



DRESSED TO SELL

Thinking of selling? Make your house stand out from the competition by showing it in its best light. Kate White asks the experts how to reach maximum sales potential



When it comes to selling your home, making an excellent first impression is vital – and Mayfair agents and developers are unanimous that high-quality interior design and presentation can make a huge impact on price.

“The type of development we do has been proven to add at least 25 per cent to the value of a property,” says Joe Burns, co-founder of Mayfair-based interior design and development practice Oliver Burns, which specialises in the £10 million-plus market.

He cites a recent example where the buyer was reluctant to pay what the vendor was asking for the upper floors of a Mayfair building. “We presented a scheme to create six penthouses with independent access, 24-hour concierge, and a very high level of finish,” Joe says. “After the presentation we managed to lift the value by 25 per cent, and the purchaser got a green light from their agent. It was an interesting exercise because it showed the true value of what we do.”

Oliver Burns’ previous projects include Walpole Mayfair, an exquisite collection of luxury apartments on Arlington Street. The scheme set record-breaking prices for Mayfair and St

James’s when it launched in 2012.

It is currently designing the triplex penthouse for Dukelease’s Beau House development on Jermyn Street, which is set to complete later this year.

“Good common parts are crucial,” Joe says. “I’ve been to many a property around Belgravia where the apartment itself is amazing but the common parts are poor, and that would put off the majority of our clients. It’s a proven fact that you have just seven seconds to impress somebody, and when you’re dealing with people who are used to seeing the best and having the best, it’s important that you deliver the best.”

For those looking to sell their property without redesigning it, Joe says: “the golden rule is to declutter. Most of your personal belongings need to be moved into storage so you’re presenting the property as a place for someone else to live in.”

Shirley Humphrey from Harrods Estates agrees. “Decluttering is crucial and presentation of the home is very important,” she says. “Although, if it’s so pristine that it feels un-lived in, then some people can feel uncomfortable when



they walk in." Cash-rich, time-poor property-owners can take advantage of Harrods Estates' interior design and furniture planning services, which will dress properties for sale if needed. Shirley emphasises that the small touches, including "plumping cushions, fresh flowers and having a lovely candle burning" can make all the difference, but says that food smells are a "definite no".

Having top quality, glossy magazines on show is a top tip from Marylebone-based agent Rokstone. Make sure it's up to date, and portrays a buzzing location, like *Mayfair Times!*

Common parts should also make a good first impression. "When you go into some apartment blocks there will be a pile of old mail that has been sitting there for weeks and weeks," says Shirley. "Addressing little things like that can make such a difference."

Decor-wise: "everyone is fed-up with beige, but if it's too eclectic it can put people off"; while furniture in situ also helps: "Otherwise with large spaces people can't visualise how it will work – they find it daunting."

Alastair Nicholson, sales associate at Knight Frank's Mayfair and St James's office, says: "If buyers see a property dressed, it's far easier for them to envisage moving in tomorrow. It certainly makes the house more saleable because people can see themselves living there." The Knight Frank Interiors team is on hand to prepare clients' properties for sale. They have recently been working on a 6,000 square foot penthouse in the Saint Martin's Lofts building on Charing Cross Road. "We advised the owners to furnish the property because it's such a large space," Alastair says. "Knight Frank Interiors is dressing the whole lot so we can make the brochure look exceptional. The photos will be so much better than if it was just a big empty room."

Italian kitchen company Rossana launched its Duke Street showroom in November last year. Founded in Italy in 1953, the Rossana design team juxtaposes patinated metals such as pewter, burnished brass and silver against natural stones to create understated but stylish, high-quality kitchens. Darren Miller, the company's head of operations for the UK and California, says: "It's all about attention to detail. The value of a luxury item is really to do with the material and how that material is utilised."

Rossana has undertaken numerous projects in Mayfair and Belgravia, and is supplying around 15 kitchens for a landmark residential scheme in Curzon Street. Storage is an important part of creating the wow factor, he says. "We have amazing, architectural storage systems. Some clients have front-of-house kitchens that are the showpieces and a back-of-house facility that can be opened or completely closed off." Darren believes the kitchen is key when it comes to selling a house. "People's lifestyles have changed so that even if they have space for a formal dining room, they tend to spend more time in the kitchen," he says.

"This has impacted on the value and the appearance of the kitchen – it's no longer just a practical space. Because it's seen day in, day out by owners and their guests, it has to look spectacular – and that's where we come in."



TOP: Rossana-designed kitchen
 BOTTOM: Two-bedroom lateral penthouse at 12 Charles Street, designed by Rigby & Rigby, POA
 OPPOSITE TOP: Oliver Bums' Walpole Mayfair
 OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Harrods Estates' 55 Park Lane