



Selling New York Episode 12: The Unwieldy Upgraders

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Every Thursday night, HGTV's Selling New York rides along with boutique brokerages CORE, Gumley Haft Kleier and Warburg as they try to sell fabulous properties fabulously. Here, our recap of how the NYC real estate industry is portrayed to the world, penned by Molly Reisner.



Upgrade. The word conjures up wide leather seats and less-icky blankets for some, and replacing off-brand dental floss with Glide for me. And for last night's *Selling New York* players, it means waving hello to the walls of their Big Apple dream apartments. Of course, million-dollar upgrades usually don't come stress-free no matter how much soothsaying a broker babbles to their buyers.

In Story #1, a fashion magazine maven calls upon a broker friend to help sell her current Kips Bay pad and find her a more modern (and twice as expensive) abode. And then in Story #2, an anxious attorney looks to lift herself out of a long-time rental and land the perfect apartment with a mortgage she can stomach.

Come watch as these ladies get easily queasy and squirm over emptying their coffers over pricey offers! Not to be missed moments include: The outing of Mama Michele's preferred cream cheese brand, a rare sighting of a subdued

Richard Steinberg, and the smallest ratio of chips to guacamole ever. Hold on to your barf bags, cuz this recap is full of turbulence!

On to all that hot real estate reality TV action! >>

CRISIS #1: CAN A CLIENT AND BROKER BE FRIENDS???

Core agent Maggie Kent has friends! And one of those friends is seller/buyer/fashion mag insider Francine Wong. Fran and Mags apparently go waaaay back, which is why Fran has entrusted her to: a) sell her apartment and b) get her a chic replacement and c) help her pick out a vintage gown for some event **THAT NIGHT!** The pressure to lie to your friend that she looks great in an '80s Barbie dress is on:



Between trying on frocks, Fran fills us in on how she thinks Mags can understand what she needs, being friends and all (seriously, they met like three weeks ago). Meanwhile, Mags, the voice of rationed reason, recognizes that doing business together can add strain to a friendship, but if she remains professional and doesn't blow it, the process will add to their relationship (I bet \$4 they're not even Facebook friends). How much are you gunning for a catfight?

Next, the ladies head over to Fran's 1 bedroom/1 bathroom apartment at 201 East 28th Street, otherwise known as The Chesapeake House. "I can't believe you've never been here before!" Fran exclaims as she unlocks the door. I can! Once inside, Fran gives Mags a tour of the oddly personality-devoid 700 sq. ft. interior. Is this not the saddest bedroom ever? Raise your hand if you had this same halogen lamp in your dorm room, replete with a collection of sizzled bugs by the bulb:



Even Mags calls the bedroom "a white box", and suggests adding some warmth before staging an open house/style intervention. Fran is eager to sell and move out ASAP, which wouldn't take long considering her perplexing lack of decor. Does she even live there? She wants to use the money she makes from the sale to go towards buying a sleeker apartment for \$1 million or a little under. With a newly remodeled kitchen, Mags thinks she could sell the place in the \$575-595k range. Now, Mags needs to show her friendquaintance what a million G Dubs can get her. Their first stop?

The nearby Twenty9th Park Madison condo building. Because who doesn't want to live under the same roof where Johnny Weir will be hanging up his bedazzled ice skates? There, *Selling New York's* over-the-top powder keg, Warburg's Richard Steinberg, is unusually tranquil while showing them around a 785-square-foot 1BR/1BA: Fran loves the open kitchen, but not so much the lack of privacy courtesy of giant windows in the living room. They giggle and wave hello to an innocent gentleman across the street enjoying a ciggie break:



OMG, he waved back! Potentially cute boys peeping into your apartment aside, Fran is not down with the \$1.1 million asking price. Mags wants to next focus on getting Fran's apartment in tip-top to snag some interested buyers and move things forward. Why? "Because it's not just about the apartment, it's about Francine's life too." Well, at least that clears everything up.

It's back to Chesapeake House to bust the lackluster in Fran's super-boring apartment. Mags taps Amy Cupp from ABCD Design to work her makeover magic. With new paint, bedding and pillows, she manages to bump up the asking price to \$645k with these frugal fixes. Here's a post-op peek:

The open house brings in some foot traffic, but no offers. Mags is hopeful someone will bite at this starter apartment since it's got "good bones" with the redone floors, kitchen and bathroom. Wanting to keep the momentum of her maybe move, Mags takes Fran to the next viewing at Gramercy 19, or as we like to call it, The Tumor Building.

