foot neo-Georgian mansion with three powder rooms. Among the house's notable features are an indoor swimming pool, and a roof with trees and a sculpture garden. Its oval five-story staircase will be the centerpiece of the house, and each floor will have a balcony overlooking the pool.

Next door, 14 East 82nd Street is being converted from a multi-tenant structure back to a townhouse. The 9,114 square foot Beau-

Arts townhouse will offer five bathrooms, five bedrooms and three powder rooms.

But the most interesting project might be the 62nd Street location, an 1881 brownstone which will be a LEED home (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Once completed, it will include a geothermal well which will eliminate any visible mechanical equipment on the roof. The well will be fully planted in native vegetation and trees. Cisterns beneath the cellar will collect rainwater from the roof and courtyard for irrigation.

None of the "green" elements are accidental. "I'm a mother, I'm about to become a grandmother and preserving the planet for future generations is important," Bullock says. (Asked about her expanding family, Bullock said she'd like to keep her family life private.) "I'm just generally very organized. I like to keep things in order and keeping things in order means recycle, don't litter, don't leave your faucet open, don't leave your lights on. When I learned there was something called green technology, I immediately jumped on it. To raise the level of awareness is very important."

Destroyed in an explosion in July 2006, the new structure will be five stories tall and contain five bedrooms, five full bathrooms and three powder rooms. Constructed entirely of limestone and glass, the new townhouse will have a sunken living room that opens to a south facing courtyard. A waterfall forms the backdrop for the courtyard and will cascade down to the floor that houses an indoor pool and spa. Light will filter into the pool from glass paving in the courtyard above.

As those projects move toward completion, Bullock can revel in the success of her most recent transaction. In January, she finalized the \$25 million sale of the Stillman House at 9 East 67th Street. The six-story 13,137 square foot building had been divided into 13 apartments in the 1950s but was restored to include seven bedrooms, five full bathrooms, two powder rooms and ten fireplaces. Other interesting elements include

Standing tall in her MANOLO BLAHNIK shoes, Bullock is dressed in a blue tweed CHANEL suit. Diamond and pearl earrings and ring by ASPREY LONDON. Pearl necklace, her own.

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an elliptical bathtub facing a stone fireplace, and a massage room adjacent to a solarium.

None of the three New York properties are currently on the market, but as time has passed and she's gained experience, Bullock has learned to be patient.

“You're more pragmatic, you're more down to earth,” explains the head of Janna Bullock For Art, Architecture and Design, LLC. “You could get lucky once, you could get lucky twice, but you could really get hit. It's more important to be strong, be able to tolerate things that are happening and just move forward. It's important sometimes to stop, take a deep breath and re-evaluate your entire approach to life and business.”

That approach has served Bullock well. She designed her first apartment soon after emigrating from Russia to Brooklyn. Considering her interests in art and architecture it seemed a natural career path to follow, even if the houses she now works with dwarf the tiny space she once occupied. She's had the talent, drive and good fortune to be able to turn something she enjoys doing into a lucrative career.

“Real estate development is such a logical thing to do if you like comfort, if you like life and if you like to enjoy life,” she says. “It kind of occurred to me that it could be done on a more commercial basis and bring a lot of emotional, financial and personal satisfaction. I think it's the best thing you can do – building spaces according to your tastes, knowledge and purpose.”

For the fifth consecutive year, Bullock is heavily involved with the Kips Bay Decorator Show House, which runs through May 17. The house she successfully restored at 54 East 64th Street was selected for the 2005 event, while 14 East 82nd Street served as the 2007 host. This spring, Bullock is designing a collector's

space on a landing facing the atrium at 22 East 71st Street.

“Janna has been a great supporter of Kips Bay,” says Jennifer Skoda, the organization's director of special events. “She's known worldwide for her designs, so we're thrilled to have her involved again.” Thanks to the effort of designers like Bullock, the show has raised more than \$1 million in each of the past three years for the 14,000 Bronx children served by Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club, according to Skoda.

