

# Titanic achievement for broker Bowen

Former movie set designer making waves in real estate

BY MAGGIE HAWRYLUK

He's created spaces for such A-listers as Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Sylvester Stallone and Nicole Kidman as a movie set builder for some of the silver screen's biggest blockbusters. And now Doug Bowen, vice president at CORE Group Marketing, is taking on a new role in creating sets — for reality.

In his latest project, 125 North 10th Street in Williamsburg, Bowen has played an integral role in perfecting the stage. From choosing the best home-grown finishes, like IceStone for the countertops, to assembling the most creative marketing strategy that will entice the audience, Bowen is setting the stage in the Brooklyn residential market.

"I look at it like a set," said Bowen, the project's director of sales. "A set is created by fabulously talented people for the actors to work in. I'm sort of like the director on this set."

Bowen's story begins in a radically different scene than that of New York City real estate. The New York native originally thought he'd pursue a career in front of the camera rather than behind the scenes.

He attended Trinity Repertory Company in Rhode Island, studying to be an actor/director. While there, he met his now-wife Geraldine LiBrandi, an actress who



Doug Bowen said building the set for the movie Titanic was 'life-changing.'

most notably played Patty Leotardo in the last two seasons of "The Sopranos." Though Bowen landed a few acting gigs, he eventually decided to try on a new role for size.

"At some point along the way, I decided one actor was enough in the family and I started acting like a carpenter," he said.

Bowen learned the skills needed to become a master carpenter and cabinet-maker, opening the doors for his first set-building job on a made-for-TV movie created by Tony award winning set designer, Eugene Lee. Bowen quickly landed other set building jobs for various films and television shows, though he was always looking ahead to the next bigger, better step.

"I always thought of it as a means to another end," he said.

Since Bowen possessed exceptional communication skills, he was often hired as the lead builder on numerous projects. Listed among his credentials are building sets for *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *The Stepford Wives* and *The Specialist*, noting that he was the lead builder for the infamous shower scene with Stallone and actress Sharon Stone.

But among the many famous films he worked on during a 13-year set building career, Bowen prides himself the most for contributing to the creation of the ship for the blockbuster *Titanic*.

"It was incredibly detailed. We worked from copies of the actual blueprints and focused on every detail on the ship," said Bowen, who was the general foreman on the project, working at Fox Studios Baja in Baja, Calif. for nearly a year. "I've worked on 50 feature films, but everything pales in comparison to the intricate nature and scope of work involved in *Titanic*."

"It was a one-of-a-kind movie. A very, very challenging and life-changing experience."

In addition to taking away some very close relationships from the grueling experience — "I cried my eyes out when I left *Titanic*. We spent so much time working on that set." — Bowen has also snagged some physical reminders of the experience. As a gift from the film's set designer, he was given a place setting used in *Titanic* to add to his movie artifact collection.

"That will never make it to eBay," he said, laughing.

After finishing work on *Titanic*, Bowen and his wife moved from the West coast back to Brooklyn. He joined the local carpenter's union, strictly working on sets based in New York, and decided to invest some of his earnings.

"I bought my first brownstone after working on *Titanic*. It was the first time I had money in my life," he said. "I then decided I was more interested in pursuing real estate than building movie sets."

Bowen continued purchasing more property in the area, beginning his role as landlord and investor, and eventually sparking his career in real estate. He began as an agent at Prudential Douglas Elliman, quickly becoming an award-winning broker in the TriBeCa office specializing in Brooklyn during his

three years with the firm.

"The sales part was no problem," he said. "I found myself completely equipped, more than some of the more experienced brokers, because of my experience as a contractor."

Steven Ganz, a founding member at CORE, recruited Bowen to join the full-service boutique a year and half ago. While on the CORE team, Bowen has really lent his building experience to 125 North 10th.

"I'm tailor-made for this," he said. "I was involved from the design level. I completely redesigned the building. We took it to another place."

And Bowen, who is active in the Brooklyn community, plans on taking his newest role at CORE to another level as well.

"I stay away from that word 'career.' I've lived life on a project to project basis since high school. It takes a whole new game plan to follow a moving target," he said. "I want to continue to grow my business, to build really high quality new development projects."



Bowen and his colleagues worked from blueprints re-create the Titanic.