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INSIDE
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REAL ESTATE

Geffer-Press Glass House
MODERN TEIGER HOUSE
Luxe Penthouses

MODERN RECYCLED spaces

TEXT **THERESA KEEGAN**

Whether it's a warehouse converted into a pizzeria with a wood-burning oven or a once abandoned industrial building transformed into a high-tech office space, Popkin creates what others can't even imagine. It's a vision he's embraced ever since witnessing a building's transformative potential while homesteading in Trenton. (Yes, homesteading. In Trenton. As in New Jersey.)

Almost 30 years ago, he and his brother participated in a program in which they could "buy" an abandoned brownstone for \$1,000. They received a \$5,000 grant from the city to fix it up; in return, they committed to living there for at least five years. "It was sweat equity," he recalls.

While his experience ignited his passion for restoration work, his work as a carpenter in college solidified that passion. "I just got a love for old buildings and fixing them up," he shares.

He has found his niche in Central Jersey, where there is no shortage of unique, old, abandoned structures. "They're fabulous old buildings. It's a love of these building to reuse them, fix them," he explains of his passion.

That fixing includes both interior and exterior efforts. Not only does he make sure they're code compliant, but he also adds modern architectural features so that they'll appeal to today's consumers. "The challenges are exciting," he states. "It's about reutilizing a space in ways you didn't know were there. It's a dynamic, organic process that I love. I've gotten very comfortable with it."

Of his position and location, Popkin continues, "There are a lot of markets that do what I do, but in my area of Central Jersey, I think I'm cutting edge. We've got a great stock of buildings." Along with these buildings, Central Jersey also has access to transit, both rail and highway, which appeals to commercial tenants.

The use of buildings is very diverse and includes art studios, showrooms, factories, restaurants, office warehouses and distribution

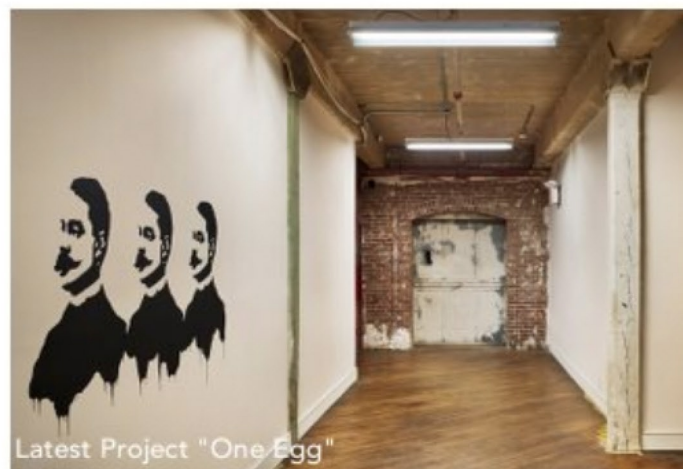
DANIEL POPKIN HAS OWNED AND TRANSFORMED AT LEAST 25 PROPERTIES, WITH A DOZEN MORE ON DECK. WHERE SOME PEOPLE SEE AN ABANDONED BUILDING, POPKIN OF MODERN RECYCLED SPACES SEES UNTAPPED POTENTIAL.



Latest Project "One Egg"



"I CHERISH THESE BUILDINGS, AND I RESPECT THEM FOR THEIR HISTORY," POPKIN SAYS. IN FACT, HE PREFERS RENOVATING AN OLD BUILDING OVER PURSUING NEW CONSTRUCTION.



Latest Project "One Egg"

space. The Canal Studio project in Lambertville successfully converted three warehouses on the north side of town; when Popkin saw the excitement and revitalization prompted by the Grounds For Sculpture, he built two dynamic projects – Studio Park and Mill One – in Hamilton.

"You have to think of economics," he advises. "Buy it right, fix it right and lease it right."

Incorporating the building's past into its current use is a fundamental aspect of Popkin's renovations. "Generally, we'll do a lot of historical studies," he says, "and we include that heritage into the building." As often as possible, Popkin will expose a building's natural features. "We're really sensitive to the architecture of the building," he notes. For example, sleek glass butts against exposed brick, while high-ceilinged rooms are transformed into gathering areas.

"I find that old buildings are more predictable than new construction," he shares. "I love the creative process of transforming them, reusing them and adapting them." ■



Latest Project "One Egg"