

August 19, 2011 | Gina Pace

Back to the Future: Chelsea steampunk apartment evokes fantasy world



(Rich Caplan for CORE)

Selling your apartment 101: Neutralize any space up for sale.

Clear cabinets of clutter. Take down family pictures. Take down the 32-foot-long Technicolor zppelin.

Wait. A zppelin? Yes.

And we haven't even gotten to how the bedroom is designed to evoke a post-Hindenburg vibe, or how the Murphy bed gets lowered by a device that utilizes a deactivated bomb.

So it's not surprising that every real estate broker Jeremy Noritz, a filmmaker, met with told him the pulleys, old wooden casks and antique tools in his 1,800-square-foot Chelsea apartment would have to go. Buyers, they argued, might not love that there are several saws mounted on the walls of one of the bathrooms and that a bookshelf contains a set of teeth – some rotten – displayed like art.

But CORE'S Parul Brahmhatt saw things differently. "I told myself to take a breath and see it for what it is, to move out of judgment and see the artistry," Brahmhatt said.

She got to work researching what Noritz had collected, finding that much of it matched up with Steampunk, a growing movement embracing fantasy and science fiction along with Victorian-era discoveries.



(Rich Caplan for CORE)

Brahmhatt contacted Joey Marsocci, also known as Dr. Grymm, a steampunk expert, to fill her in on the subculture. Marsocci brought some of his pieces to a party thrown to drum up attention for the apartment, such as a piece called "Amelia Earhart Navigational System," which combines a brain in a jar with bubbling liquid, an old-time radio and a typewriter. He invited friends in the steampunk community to come in costume.

The result: Media coverage that's taking off like a dirigible.



CORE agent Parul Brahmhatt (center), who has the apartment exclusive, talks to Dr. Grymm (r.) and friend (James Monroe Adams IV for News)

"If I would have known about this place, I would have put it in my book," said Marsocci. "You can see the time and love that went into it."

Marsocci said that steampunk has really gained, well, steam, in the last three to five years. There's long been an

appreciation for the esthetic, which pulls inspiration from works like Jules Verne's "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" to movies like "Sherlock Holmes," but people didn't know what to call it. It may hit mainstream soon. Marsocci completed an installation at the Cosmopolitan hotel in Las Vegas, and says J.Crew has plans for a steampunk in-store display.

Noritz hopes there's a buyer out there who appreciates his place as much as he does. So no neutralizing for now.

"Where do you start stripping and where do you stop?" Noritz wrote in an email. "Otherwise it would be just like all other New York apartments – vanilla crème."



(Rich Caplan for CORE)

Brahmbhatt knows it takes only one buyer for the \$1.75 million apartment, but is optimistic it might speak to an entire subculture.

"I'm zoning in on a target market. It's not just one person that will like this place. It's an entire movement that is into this place," Brahmbhatt said. "If not, I'll find Tim Burton myself and drag him in here."