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Johnson's rooftop bedroom, with three walls of glass, opens onto a verdantly planted deck 17 stories above Manhattan (left). Victorian bathroom fixtures (right) came from a salvage store.



Betsy Johnson's search for her apartment was, in essence, a search for a roof. "I wanted a private roof," she says. "I wanted a view. I looked for over three years." If the apartment, when she first saw it, was a little discouraging, its rooftop deck was anything but. "When the agent took me up there," recalls Johnson, "I said, 'I'll take it.'"

Johnson's rooftop aerie is a mesa of sorts, with Grand Canyon-like views of downtown Manhattan tumbling off in three directions. She has installed a staircase that leads from her living area to a glassed-in bedroom pavilion she resurrected from a shaky little rooftop lean-to formerly used for storage.

Now, her Art Nouveau-style iron bed, stately under an ornate crystal chandelier, appears to float like a barge among the stone spires and pediments of neighboring buildings.

Outside the glass walls of the bedroom, landscape designer Janice Parker has planted a welter of miniature potted gardens: an herb garden, a vegetable garden, a Victorian-style rose garden and what Johnson calls a "cartoon garden," in which flowers like cosmos, nasturtiums and sunflowers have been chosen strictly for their vivid colors and general aspect of whimsy. "I get a lot of inspiration for clothes from the gardens," Johnson says. The rooftop is also host to assorted chairs and chaises, umbrellas, birdbaths and statuary—and a trampoline. "It's as cluttered up here as it is downstairs."