

# LIFE



An old commercial building at 11th and Ludlow has been refreshed with a throwback facade.

## East Market renovation is a nod to SoHo lofts



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The old Snellenburg's building pays homage to cast-iron fronts.

Three decades ago, Morris Adjmi was working for the celebrated Italian architect Aldo Rossi, who was trying to find the right look for Scholastic's new headquarters in SoHo's historic Cast-Iron District. The building would have to please New York's picky Landmarks Preservation Commission but couldn't simply copy the neighborhood's classically influ-

enced, 19th-century industrial buildings. Those facades, the architects came to realize, were essentially a repeating grid of molded forms, stamped out just like the products that were once manufactured in their workshops. By blending the same strict rhythms with a boisterous modern sensibility, Rossi and Adjmi came up with a design that remains a model of See **SKYLINE** on C3

### ARCHITECTURE CHANGING SKYLINE



Architect Morris Adjmi also designed the tower rising at 12th and Market, next to the landmark PSFS Building. MICHAEL BRYANT / Staff Photographer

### Q & A

## A hip-hopper's progress, from Pulsations to Princeton

By Lauren McCutcheon  
FOR THE INQUIRER

When Raphael Xavier, 46, was growing up in Wilmington in the '80s, he knew he'd get kicked out of school if he got caught breakdancing there. He did it anyway. From junior high through his 20s, he practiced hip-hop whenever, wherever he could. More than three decades later, despite the street genre's physically punishing moves, he's still doing it. Perseverance has paid off. The Southwest Philadelphia resident has earned Pew, Guggenheim, and MacDowell fellowships and is a guest lecturer of dance at Princeton University. He recently served as assistant choreographer to director Bill T. Jones for the Opera Philadelphia production, *We Shall Not Be Moved*.

He's also branched out: into See **XAVIER** on C5



### DANCE

#### ► Point of Interest

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**Raphael Xavier** and his ensemble will perform his work "Point of Interest" at the Annenberg Center. Bicking Photography Studio

### CONCERT | C2



Beijing orchestra practices outreach.

### ASK JENNIFER | C2

Two twins or one king in the guest room?

## Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival must-sees

By Gary Thompson  
STAFF WRITER

The 37th Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival kicks off Saturday and runs through Nov. 19, with 28 features, documentaries, and short films screening that span topics of the Jewish diaspora. Unlike many film festivals that concentrate their screenings in one place, the Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival spreads its screenings out in the city — many are at the Gershman Y (401 S. Broad St.) — and in the suburbs, like the drama *Cloudy Sunday*, about two people who fall in love in German-occupied Greece, which is playing at the Reel Cinemas Narberth 2 See **FESTIVAL** on C5



Tim Kalhof in "The Cakemaker," which examines the friendship that forms between a gay German baker and a Jerusalem widow. The film opens the Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival on Saturday.

## ARCHITECTURE | CHANGING SKYLINE

## East Market facade has echoes of SoHo

**SKYLINE** from C1 good contextual architecture. Adjmi struck out on his own after Rossi died in a 1997 car accident, and he has been playing around with the cadence of grids ever since, in projects like Brooklyn's Wythe Hotel. His facades evoke the no-nonsense muscularity of early 20th-century factories but are rendered with a refined contemporary elegance. Call it neo-industrial, if you'd like. What keeps things interesting is that no two of his grids are exactly alike.

Adjmi has now brought that approach to Philadelphia with the completion of 1100 Ludlow, an early-20th-century commercial building that is part of the massive East Market development. Once faced in white brick and terra-cotta, the renovated and repurposed building sports a stylish, factory-inflected grid of dark gray I-beams and overscaled casement windows. It fits in and stands out at the same time.

Not that 1100 Ludlow was ever a working factory. Just a block below Market Street, it spent the first half of the 20th century as the men's annex of Snellenburg's department store, then did a stint as the first home of Community College of Philadelphia. By the time the building was acquired by National Real Estate Development in 2014 for the East Market project, it had been reduced to a dismal outpost of Family Court.

Though the blocky, seven-story loft building had good bones, decades of neglect had left its terra-cotta skin cracked and sagging. National concluded that the exterior could not be saved. That decision gave Adjmi the opportunity to create a new facade. It was like going back to his SoHo roots: All those cast-iron fronts were installed by 19th-century industrialists hoping to make their aging factories appealing to a new generation of users.

Given that 11th Street's history is retail, the faux-factory aesthetic may at first seem like an affection. The structure is faced with precast concrete panels that are shaped to resemble the



heavy I-beams used in the construction of high-rise towers, like the pair rising next door on Market Street. What are those I-beams doing on what is essentially an office building?

