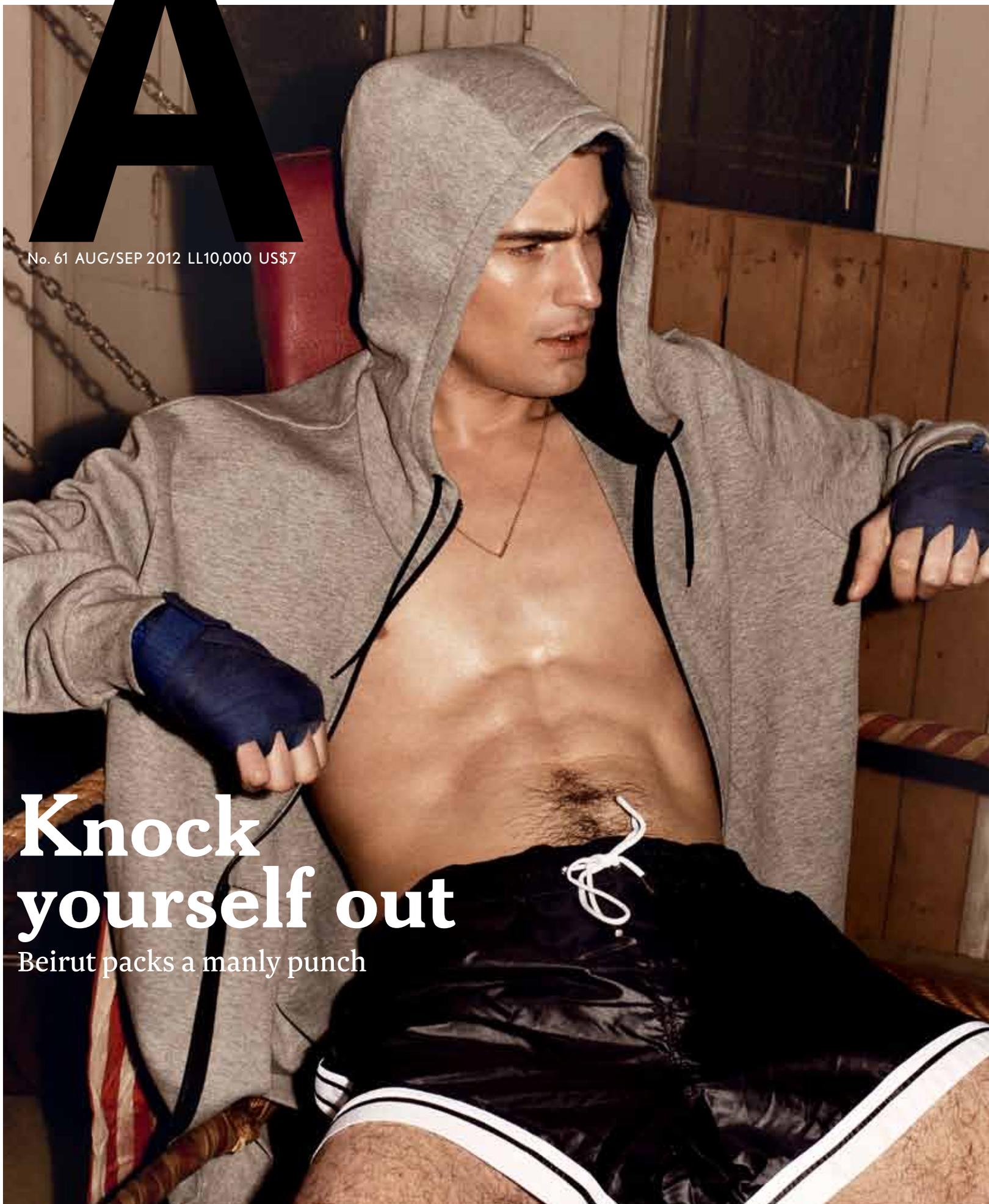


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# Knock yourself out

Beirut packs a manly punch



# Artistic haven

By Marwan Naaman

## New York's Gramercy Park Hotel offers stylish accommodation in an art-filled space

If you're planning a trip to New York, one of the most important decisions you have to make is where you're going to stay. The city has an endless number of hotels, many of which are among the best in the world, so choosing a temporary Manhattan home can be a daunting task.

An easy way to proceed is to settle on a neighborhood and then check out which hotels are available in your choice area. Most visitors are quick to single out Times Square, Fifth Avenue (with its high concentration of shops) or lively, super-trendy Soho.

I propose a different area: Gramercy Park. Quieter than other Manhattan hotspots, and graced by the leafy park that gives the area its name, Gramercy Park is a small neighborhood with high doses of charm and an aura of timeless romance.

The reigning property in the area, located directly on the park, is the Gramercy Park Hotel, a 185-room establishment that sets the standard for New York cool. First opened in 1925, the Gramercy Park Hotel was redesigned in 2006 by hotelier Ian Schrager, who had the ingenuity to employ architect John Pawson and Oscar-nominated filmmaker and interior designer Julian Schnabel to overhaul the property.

Inspired by the spirit, colors and art of the Italian Renaissance, Schnabel used a bold mix of hues (burgundy red, mint green, royal blue) and materials (brick, untreated wood, Louis XV furniture, handmade Moroccan tiles) to create breathtaking interiors.

The lobby is something of an art gallery, offering a changing selection of paintings by some of the world's most revered artists, including Andy



Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Damien Hirst, Fernando Botero, Thomas Hoepker and George Condo. In fact, whiling away an evening in front of the lobby's blazing fireplace, under the spectacular Venetian glass chandelier and in full view of an authentic Botero, has got to be one of this world's loftiest experiences.

