

May 31, 2013

Housing Prop: Faux Furniture

To help sell homes faster, some brokers turn to an illusion: origami-style, pop-up furniture.

Home-stager Douglas Pinter, foreground, of informed Space, and his associate, Michael Smith, put together origami-like furniture to stage an apartment for show in New York.

Mr. Pinter's entire line of furniture is an illusion. All of his contemporary pieces are made of polypropylene, a lightweight material similar to what's used to make milk cartons. Here, Mr. Smith puts together some of the faux furniture.

"I can bring a two-bedroom apartment up in four nylon bags," said Mr. Pinter. The polypropylene furniture can be folded flat and then installed in a matter of hours. He recently staged this three-bedroom apartment on the north end of Central Park in New York.

The apartment is expected to come on the market for about \$2 million, said Mark Reznik of A&I Broadway Realty. "But we expect bids to come in much higher," he said.

Another apartment staged by informed Space is shown.

Of about seven listings that informed Space has staged so far, a \$925,000 unit is in contract, and another sold for almost \$1.3 million. Shown here is a staged bedroom designed by the company.

"I see this as a phenomenon of a market that's waking up," said Jonathan Miller, president of Miller Samuel Real Estate Appraisers & Consultants. Mr. Miller said these kinds of novel approaches to real-estate marketing pop up at the beginning of every new development boom cycle, as in the early 2000s. An informed Space chair is shown.

This New York apartment staged by informed Space recently sold for just under \$1.3 million. The listing agent, Tom Postilio of CORE, said this unit was in contract just a day after the staging. "We really felt it helped," Mr. Postilio said.

NextStage Furniture, based in Sioux Falls, S.D., created collapsible cardboard furniture with slipcovers for homes mostly in the \$300,000 range. A photo of some of the cardboard pieces without fabric slip covers is shown.

The same cardboard furniture, here with fabric slipcovers, is shown. Kevin Nielsen, a co-owner of NextStage Furniture, said sales are picking up and Web traffic to his site is rising. A 'starter kit,' including a sofa, dining table and queen-size bed, costs about \$600 before shipping.

The faux electronics business also is enjoying a boost from the housing market's gains. A fake-flat screen TV built by Taiwan-based Real Electronic Propers is shown in a staged living room. A room staged by Kelly Young Design Associates based in Plantation, Fla., is shown. The prop television is shown at center.