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The iconic Waldorf Astoria's makeover was so luxe its model alone cost close to \$1 million. Here's a view inside the landmark's new look.

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Impressions: 28,078,207



The Waldorf Astoria model and its maker, Michael Kennedy. Crystal

The iconic Waldorf Astoria is undergoing a metamorphosis, and a million-dollar model of the historic building is a big part of its lavish revival.

Building models have long been used to help sell luxurious Manhattan real estate, but bringing this historic structure's revival to scale was a uniquely costly undertaking with a price tag close to \$1 million. A to-scale rendering, the project showcases the Waldorf's fresh look as a landmark space making room for affluent permanent residences.

The Midtown Manhattan hotel was purchased by China's Anbang Insurance Group for \$1.95 billion in 2015, the New York Times reported. One of the most expensive hospitality buyouts ever, the deal was followed by the partial conversion of the hotel into condominiums. The conversion is ongoing and the entire building is still under renovation, with both the hotel and residences scheduled to open in early 2023. As top floors undergo renovation to convert 1,400

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guest rooms into 375 residences, lower floors will remain hotel space, to be redesigned and run by Hilton.

The 47-story Art Deco hotel's renovation comes at a cost of about \$1 billion, according to the Times, which reported that the 375 newly planned residences are built based on 124 different floor plans, many of which offer deep-pocketed buyers furnished, move-in-ready spaces with private outdoor terraces.



The Waldorf Astoria. Noë & Associates/The Boundary

Positioned on pristine Park Avenue, the hotel and residences encompass a full block of exclusive Manhattan real estate, spanning East 49th to 50th street. Spaces in the Waldorf residences — called The Towers — scale from studios to two penthouses, and the prices range too. A one-bedroom starts at about \$1.8 million, according to Architectural Digest, while four-bedrooms that span nearly 3,000 square feet will start at approximately \$18.5 million.

Some of the residences are even multi-floor, including the two new penthouses located in the landmark's copper pinnacles.

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The Waldorf Astoria. Noë & Associates/The Boundary

The redesign is led by Jean-Louis Deniot, an AD100 (Architectural Digest's annual list of the best designers and architects at work today) interior designer who is taking charge of modernizing the historic space. With no shortage of luxurious amenities, Waldorf residents will have access to plenty of at-home comforts, from an in-house spa to rooftop pool.

To lure luxury buyers, buildings have long been modeled to present the structure's design in small, detailed parts. But the Waldorf takes modeling to new heights. Model designer Michael Kennedy and his team at Kennedy Fabrications spent close to a full year developing three separate models to represent the building as a whole.

And they let Insider take a look at the finished product.

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The model Waldorf Astoria. Crystal Cox/Insider

On display at the Waldorf sales gallery, the 50,000 square feet of amenities space is condensed into three pieces, replicating the building as it sits on the Park Avenue street corner, all with custom built-in tech.

The main building model weighs in at about 300 pounds and stands over nine feet tall, almost like a dollhouse for the rich. It includes a base, gold leaf, and hosts 4,200 lights that illuminate both the hotel and residences.

Kennedy — an industry veteran who's spent 30 years building models — told Insider that the year-long project was the longest he's ever spent on a project, and that they usually take between three and six months to complete.

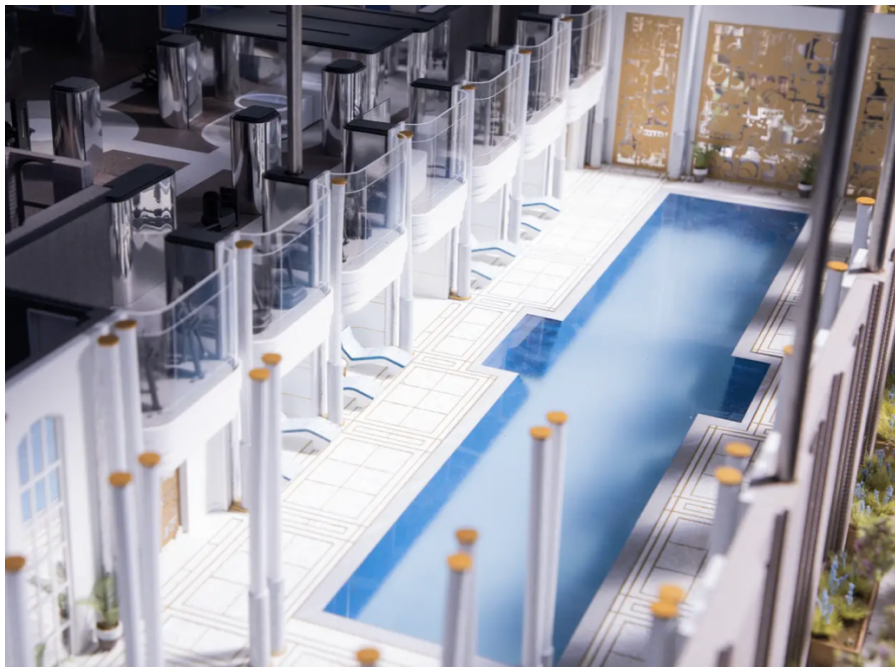
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Crystal Cox/Insider

The task meant inventing a lighting system matrix with a full range of color for the neighborhood model that lights up based on factors like green spaces and restaurants. A hydraulic lift system was invented, too, for the amenities model that raises the roof on the model to reveal the Starlight Pool and Winter Garden.



The Waldorf model pool. Crystal

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While luxury apartments are often marketed through sales galleries, with upscale 3D renderings and samples, the million-dollar model Kennedy created takes luxury living to new heights.

The model showcases the Waldorf in precise detail, Kennedy said, and includes all of the space's furniture, wall coverings, and even potted plants.



Detail inside a room of the model Waldorf. Crystal Cox/Insider

Design so precise, that when designer Jean-Louise Deniot first saw the models he was almost shocked, Kennedy said. In tiny form were the pieces Deniot designed himself, from beautiful French furniture to inlaid floors and walls and even tiny billiard balls.

"Every little detail is taken care of, that's what's fun about it," Kennedy said, adding that the rendering gives a good sense of what the space really feels like.

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The model's exterior. Crystal Cox/Insider

The process of creating such an elaborate display is no easy task, but Kennedy has it narrowed down to a science. It begins with he and his team modifying original drawings of the building, and from there the process of building the model goes through stages.

The space is broken down into layered components and developed with the help of 3D printers and laser machinery. Though Kennedy has been using 3D printing in his workshop since the 1990s, he now uses Boston-based FormLabs printers, too, which help develop more specific, custom work.

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The entrance to the model Waldorf Astoria. Crystal Cox/Insider

Through the building process, tasks are divided among Kennedy's team, with one group tackling light components while another works on exteriors and painting. Between 12 and 15 people worked alongside Kennedy for between nine and 12 months to create the final project, which now stands tall in the Waldorf sales gallery, ready for buyers to take a look.



The model Waldorf Astoria. Crystal Cox/Insider

<https://www.businessinsider.com/inside-the-million-dollar-model-of-the-waldorf-astoria-2021-3>