


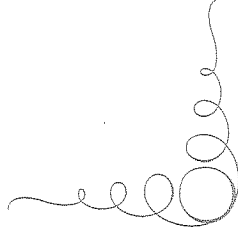
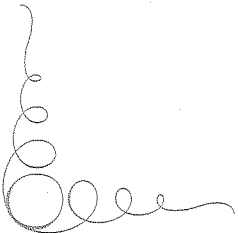


it's
**SHOW
TIME!**

Professional House Stagers
Can Be The Key To a Quicker,
More Profitable Sale.



By KEITH ROCKMAEL Photography by BRAD BARTHOLOMEW



Decorators create what appeals to the owner while a good stager will creatively hit the lowest common denominator so the home appeals to everyone.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE MIGHT not have been thinking about real estate or selling his house when he wrote, "All the world's a stage," but it seems apparent that the great writer tapped into a burgeoning trend. For history buffs, staging has been around for about 30 years, but only in more recent years has the term "staging" gained more popularity and significance. Don't confuse staging with the myriad of other home-related terms and professions such as home designers, interior decorators and home enhancers, as staging takes on its own significance.

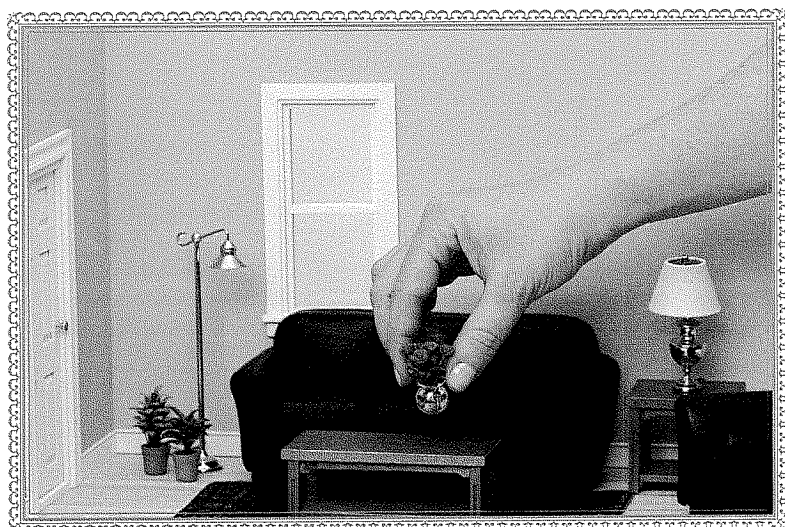
In reality, one might say that interior decorators personalize a home while stagers de-personalize. Decorators create what appeals to the owner while a good stager will creatively hit the lowest common denominator so the home appeals to everyone.

With staging, the beauty lies not only in the art but also in the numbers. It's more about creativity than money. Think of staging like detailing a car. A smart auto seller would detail a car before selling it to add value, and that's exactly what staging can do for a house.

The bottom line

HOME OWNER RENEE Psareas tried to sell her Windham, N.H., house herself last April using a discount broker but the house sat on the market for 61 days with an \$829,000 price tag. Psareas then tried the FSBO (For Sale By Owner) method but 20 days later, no bites. Then she listed with a real estate agent Val Munoz and they relisted at \$819,000. They reduced to \$809,000. Then \$799,000 in late October. They dropped again to \$785,000.

Finally they had the home staged by Margaret Innis, an accredited staging professional, and got their asking price in just six days. It doesn't take a math wizard to understand these numbers: Before staging, 272 DOM (Days on Market). After staging, 6 DOM.



"I absolutely think that it helped. The stagers moved my bedroom around, which made a huge difference. It made it more inviting," Psareas said. "They used stuff that I didn't know that I even had and they didn't even buy anything except for some small items," Psareas added. "In hindsight I think that it is worth the money. It may have been the spring market but the staging definitely helped."

Barb Schwartz, founder of Associated Staging Professionals and author of "Home Staging: The Winning Way to Sell Your House for More Money," claims recent numbers indicate that staged homes in the lower end (less than \$1 million) are selling for approximately

10 percent more versus unstaged homes, while \$1 million plus staged homes are selling for about 20 percent more.

Schwartz offers other recent examples including an unstaged Philadelphia house that sat on the market for one year with a \$1.195 million price tag. Then her stagers came in to do their magic and the house received a \$1.395 offer the next day. She mentions a Seattle house that sat for nine months at \$1.4 million then got a staging

treatment and sold for \$1.9 million three weeks later.

