

KEY | SPRING 2009

New Glass City

By JIM LEWIS; Photographs by IN SOOK KIM
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New York is the capital of glass, the city of windows. Other cities get their gravitas from marble or stone, but New York is made of silica, soda ash and lime, melted to make this vitreous stuff: transparent, translucent and opaque; reflective, tinted, frosted, coated, clear. The slightest shift in the angle of sun fall can hide or reveal entire worlds, and as evening comes the city gradually turns itself inside out — the streets go dark and the buildings open up, offering their rooms like stagelets upon which our little lives are played.

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In Sook Kim for The New York Times

25 Cooper Square: The Cooper Square Hotel **Completed:** 2009

Architect: Carlos Zapata

Developer: Sciamè **Photo date:** Sunday, Jan. 18, 2009



In Sook Kim for The New York Times

731 Lexington Avenue and 1 Beacon Court: Global headquarters for Bloomberg L.P. and other offices, as well as retail and residences **Completed:** 2005 **Architects:** Cesar and Rafael Pelli (Pelli Clark Pelli Architects) **Developer:** Vornado Realty Trust **Photo date:** Thursday, Jan. 15, 2009

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As old as the material is, glass remains a mystery. No one quite knows what goes on, down where the molecules bind — whether it's a slow-moving liquid, an especially mutable solid or something in between. Still, new compounds appear regularly, with new qualities that promise new possibilities. The substance has never been exhausted, and may yet prove inexhaustible, an endless inspiration to architects and designers as it grows stronger, lighter, clearer and more flexible.

For this issue, In Sook Kim, an artist with a special interest in intimacy and display, photographed five buildings in [Manhattan](#) — chips in the kaleidoscope of the city and homes to some of its most emblematic activities: business, the arts, putting up tourists and, of course, staying in for the night. For each photograph, Kim, who is based in [Germany](#), lit interior rooms with colored gels and arranged the occupants of the buildings in everyday tableaux. She then parked herself across from the buildings with a large-format camera, the glass of her lens facing the glass of the facades, creating portraits of the city as a crystalline beehive, always bright and always busy.



In Sook Kim for The New York Times

405 West 55th Street: The Joan Weill Center for Dance, home of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater **Completed:** 2004 **Architect:** lu + Bibliowicz Architects L.L.P. **Photo date:** Friday, Jan. 16, 2009



In Sook Kim for The New York Times

48 Bond Street: Condominium residence **Completed:** 2008 **Architect:** Deborah Berke & Partners Architects **Developer:** Dacbon L.L.C. **Photo date:** Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2009