

# PENTA

## Worldwise: Architect Morris Adjmi's Favorite Things

By **Fang Block**

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Morris Adjmi, founder and principal of design firm Morris Adjmi Architects. **Lisa Mahar**

Morris Adjmi, founder and principal of the New York-based architecture and interior design firm [Morris Adjmi Architects](#), is known for revitalizing historic buildings into contextual, but unmistakably contemporary, spaces.

Adjmi, 60, combined two adjacent 19th-century buildings in 2008 in Manhattan's Meatpacking District into a modern commercial building through painstaking restoration, including stripping away layers of stucco and paint on the brick facade to reveal their original masonry.

In 2010, he designed two buildings for the New York University School of Law, one of which included the restoration of the historic Provincetown Playhouse—a public theater that was built in 1916 and credited with launching the careers of Anne Bancroft, Julie Harris, and Eugene O'Neill.

Adjmi's passion and craftsmanship for restoring historic architecture are also evident in projects such as the Wythe Hotel, completed in 2012, and 138 North 10th St., completed earlier this year, both located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

The luxury boutique residential building at North 10th St. integrates the neighborhood's industrial aesthetic with a design-forward take on Italian modernism. "I wanted to design something that looks like it's been a part of the neighborhood forever—yet with a freshness to it," Adjmi says.

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"Luxury in real estate is really about quality—quality of things you can touch," he says. "It's also about creating warm and authentic spaces with great material."

Adjmi's interest in historic and industrial buildings is rooted in his upbringing in his hometown of New Orleans. "I grew up in New Orleans, surrounded by beautiful, historical buildings in the French Quarter. I was inspired to bridge the disconnect between the old and the new," he says.

After graduating from Tulane University in New Orleans with a Masters of Architecture degree, Adjmi began in 1981 to collaborate with Pritzker Prize-winning architect Aldo Rossi in New York and Milan. After Rossi's death in 1997, Adjmi established his own design firm.

In addition, Adjmi is the author and editor of several books on Rossi including *Aldo Rossi: The Complete Buildings and Projects, 1981-1991 (1991)*, and *Aldo Rossi: Collector's Edition (1997)*. His monograph, *A Grid and a Conversation: Morris Adjmi Architects*, will come out later this year.

An art aficionado, Adjmi spends a lot of time at art galleries and museums. He also gets his inspiration for design from biking around the city to "look at what's happening and what's historically here," he says.

**My favorite neighborhood in the world is...** the Garden District, where I have a home, in my native New Orleans. I love shopping on Magazine Street, which is filled with amazing little shops and great restaurants.

**The one thing in my closet I can't live without is...** a black T-shirt because I wear one every day.

**If I were to buy a piece of art, it would be by...** William Villalongo. I'm impressed by his technique and the potency of his imagery.

**The best book I've read in the last year is...** *The Secret Lives of Color* by Kassia St. Clair. Through the biography of different colors, I was able to learn more about the world.

**A passion of mine that few people know about is...** I love supporting art organizations, particularly ones that are focused on emerging artists. In New Orleans, I was recently introduced to Antenna, an interesting non-profit space for literary and visual art events and education, plus a printing press. I admire their mission. I am also very fond of Turn Galley in New York's Lower East Side, and have discovered a number of artists there.