

THE HOME STAGING RAGE!

In a recent interview, real estate tycoon and star of ABC's *Shark Tank* Barbara Corcoran stated that "home staging used to be a luxury, and now, it's mandatory." For those of you who haven't had to put a house on the market in the last 25 years, home staging simply means preparing a residence for sale with the goal of making it appealing to the highest number of potential buyers. Staging usually involves improving a home's appeal by transforming it through shaping up or changing out its furniture and décor in order to create a more attractive first impression.

When it first came on the scene, home staging was reserved for specific high-end properties or model homes, but over the years, it has expanded to include homes of all price points. Real estate agents like to point out that staging a home can often cost less than a price reduction and can even help discourage a list of concessions a buyer might ask for. The National Association of Realtors reports that 92% of buyers last year used the internet in some way in their home search process and that 81% of buyers who saw photos of a home that had been staged had a much easier time imagining it as their future home. Seasoned professional Lisa Gutman of Keller Williams, specializing

in luxury and estate properties in Hidden Hills and Calabasas, says, "If a home is vacant, I always recommend staging it. I believe staging can work magic!"

Fees associated with hiring a professional stager can start as low as \$200 for a one-time consultation fee and range into the tens of thousands to completely furnish and provide décor for the largest of luxury homes. If you're looking to work some staging magic on your home to sell it (or just to get that freshly-staged feeling!) and you aren't ready to take the plunge and hire a stager, here are some of the tricks of the trade we employ when staging for our clients:

- Say sayonara to clutter and pare down! There is nothing more important in preparing your home to sell than to rid it of disorder. Obviously, you want to present a house as clean and tidy as you can, but also, try to remove as large a volume of 'stuff' as you can, even if you would normally consider it to be organized. The orderly stack of papers by the phone, the gallery wall of old family photos, the daily detritus that you can't even see under normal circumstances because it's always there—even when they're organized, the

things that make your home feel homey to you might make your future buyer feel like they're intruding upon someone else's house and they might make it harder for them to imagine the house as their own. Clear surfaces and leave only the most pleasing accessories. Take a good look at your furnishings and reduce what you can—anything superfluous should go into storage. Things should feel a little more bare than what you're used to in order to enable a buyer to project their own style into your home.

- Give your furniture groupings a designer's professional touch. Move furnishings into the center of a room and make cozy conversation groups by floating pieces in the space. Except in the smallest of spaces, pushing furniture up against walls is never the way to make a room look larger.
- Accessories are often the first things you notice when entering a room. Combining the right accoutrements can make a room more appealing. If you want to spruce things up without refinishing, try adding a few new and fabulous accessories. When it comes to arranging them, odd numbers of items usually look best. On a large, flat surface such as a coffee





Architectural and Furnishings Design by Interior Archaeology

table, I like to imagine a triangle and place one object at each point. Scale is important too, so try varying the widths and heights in your groupings, with the largest item at the back and the smallest in front. For high impact, group accessories by color, material, or some other unifying element.

- If you have a spare room that a child has moved out of or that's just used for storage, reimagine it. The last thing you want is for the buyer to think "yes, this is also where I will pile my junk." Who wouldn't love a craft room, meditation room, or a home office? Bring in a vibrant area rug, some weights, and a wall mirror to create a home gym and get the buyers excited about how they might use the space.

- This is a hard one to swallow, but if I don't tell you, no one will. Bold colors can discourage offers. Ditch the dated tones and accent walls. Paint walls a fresh palate of neutrals to elegantly update a space and allow them to flow together. This helps spaces look larger and more important, and again, it makes it easier for your buyer to project their own style into your home.

- Storage ranks high on everyone's list. Show off your closet space and make closets more appealing by beautifully organizing them top to bottom. Make sure that the moment your buyer opens her future walk-in closet, it reconfirms her dreams instead of reminding her of her current storage nightmares.

Home staging
used to be optional.
Now it's a
necessity when
selling a house.

~ Barbara Corcoran

- The fragrance of a house will only be the first thing your buyer notices if you're doing something very wrong, but I like to stack the deck in my client's favor by making sure to light a pleasant (but not overwhelming) candle a few hours before a showing. I've known realtors who like to have fresh bread or an apple pie baking when they show a house. Fresh flowers on the kitchen table or in the powder room also can evoke that sense of welcome that will help a buyer romanticize their future life in your home.

There is nothing more exciting (at least to me!) than imagining a new chapter in a new home, but most of us have to sell the one we're in first.

Until next time, here's to setting the stage for a successful sale and here's to creating your own Noble Spaces! ■

Tammy Randall Wood, ASID, is the founder and principal of Interior Archaeology. She has designed an extensive array of projects coast to coast -- from seaside cottages on Martha's Vineyard, metropolitan penthouses and formal Beltway manors to cultivated West Coast compounds. Her firm brings a fresh approach to tailored interiors. Tweet Tammy your staging story @IArchaeology.

Tammy Randall Wood, ASID
INTERIOR ARCHAEOLOGY
818.991.0365
InteriorArchaeology.com
facebook.com/InteriorArchaeology
instagram.com/interiorarchaeology