Halstead broker Dorothy Somekh welcomes the duo into this 903sqft 1BR/1.5BA joint:

Again, Fran loves the location and the space...but at \$1.15 million can't commit. Why is Mags showing her something more expensive than the last place? Doesn't she listen? Real friends listen. Up on the roof, Mags lays out alternative options for Fran to consider: a) renting out old apartment and purchasing now with since interest rates are low or b) renting out apartment while keeping it on the market, and move to a more modern rental. Do any of these sound good to you?

They don't to Fran either. Cuz she's got a better option! At the Fashion Institute of Technology, Fran divulges the plans amongst her real friends:



Fran delights Mags by revealing that not only is her family on board to help finance her new apartment, but she'll be able pay in ALL CASH. That is, when said family is able to "move some current properties out of town," which will take a couple months. Mags starts licking her chops over her friend's newfound financial liquidity, and the postscript informs us that Fran hasn't been funneled the parental dough yet but is jazzed to have her faux-friend Mags help her look at apartments. Yaaaaawn.

CRISIS #2: JITTERY RENTER NEEDS HER HAND HELD TO TAKE THE PLUNGE!

Oh hallowed day! Have you ever wondered what Mama Michele Kleier's kitchen looks like? It's filled with one adorable little boy looking semi-fearful at a tub of every Jewish Grandma's favorite whipped cream cheese: Temp-tee!



The next generation of Kleiers is crazy kute! Daughter Sabrina bops into the kitchen to ask permission to borrow her mom's bangle so she can wear it to a meeting with her client, hospitality lawyer Carolyn Richmond. Sabrina dishes on Carolyn's conundrum - she loves an apartment they saw together at massive post-war condo conversion Manhattan House at 200 East 66th Street, but since it was only the first place Carolyn checked out, she thinks she can do better. The nerve to want to comparison shop!

But Sab was right...after running around town looking at less lustrous layouts, Carolyn still has her heart set on Manhattan House and is returning to visit it again with Sab in tow. Is it the expensively staged interiors that did the trick? This is what makes Carolyn want to move on from 20 years of renting:

Carolyn can see herself settling down for the next decade in this airy 1,078-square-foot 1BR/1BA unit. The corner exposure definitely has the corner on Carolyn's heart, but coming from a renter's state of mind, she's finding it hard to swallow the \$1.315 million price tag. Yeesh, some pricey one-bedrooms this episode, huh? That's like going from an '06 Camry to a Luxury Mini Cooper in one fell swoop. Enticing but a leap. Carolyn lowballs a bid at \$1.15 million which Sab says ain't gonna cut it but she'll try...

...and the offer is rejected. Next, Sab swings Carolyn west to another property inside Hudson Hill at 462 West 58th Street in Hell's Kitchen, pardon us, "Midtown West." We've been tracking this condo building's pricing strategy for quite some time. A snoop inside this view-deficient 2 bed/2 bath abode:

At 1,196 sq. ft., it's slightly bigger than Manhattan House but Sab surely knows Carolyn isn't into picking up the \$1.39 million fee. It's more moolah than her #1 pick, so why even bother? Used to East River views, Carolyn is not impressed with the dead-on stare into the hospital windows across the street. Cuz seeing someone get their catheter removed is way down on her wish list.

Sab is able to snag the busy Carolyn for an impromptu lunch at Meatpacking District Mexican hotspot Dos Caminos. For the love of guacomole, get some chips on that plate!



There, Sab breaks the news that Carolyn's beloved Manhattan House apartment has left the market but - ACT NOW BECAUSE THIS OFFER WON'T LAST! - there's a similar unit available to purchase. Sab tries to allay Carolyn's financial fears by telling her that an extra \$50 or 100k in the long run won't add up to very much a month if this is a long-term investment. Plus, an apartment this good at this price might not be available a couple years from now, just sayin'. Still skittish about breaking the bank, Carolyn wants to meet her money manager before she bids. And the next time she returns to The Manhattan House? "I'm bringing champagne!" I like her attitude.

Finally, the gals meet up at Chelsea Market for Carolyn's big, unsurprising announcement - she's decided to bid! With 12 weeks left on her lease, Carolyn "can't think anymore about it." I hear you girl. The update blurb at the end reveals that Carolyn in fact put in an offer and hopes to be a proud NYC homeowner any second. Shall I bring the Asti Spumanti?

Episode grade: A bit of a snoozefest, and with no John Hancocks inked on contracts, these unhappening upgrades score a C+. Which in Kleier konversion means 2.5 out of 5 cackling Kleiers!