The challenge of designing a disjointed space excites Bullock. “How do you connect things that don't look connected to begin with?” Bullock says. “That's what I'm trying to do with this space. I hope it will make a serious statement and show you that harmony can be achieved if you put the energy and effort into it. If you achieve it you make a successful design. I'll try to make it happen.”

Bullock is far more than a real estate developer and designer, though. She's involved with a myriad of charities, including the Society of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Bullock has opened her home to host fundraisers for the Society, which promotes the well-being of patients, supports cancer research, and provides public education on the prevention, early detection, and treatment of cancer. Bullock sponsored The Society's annual Antique Show in 2006 and 2007.

A devoted art patron, the respect Bullock has gained in that community is reflected in her role as a trustee for the Guggenheim Museum Foundation, a position she doesn't take lightly.

“America's cultural assets reflect the wisdom and generosity of trustees such as Janna Bullock,” says Jennifer Stockman, the president of the foundation. “She has developed a keen understanding of the art world as a passionate collector and takes her position as a trustee of the Guggenheim Museum very seriously.



Bullock relaxes on a multi-colored GEORGE NELSON style marshmallow chair in front of a Damien Hirst polka-dot painting at THE PLAZA HOTEL RESIDENCES. She wears COOL HUNTING PEOPLE jeans and a silk charmeuse top by LANVIN; wedge heeled shoes by YVES ST. LAURENT; diamond ring by DE GRISOGONO; pearl necklace she wears as bracelet, her own.

"Everything is relative; we all have our up and down periods. It's important not to think about success. The last thing you need to do is to please your own ego."

I especially look forward to spending time with Janna during our board meeting with our Peggy Guggenheim colleagues during the Venice Biennial."

Bullock was also a co-chair of the Brooklyn Museum's Modernism preview show last year and Bullock served as an international chairman with Sophia Loren and Martha Stewart for the 15th anniversary of the Russian National Orchestra in 2006.

She also found time to help showcase works of Dennis Hopper at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. While far more acclaimed for his acting, Hopper is also a painter, an artist and a collector. "Janna is my guardian angel," says Hopper. "She arranged for a show of my paintings and photographs at the Hermitage Museum that was a milestone in my career. She fell in love with my work, and I fell in love with her."

In fact, her appreciation for art runs so deep that next month Bullock will begin publishing a bi-weekly newsletter on Russian contemporary art. She is also penning a book on Russian contemporary art history which should be published next year. Even though she's been in the United States for about two decades, Bullock still holds a strong affinity for her home country. "I would support anything Russian," she says. "That's where I'm from and if we don't support our own heritage, who else will do it?"

Although Bullock is spending more time in the United States and less in Russia than she used to, she has taken an active stance in trying to build a cross-cultural bridge between her native home and her adopted one. She organized the first Russian Design Show last June in suburban Moscow and plans to have a second version in 2011. The 2008 show, which featured three designer houses, an auction home and two theme homes seems to indicate the willingness of Russians to embrace a more modern way of life. "Russians are very conservative in their approach to design," Bullock says. "Even if you're conservative when it comes to architecture, you can still add sparkle to your life."

It included furniture by architects like Frank Gehry, Ron Arad and Philippe Starck, all

of whom Bullock admires. It's taking note of the accomplishments of that trio that keeps Bullock from patting herself on the back too much.

"I don't think I'm so successful," Bullock says. "I think everything is relative; we all have our up and down periods. It's important not to think about success. The last thing you need to do is to please your own ego."

That doesn't mean Bullock hasn't set goals for herself. After all very few people have managed to build and maintain success by sitting still. "I'd love to increase my market share worldwide," she says. "I'd love to build a name that stands for excellence and sophistication in art, architecture and design."



Dennis Hopper calls Janna Bullock his "guardian angel" for helping to arrange a showing of his paintings and photographs at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

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Bullock's Blackberry Pearl keeps her in touch with the wide array of business and philanthropic activities in which she is involved.