

ARCHITECTURE

SHOW & TELL FIVE FRANKLIN PLACE



Fabric plays an uncredited role in architecture, mostly in the form of drawn shades that give glass-skinned boxes a second, inner hide. In this plan for a Tribeca building, published here for the first time, the great Dutch architect Ben Van Berkel brings cloth—or the idea of cloth—out of doors, swaddling a twenty-story condo in black metal scarves that thicken and thin as they wind their way around. The façade becomes a burka, a form of resistance to the immodest transparency of glass. Five

Franklin Place, the first New York project for Van Berkel and his firm UNStudio, comes at a moment when the city has reverted to its natural suspicion of architecture as public spectacle. In that cloistered spirit, the building will turn its inky back to Broadway and face the cobbled alley a half-block over.

Van Berkel is not in the habit of designing buildings to go unnoticed, however, and this one's glossy casing will attract enigmatic attention in the same way that a masked figure would. Its mission is to eke multimillion-dollar luxe out of a tight lot, and to do it with cleverness, curves, and fine detail. As it goes up, Five Franklin Place breaks free of its stumpy neighbors, and each apartment acquires a second floor and a roof terrace where even the building machinery gets to inhabit a chic white pod. There, the shroud drops, giving way to classic rooftop exhibitionism—the kind that binoculars were made for. JUSTIN DAVIDSON

