

DRINKS AT INTERMISSION

Architect and acclaimed set designer David Rockwell turns his terrace above Manhattan's High Line into the perfect place to relax and entertain.

By Stephen Treffinger Photographs by Nicholas Calcott Styled by Anthony Amiano



The sound of a harmonica from above the High Line during the pandemic—that would have been architect David Rockwell. He had moved into a Zaha Hadid-designed building beside the winding park in Manhattan's West Chelsea neighborhood a year before the Covid-19 shutdown and found solace on his rooftop terrace, calling it “a godsend.”

He strove to create, as he puts it, “a place that feels magical both in the day and at night,” but also wanted it to be flexible—comfortable for him alone or while entertaining friends.

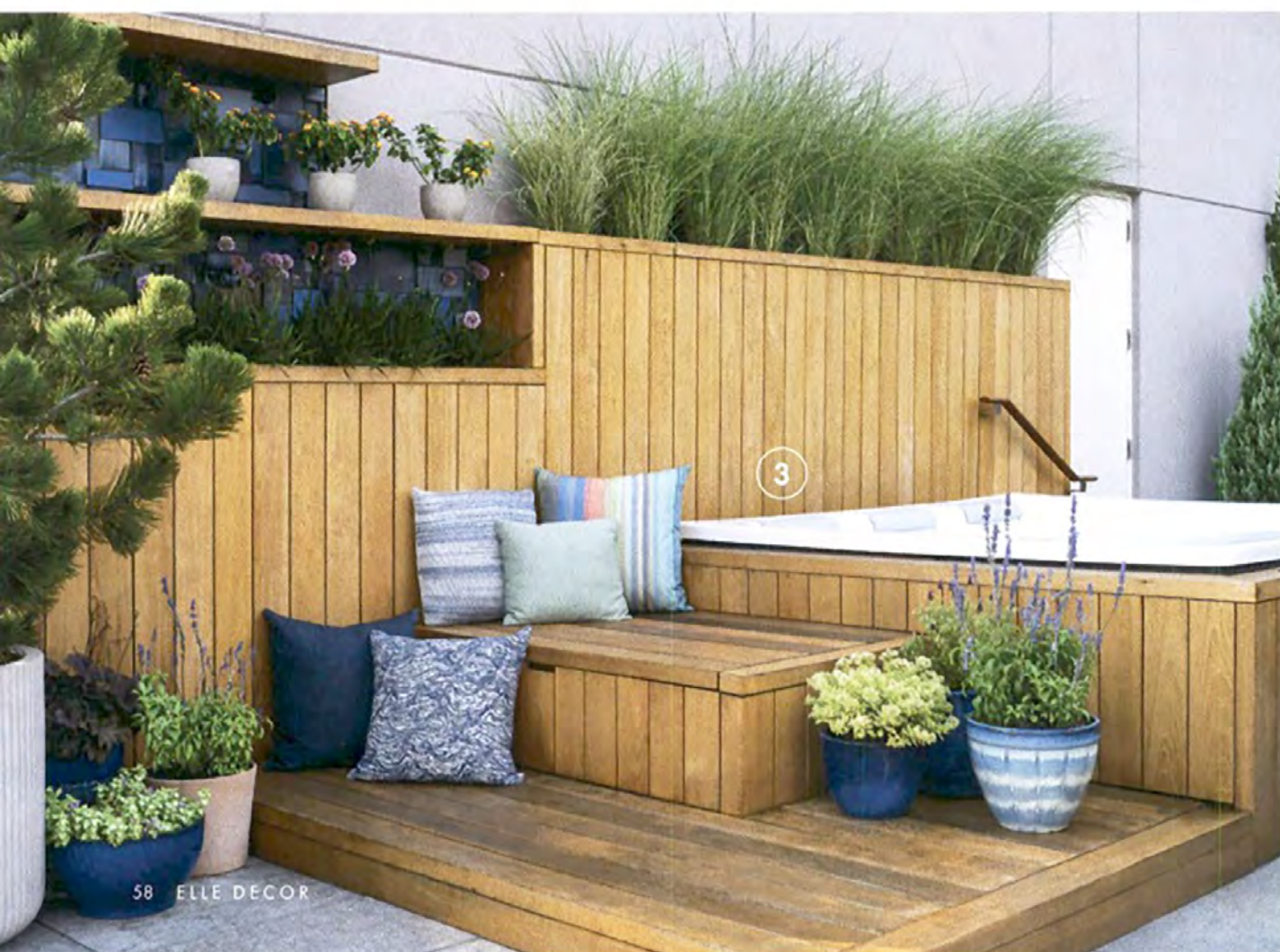
Rockwell installed a teak wall that wraps around one corner, framing a hot-tub area and a long kitchen. “It subtly creates the idea of a

room within the roof,” he says. The wood provides a solid backdrop that plays opposite the glass walls and soaring urban architecture beyond. He then outfitted the terrace with stylish furnishings in a palette that started with his favorite color, blue, which appears in various hues and forms from tabletops to planters.

For Rockwell, the pandemic reinforced the idea of how much the city depends on biological life, “the kind of software of human life as opposed to the hardware of buildings.” His terrace design similarly has such a dependence on the people who inhabit the space. “I guess that’s part of what I wanted it to feel like—that it’s only complete with people.”

LIVING ON THE CITY'S EDGE

1. Rockwell left the glass edge mainly unobstructed, placing small Flos lights hardwired into custom ceramic bases. He conceived the roof, with a diverse array of plantings, as a place where he could “gather with other people and have a kind of outdoor space that was really part of the city but on its own.” The custom chair is for Paola Lenti. ▶



RELAXATION TAKES

MANY FORMS

2. Blue, Rockwell's favorite color, is represented in many shades here. The custom glazed lava table is by Paola Lenti. The lounge chairs are by Rockwell for Roche Bobois. The sofa (left) is by Kettal, the chairs (right) are by Roche Bobois, and the stools are by Shore.

3. Rockwell uses the hot tub often, usually as a way to unwind at the end of the day. The custom teak wall, which wraps around the corner, and tub platform are by Bednark. A small private elevator behind the white door leads to the rooftop.



HOW TO COOK AND DINE ABOVE THE CITY

4. Rockwell created a stark contrast with the outdoor counter unit by Brown Jordan and a custom-cut blue lava stone top by Pyrolave set against the backdrop of Manhattan skyscrapers.

5. The dining area is in a strategic corner with a view of the Hudson River and proximity to the grill. Dining stools with seats in a cast material made to look like fabric by Rockwell for Paola Lenti surround a custom hand-painted lava stone table.

6. The grill, by Rockwell for Caliber, features a domed lid that, when opened, retracts into the top, allowing access from both sides.

"It's a place that feels magical both in the day and at night."
—David Rockwell

