

June 15, 2011 | Maya Pope-Chappell

A Dip in the Pool Without Leaving the Living Room

It's not often that you come across a home with 30,000 gallons of water in the living room. But one rare property in Manhattan is equipped with just that—an indoor pool that doubles as an entertainment area for the owners.

The "trophy property," as the owner calls it, is a Federal-style townhouse on West 15th Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues, which is on the market for \$10.955 million.

Evelyn McMurray Van-Zeller was living in Europe when she inherited the Manhattan home from her brother in 1995; she now lives there with her husband, João Van-Zeller.

For Ms. McMurray Van-Zeller, taking on the townhouse was challenging both emotionally and physically. "I had a full, complete life in Europe," she said. "In several weeks I had to sell houses, cars, a dog. It was very difficult. This is a complicated house to inherit."



This Chelsea townhouse is equipped with a rare amenity—an indoor pool with a swing in the living room.

The 15-by-30-foot pool is eight-feet deep and was installed in 1975 by previous owners. Ms. McMurray Van-Zeller said the pool is "grandfathered in."

The pool level has a brick wall and is surrounded by granite flooring and living-room furnishings. Ms. McMurray Van-Zeller said the artwork, antiques, medieval weaponry and plantings in the adjoining atrium give the space a "cave-like, medieval, Moroccan look."

But achieving the look was no easy task. In order to hang the artwork and weaponry on the brick wall, Ms. McMurray Van-Zeller had to get a 25-foot ladder and place it in the pool; in order to reach the ladder without getting wet, she employed a small pink raft, rowed it to the ladder, and climbed up to affix the decorations to the wall.

"Improvisation is very important when you have a house like this," she said. "The good news is that if you fall off, you fall into the pool."

While pool maintenance may be a drag, Ms. McMurray Van-Zeller says she and her animals thoroughly enjoy the amenity. Her three turtles and 5-pound Yorkshire terrier sometimes go for a dip. "You feel like you're on a permanent holiday," she said. "There's almost no reason to leave the house [with] the pool, the sauna [and] the gym."

The renovated townhouse is split into a triplex with two apartments on the top floors that rent for \$4,000 and \$5,000, respectively. The entire townhouse has six bedrooms, five bathrooms and a garden with a small pool—this one for the owner's turtles. There are also five fireplaces, including one in each of the rental apartments.

Ms. McMurray Van-Zeller said she's ready to move back to Europe and own a smaller place in Manhattan. She says the buyer of her home could either be "a celebrity or someone who wants a trophy property or bragging rights." She added, "Who doesn't want to say they have a swimming pool in their living room?"

The property was listed in February with CORE. Prior to that, it had been on and off the market in 2008 with an initial asking price of \$11.5 million.

