

Art of the Deal Condo Sales Pitches Include Pricey Paintings and Massive Murals

The \$8.7 million duplex penthouse for sale at Trump SoHo has a heck of a view — and we don't just mean from the windows.

Yes, we'll admit that the 2,331-square-foot two-bedroom, 43rd-floor residence looks out from 20-foot-tall windows on a broad and beautiful swath of Manhattan. But we found the most eye-catching view to be "Candy Coated Hot Lips," the cast acrylic of a sultry, Brigitte Bardot, which was painted by Brooklyn artist Jeremy Penn — and which also happens to be for sale.

In fact, this duplex doubles as an art gallery in the sky.

Late last year, Trump SoHo decided to contact Indiewalls, a company that places local artwork in homes and offices, and put up this installation in its penthouse. The building is planning more exhibitions in its public spaces.

The work hanging on the penthouse's walls ranges from a \$900 print by Robert Herman (another Brooklyn artist) and goes up to \$8,000. There are paintings by young artists such as Max Gleason and Lee Everett in between. (A guest who's staying in the penthouse hotel/condo unit overnight — or a prospective buyer, for that matter — can use a smart-phone app to have the work shipped to their house if so inclined.)

"We were on a search for an exhibition of art that rotates within the hotel," says Andreas Oberoi, general manager of Trump SoHo. He adds, "Here in SoHo, if you don't display art, you're obviously in the wrong neighborhood."

"We're trying not to compete with the incredible views," says Indiewalls' Ari Grazi, who put together the collection. "And we didn't want to overload the guest with a huge quantity of work."

Art is an important amenity for real estate buyers. Sometimes that means having tasteful paintings, prints and murals in the common areas. Other times it means having an apartment where a personal art collection can bloom. Sometimes it means both, as is the case at Griffin Court, on West 54th Street and 10th Avenue.

When Alchemy Properties put up the 95-unit condo building with an 8,700-square-foot courtyard at its center, the developer decided to do something creative with the courtyard's empty wall space: It held a contest for artists to turn it into a mural.

“We got 90 different proposals — some from Russia and Hawaii,” says Ken Horn, president of Alchemy.

A committee of art experts picked Brooklyn artist/architect Corinne Ulmann’s autumnal mural. “It took us about a month to paint,” Ulmann says.

And the idea of an artsy building has attracted art-minded buyers. Chuck Steffan and Ron Abel bought a 1,750-square-foot three-bedroom in Griffin Court late last year partly because the space seemed like a good place to hang their art. They haven’t finished decorating yet, but they have work by painters Eric Karpeles and Colleen Ross, plus an Andy Warhol in the bathroom — and they’re still figuring out how to hang a pair of massive 11-foot-long angel wings and where to hang the oil portrait of themselves by Shirley Wolf.

Art is “the natural complement for real estate,” says Daria Salusbury, senior vice president for Related, whose new 180-unit rental building, 1214 Fifth Ave. — featuring one-bedrooms starting at \$3,995 per month and a three-bedroom, \$12,000-plus duplex penthouse — commissioned Derek Reist to do two abstract paintings and one realistic painting for the lobby.

“They told me to go look at the building,” Reist says. “I walked across the park from the West Side. I had a tough time finding the entrance, and I thought I wanted to do something in the lobby that really makes you feel you’re in the park.”

Of course, it’s no surprise that neighborhoods full of galleries and artists have spawned art-heavy buildings.

In addition to 1214 Fifth Ave., one of the biggest developments to hit that museum-saturated part of Fifth Avenue is One Museum Mile, the Robert A.M. Stern building that is connected to the Museum for African Art.

Liddy Berman, director of the Eleusis Art Advisory (which specializes in managing art collections for buildings and private clients), put together a collection of artwork in the model units of the 114-unit condo building as well as in the common areas. Remaining units range from \$816,000 for a studio up to \$8.275 million for an eight-bedroom.

“I think we’re now at about 16 or so pieces, all different sizes,” says Tom Postilio, managing director of Core, which is selling units at One Museum Mile. “It was two dozen to begin with, but we had to give some back. It worked well. The art is really important, it completes the space, conveys sense of the building.” (And, yes, a buyer can purchase the artwork through Eleusis.)

It’s also no surprise that the area around the High Line has inspired buildings to showcase art. There’s the aptly named +Art building, a condo-rental hybrid with 119 total units.

“The whole idea was to build a lobby and have an outside art space — what they called an art yard — with rotating art” in both spaces, says Richard Nymark, a vice president with

Bellmarc, who has sold apartments at +Art. “It’s both for the pleasure of the residents and to showcase some of the artists of the Chelsea area.”

Other neighborhoods have gotten in on the action, too. At 118 President St. in Brooklyn’s Columbia Waterfront District, brokers Tina Fallon and Victoria Hagman of Realty Collective decided to put some work by Brooklyn photographer Carolina Salguero in the model unit when they put the building’s four condos on the market last September.

While it would be difficult to say that Salguero’s photos sold the building, they definitely didn’t hurt — all four units had accepted offers (at asking price or above) within 24 hours. And the photos (as well as custom furniture by Jeremy Pickett) were a big hit.

“People were like, ‘Can we buy this?’ ” says Hagman. “We had a price list out. But I guess after they spent almost \$1 million on an apartment, they were tapped out.”

Hagman wound up buying two of Salguero’s photos herself. They hang in her Columbia Street office.