### Maialino

Once you pull yourself away from the engaging lobby, you'll want to explore the rest of the property. First off, indulge in the culinary pleasures of Italian restaurant Maialino, set directly to the left of the hotel entrance. Here, chef Nick Anderer creates his own version of Roman classics. Designed to resemble a Roman trattoria, Maialino has three distinct sections: the main dining area, the bar area and the private dining room for special events. The bar area, featuring cocktails and nibbles, is particularly popular as an after-work destination for hip New Yorkers, who will often start the evening with a few glasses of red wine, and then move into the dining area for delectable Italian fare, like spaghetti with anchovies and olive oil and fettuccine with suckling pig ragu and parmesan.

### Gramercy Terrace

If you want to try an entirely different dining experience, take the elevator to the 18th floor. Here, high above the surrounding buildings and in a bright, plant-filled space, you'll find the Gramercy Terrace. The restaurant, with its retractable glass roof, is

a great place to have breakfast (freshly baked croissants, toasted bread, fruit preserves, coffee, orange juice), sample modern American cuisine or enjoy sunset cocktails.

### Rose Bar and Jade Bar

The Rose Bar and Jade Bar, two of Manhattan's hottest nightspots, are set inside the Gramercy Park Hotel, immediately to the right of the entrance. The first one visitors spot is the Jade Bar, where red drapes cascade over walls painted a majestic green. While the Jade Bar is open to all, the adjacent Rose Bar is an exclusive destination where reservations are required after 10pm and access is seldom guaranteed. Fortunately, if you're a guest at the hotel, you can ask the concierge to add your name to the guest list, allowing you to rub elbows with celebrities for at least one night. Both bars shimmer to the glow of soft candlelight, and both showcase spectacular artworks by the likes of Hirst, Warhol and Schnabel.

### Fitness and spa

All the eating and drinking at the Gramercy Park Hotel certainly doesn't mean that you have to let yourself go. The hotel gym, with its massive windows overlooking Gramercy Park, offers modern equipment and even personal trainers upon request. The on-site spa has a steam room and a whole range of massage and beauty treatments.

### The rooms

Then, of course, you have the spacious and

Maialino restaurant (left), a glimpse of the Jade Bar (directly below) and the Gramercy Terrace restaurant (bottom)



The Gramercy Park Hotel's lobby (below) and the hotel's plush Drawing Room (right)



luxuriously appointed rooms. Don't expect traditional hotel guestrooms or ubiquitous minimalism. The rooms at the Gramercy Park Hotel are all about tasteful grandeur and sophisticated excess. Furnishings include leather chairs, hand-knotted rugs, velvet curtains and oak floors, while tech amenities range from flat-screen TVs and DVD players to an iPod docking station.

### **A walk in the park**

During your stay at the hotel, be sure to make time for a leisurely walk across Gramercy Park. This is Manhattan's only privately owned park, and access to the green space is exclusively for residents of the neighborhood and hotel guests. Ask the concierge for a key, and discover this lush sanctuary.

For reservations, tel. 1.212.920.3300, [www.gramercyparkhotel.com](http://www.gramercyparkhotel.com)

### **Art tour**

Even though Chelsea, with its high concentration of art galleries, is located on Manhattan's West Side, you can easily walk from the Gramercy Park Hotel to the galleries via 23rd Street. The entire trek will take about 15 minutes. Once there, check out some of the world's most renowned contemporary art spaces.

#### Anton Kern

This major gallery features an exhibit of Alessandro Pessoli's work from September 6-October 13.  
523 W. 20th St., tel. 1.212.367.9663, [www.antonkerngallery.com](http://www.antonkerngallery.com)

#### Bortolami

Works by Barbara Kasten and Justin Beal are on view until August 3.  
520 W. 20th St., tel. 1.212.727.2050, [www.bortolamigallery.com](http://www.bortolamigallery.com)

#### David Zwirner

On view until August 10, "People Who Work Here" is a group exhibit curated by Rawson Projects.  
525 W. 19th St., tel. 1.212.727.2070 and 519 W. 19th St., tel. 1.212.517.8677, [www.davidzwirner.com](http://www.davidzwirner.com)

#### Gagosian Gallery

The prestigious art establishment has two locations in Chelsea, featuring changing exhibits.  
555 W. 24th St, tel. 1.212.741.1111 and 522 W. 21st St., tel. 1.212.741.1717, [www.gagosian.com](http://www.gagosian.com)

#### Greene Naftali

Works by contemporary artists are on view at this art space.  
508 W. 26th St., eighth floor, tel. 1.212.463.7770, [www.greenenaftaligallery.com](http://www.greenenaftaligallery.com)

#### Lombard-Freid Projects

From September 6-October 17, the gallery features American artist Michael Rakowitz's solo exhibit "The Breakup."  
518 W. 19th St., tel. 1.212.967.8040, [www.lombard-freid.com](http://www.lombard-freid.com)

#### The Pace Gallery

The respected art gallery exhibits the work of Wang Guangle until August 17 in one of its two Chelsea locations.  
534 W. 25th St., tel. 1.212.929.7000, [thepacegallery.com](http://thepacegallery.com)

#### Paul Kasmin Gallery

Until August 17, the art gallery features "Sculpted Matter," focusing on contemporary sculptures, and beginning on September 6, the works of artists Erik Parker and Saint Clair Cemin are on display.  
293 10th Ave. and 515 W. 27th St., tel. 1.212.563.4474, [www.paulkasmingallery.com](http://www.paulkasmingallery.com)

#### White Box

This pre-eminent art space hosts "The Art of War" exhibit from August 1-7. This is the first time that a complete graphic novel has been exhibited at a gallery.  
329 Broome St., tel. 1.212.714.2347, [www.whiteboxny.org](http://www.whiteboxny.org)