It's not only about million dollar houses, as the owners of a house in Oak Grove, Calif., originally listed at \$369,000 then relisted at \$379,000 after staging. The house eventually sold for \$390,000, a tidy \$21,000 more than the original asking price.

What it costs

BUT THIS MUST come at a high cost, right? Not necessarily. A good stager will do more with less money. It forces them to be creative.

Any stager can fill a house with fancy furniture, artwork and table settings but then their fees rise as well. A stager charging more than \$5,000 for an entire house (unless it's empty) might not be using all their creative juices. According to a 2003 HomeGain Survey of 2,000 real estate agents nationwide, staging typically costs \$212 to \$1,089 and increases the sales price by \$2,275 to \$2,841. Top stagers can charge as little as \$300 by creatively swapping items from other rooms.

"We make things out of nothing, like on 'Gilligan's Island.' It cuts down on the cost," Schwartz says. Some stagers do their thing while the client is away but some sellers like to be more hands-on. The more work a client

STAGING DO'S



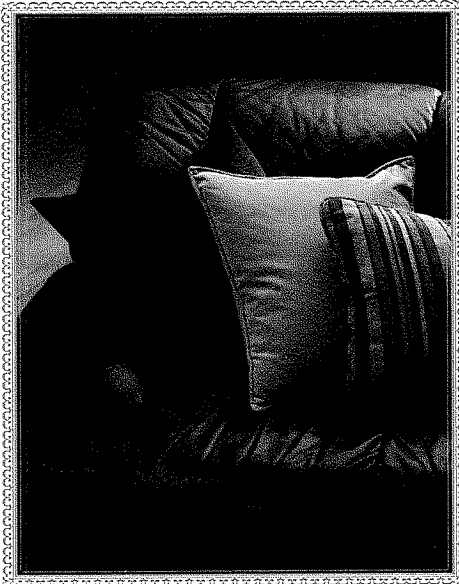
1. *De-clutter—prospects should see space, not stuff*
2. *Work in angles—it creates interest and perception of more space*
3. *Color—use neutral colors, especially paint*
4. *Re-accessorize—work in odd numbers such as one, three and five*
5. *Find a pro—work with an Accredited Staging Professional*
6. *De-personalize—remove personal photos from walls, countertops and refrigerator panels*
7. *Lighten up—leave on lights during the day and turn on all the lights and lamps during showings*
8. *Open up—clear patios or decks of small items such as flowerpots, barbecues and toys*
9. *Soften up—play soft jazz or classical music during showings*
10. *Freshen up—pet odors are a killer*

performs not only can increase the house's value but it also can lessen the amount of work that the stager must perform.

"Sometimes the owners run and buy new dishes, even at Target, but there's nothing that I can't make work," says Peggy Selinger-Eaton who has out a new book and DVD, "Stage Your Home for Profit."

When Selinger-Eaton enters a client's home she warmly greets them and hands them a wish list. "In this market, I'm pretty tough with my wish list. It's their profit list," says Selinger-Eaton. Top-flight stagers like Schwartz and Selinger-Eaton bring value to a house. Staging differentiates a house; it creates emotion, which creates more offers and more money. Selinger-Eaton says that she creates an illusion.

"Even if there's a grungy couch, we can update it by buying pillows and throws."



Sellers with expired listings or who have properties that have sat on the market might rethink their strategy. A real estate agent who either works with or is a superior stager can make a huge difference. Savvy sellers shouldn't look at staging by seeing how much it will cost but how much it will make. Even sellers with limited financial resources can find ways to use a stager's expertise. Some home stagers will do a consultation and provide a list of ideas to the homeowner for about \$250.



As the air slowly seeps from the real estate bubble, staging should be more on the minds of home sellers. In the real estate game, time looms equally as important as money. According to statistics compiled by Stagedhomes.com, unstaged homes spent an average of 22 days on the market but those staged by an Accredited Staging Professional spent an average of 11 days on market, which equates to 50 percent less time on market. As for sales price, a non-staged sales price averaged \$518,820 while a staged home sold for \$557,271, a 6.9 percent increase. Considering those numbers, you have to admit stage hands are key to the production. ●

Keith Rockmael is a San Francisco-based "Green" Realtor and freelance writer. He specializes in green and eco-friendly homes and real estate but still finds time to contribute to publications such as Budget Travel, the Christian Science Monitor and TheSpinningImage.com.



Info Source

www.stagedhomes.com
www.peggyscorner.com