



To be honest, when I saw this apartment, I flipped! I mean, the design! The windows! Incredible. The people that fixed this building, they really did a hell of a job. ---Tony



I lived in a terrible place. Was just like hell. I couldn't sleep-- roaches were all over the ceiling...But this house is a blessing. I think it's a glory. Compare it to the place I lived before! Amazing. ---Isaura



I love this. I love cleanliness...I didn't have this! This is my space, this is my home. I'm nourishing my children. So it's important to me, my environment here. The house reflects the person I am. ---Norma

It was once common that communities had great public buildings as their centerpieces: built to inspire, to confer a sense of dignity on their neighbors, to send a message that they deserved the very best. Policy makers and community development experts puzzle over how to best recreate that sense of dignity and entitlement. What if people in distressed neighborhoods regained proximity to elegant architecture, recaptured lost expectations, and internalized an entitlement to beautiful lives? Is this a fair question when basic shelter is often barely possible?

I was privileged to help reincarnate an Italian Renaissance-style hospital, once the pride of its community and then, during twenty years of abandonment, a symbol of its decay. Do these architecturally stunning apartments give our residents joy? Have their lives been changed? Our quest to discover the power of beauty begins with this glimpse into the homes of five tenants who have lived here for nearly six years.

*Nancy Biberman, Founder and President
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation*

The **Guided Tours at Urban Horizons** are my

collaborative project with residents about the relationship between the building's thoughtful spaces and their building of their own lives. With the invaluable help of superintendent Tony Sosa, I asked five people, Narcissa, Isaura, Norma, Tony and Frances to give me tours of their homes and explain where in their spaces they felt most comfortable, most at home. Through the photographs and excerpts from residents' tours, I hope that the viewer can feel the importance thoughtful housing has for residents of Urban Horizons as rare places into which they can allow their individual identities to grow and flourish. These are places that, and people with whom, I feel deeply for, and it is my hope that these works might allow the viewer to have something of that experience themselves. What my tour guides share with us about their making of home is both valuable and essential and I thank them.

*Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, Photographer
Ph.D. Candidate, Environmental Psychology
CUNY Graduate Center*

The voices and images in this exhibit vividly

illustrate social science research that documents the importance of good, safe housing in supporting mental and physical health, and successful parenting. They also show how the beautiful housing WHEDCO provides goes beyond this minimum to heal the damage done by prior homelessness, decrepit housing, and exposure to community violence, while potentially opening doors to achievement in many domains from creative homemaking to higher education. WHEDCO residents approach their lives from a firmer base as their homes become positive reflections of themselves and their community.

*Susan Saegert, Professor of Environmental Psychology
Director, Center for Human Environments
CUNY Graduate Center*

Bronx By Design:

High End Architecture Inspires Low Income Home-Making

Thursday, October 9th, 6-8 pm
National Arts Club, New York City

Program

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Reception

6:45 pm Remarks

Welcome

Hon. Sheila Abdus-Salaam, Justice, NY State Supreme Court, Chair,
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. (WHEDCO)

Project Origins

Susan Saeger, CUNY Graduate Center

Being Shown "Home": Interviewing and Photographing with
Residents of Urban Horizons

Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, CUNY Graduate Center

Housing's Role in Human and Social Development

Susan Saeger

Values Based Affordable Housing

Nancy Biberman, WHEDCO

About the Project

The first phase in a collaboration between WHEDCO, the Center for Human Environments at the CUNY Graduate Center, and photographer Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, Bronx By Design features the homes and stories of five residents of WHEDCO's Urban Horizons housing, an apartment building adapted for re-use from the formerly abandoned Morrisania Hospital in the South Bronx, and the winner of the 2000 HUD Secretary's Award for Excellence from the American Planning Association, as well awards from the Municipal Art Society and the Fannie Mae Foundation.

Through photographs and interviews, Bronx By Design explores the effect that high standards of architecture and design have on residents of low-income housing. What role do beautiful physical environments play in human and social development, and what are the implications for housing policy and practice?

Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (www.whedco.org) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the economic advancement of low-income individuals and families through the creation of beautiful environments and a uniquely integrated program of housing, education, job training and placement, social services, and advocacy.



Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani (www.buscada.com) is a professional photographer and Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center. For the past six years "Guided Tour" has been her ongoing photographic and narrative project, examining people's personal relationships to place and the manner in which space is populated by story and memory. She is currently working on a project called Guided Tour : Prospect Heights, in her Brooklyn neighborhood. She is the recipient of a Watson Foundation Fellowship to support her photographic guided tour work in squatter settlements in Buenos Aires and the neighborhoods of the East End of London.



The Center for Human Environments (http://web.gc.cuny.edu/che/che_home.htm) is a nonprofit organization of social scientists, environmental designers, planners, and educators whose research addresses the relationship between people and their physical settings. The Center grew out of the pioneering work of the Environmental Psychology Subprogram at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York.

All photographs by Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani

Bronx By Design

High End Architecture Inspires
Low Income Home-Making

Photographic guided tours of
WHEDCO's Urban Horizons housing



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