Besides being undeniably handsome, the I-beam motif can be seen as a metaphor for creation. National had hoped that 1100 Ludlow would become the successor to Philadelphia's Design Marketplace, the upscale furniture showroom that closed when its home in another factory, 2400 Market, was taken over by Aramark. (That building is also being re-clad.)

The furniture showroom, which has rebranded itself as the Design Center, is the main tenant at 1100 Ludlow, with two full floors. The architecture firm Bohlin Cywinski Jackson also leased a floor. A co-working firm is planning to take the top two floors, says National managing

director Daniel Killinger. Though not exactly a creative business, Mom's Organic Market occupies the ground floor. Because the East Market project is restoring Ludlow as a real street, Adjmi has woven the facade back into the city with an interesting space for a restaurant and an outdoor seating area.

It would have been nice if Adjmi had been able to use real steel on the facade, as he has done for some of his New York projects. The finish of the precast concrete doesn't have the same sparkle. But the layering of details still provides recesses for sunlight and shadow to nestle and helps bring the building to life. Adjmi mixed things up by including horizontal bands of metal between several of the floors.

The rough, masonry cladding sets 1100 Ludlow apart from the

more conventional, thin-skinned, metal-panel apartment tower going up next door at 11th and Market. Designed by Philadelphia's BLT Architects, it doesn't suffer from the extreme flatness of some metal-panel buildings, but its tightly spaced rows of narrow windows are odd, especially in a world where tenants prize large openings.

Seeing the two buildings side by side reveals the strengths of Adjmi's approach at 1100 Ludlow. As American cities have rebounded with new construction, architects have struggled to find the right language for infill designs that are squeezed in among old masonry structures. Buildings skinned in metal panels often suffer from a deadening flatness, while those shrink-wrapped in glass tend toward the generic. Both pale next to the left and craft of older buildings.

The renovated building at 11th and Ludlow features I-beams and overscaled casement windows. It fits in and stands out at the same time. MICHAEL BRYANT / Staff Photographer

Some architects, like Robert A.M. Stern, who designed the new American Revolution Center at Third and Chestnut, have tried to counter the blandness of developer-driven contemporary architecture by taking their cues from historic buildings. Stern and Rossi were products of the postmodern movement, which was a reaction against the soullessness and antiurban qualities of late modernism. Both architects incorporated recognizable historical elements into their buildings, played with scale, and went wild with color.

Like Stern, Adjmi uses stylized historical references to humanize his designs and make them fit more comfortably into the city. But Adjmi's grids avoid the fussiness of more literal, historicist designs. His 1100 Ludlow successfully evokes the city's masonry heritage without pandering.

Because of Adjmi's skill in navigating developer-driven design, National Real Estate selected his firm to design East Market's second apartment tower, at the corner of 12th Street. It's a sensitive location, eyeball to eyeball with the PSFS Building, a modernist icon that is one of Philadelphia's most important works of architecture. Although the steel is still going up on Adjmi's tower, it's already evident that the design nods to PSFS's famous rounded corner with one of its own.

The facade of the apartment tower is a variation on 1100 Ludlow. It uses the same precast concrete I-beams but proportioned differently in a lighter gray. Whether the finished project can stand up as a worthy companion to PSFS or Adjmi's 1100 Ludlow remains to be seen. Second acts are always the hardest.

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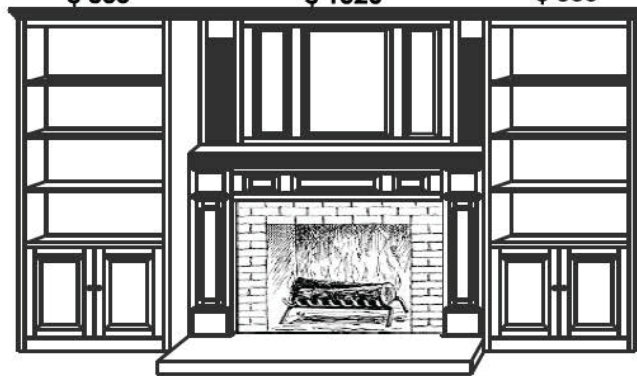
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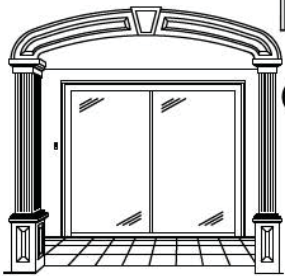
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