

DO-IT-YOURSELF STAGING

These simple steps can help transform your house into a dream home for potential buyers, without the need to hire a professional **By Tara Nolan**

Drape a colourful throw

An artfully arranged blanket can cover an unfortunate blemish on the couch or simply add a chic dash of colour to a neutral room. Cambie Yellow & White Blanket, \$100, cambiedesign.com.



Toss a playful cushion (or two!) on the couch

Throw cushions are a great way to add some colour and style to a tired sofa or to your favourite, well-worn, comfy armchair. Pink Peony Stripe Pillow Cover, \$39.50, Chapters and Indigo stores, indigo.ca.



Neaten up your vanity

An impeccably spotless bathroom will leave a good impression with prospective buyers. Bathroom set with Baci Mountain pattern in sky blue by Samantha Pynn, \$6 to \$12, Simons, simons.ca.



Brighten your bedroom with colourful bedding

Deflated duvet? Fluff up your tired set and accent pillows with cheerful new covers like these ones designed by Sarah Richardson. Pomegranate Ribbon Stripe Ensemble, \$200 (U.S.), sarahrichardsondesign.com.



Add some greenery

Send the knick knacks packing, but highlight an empty spot on a coffee or side table with an arty flowerpot, like this concrete gem. Marbled Icosahedron Geometric Planter by Double L Décor, \$20, doubledecor.ca.



Set the table with style

You don't have to pull out the good china and silverware, but perhaps dress up the dining table a little bit with a stylish tablecloth and a vase of fresh, in-season blooms. Garden Gate Tablecloth by Samantha Pynn, starting at \$24, Simons, simons.ca.

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Add splashes of colour to the kitchen

If you're hanging a tea towel from the oven door, like this lively graphic linen design, be sure it's fresh and pressed. Kiwi Tea Towel by Anizet Designs, \$24, anizet.com.



Add a little ambience to your outdoor decor

Is your patio table set up on the back deck? Help a new buyer picture summer fiestas with a few carefully placed items, like these lanterns (don't forget to add a tealight). Blue glass lanterns by PC Home, \$12 to \$16, Loblaws stores.

Help people envision themselves in the house

STAGING from M1

While that may sound easy enough, in reality it can take an expert eye. Essentially, the images homeowners ogle in magazines often don't carry over into their own living quarters, say the pros.

Home stager and interior decorator Red Barrinuevo can make any space, from a 600-square-foot downtown condo to 6,000-square-foot house, pop.

"Every square foot counts," Barrinuevo says. "Everything needs to showcase as much space as it can for home buyers. They need to know exactly what they're going to do with the space and how they are going to do the layout with their furniture. When you walk into a house that's not staged and not de-cluttered, it's a challenge for most buyers. They think, 'How will my couch fit here?'"

Common rules for staging include removing TVs and replacing them with art and storing all personal items and mementos.

"No. 1, remove all of the little bits of clutter that we all have," advises Bourne. "The stacks of paper, the tiny paper weights beside the lamp, any little knick-knack things people tend to collect all should be gone. I'd rather see nothing on end tables than a lot of little things. Just stick one

vase on your coffee table or three great coffee-table books. Keep it simple. The whole idea is to let people envision themselves in the house. People want to see the space, where they're going to cook or bake or whatever it is they do, but nobody wants to know what shampoo you're using."

Bourne, on occasion, will allow personal photos to remain, however.

"I don't mind personal pictures in a family room or a basement if they're nicely framed," she says. "I think it brings some personality, so I am not one to say 'all family photos have to go,' but definitely the giant one of the 1980s wedding, that has to go."

Barrinuevo says a staged home priced right for the market is almost guaranteed to boost the sale price.

He recalls working on a Vaughn listing after it sat unsold for three months without receiving an offer, in part because the property backed onto a hydro plant. The owners considered lowering the list price, but first they hired Barrinuevo as a last-ditch effort to highlight the best features and, ultimately, sell. It turned out to be a lucrative decision. After a staging overhaul, the home sold for \$115,000 over asking.

After two years of living in a gorgeous century-old Victorian semi located on Markham Street in the An-



JONATHAN NICHOLLS FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Toronto luxury stager Anne Bourne of StagingWorks doesn't mind keeping family photos hanging during showings as long as they're properly, and tastefully, framed.

> THE PRICE OF THE PROS

Condos

A consultation of a condo of less than 1,000-square-feet will cost about \$200-\$300 and take up to three hours.

During a consultation, the stager will advise on furniture placement and art, lighting and the best accessories to add.

Staging a 700-square-foot condo (which can include bringing in

furnishings, lamps, accent pieces, art, fresh bedding and towels) typically costs \$2,500 — \$3,000.

Mid-sized house

A consultation will cost \$300-\$350.

Staging an occupied 3,000-square-foot home is about \$2,000-\$2,500 on average.

Staging a vacant property can run \$4,500 and up.

nex, owner Christine Robertson listed her house, but not without having it staged first. She hired Bourne for the job.

"We painted the entire house, redid the floors and staged it to death," says Bourne. The home was listed at

\$1,849,000 and sold for \$2.1 million in seven days.

A mixture of Robertson's own belongings and borrowed items were incorporated. She had the hardwood floors on the main floor sanded and given a new seal, adding shine and

> WHAT TO DO BEFORE SHOWING YOUR HOME

- > Go on a decluttering bender: Tuck away the coffee machine, blender, footwear, bathroom mats, hygiene products and mementos.
- > Clean, paying special attention to the kitchen and bathrooms.
- > A fresh coat of paint does wonders, however, if it's not in the budget remove scuff marks and fill in small dents.

reducing worn spots. On the second floor she had carpeting removed and hardwood flooring installed.

"I've been through this three times in my life now, but every time after I see the staging, I think, 'Why didn't I do this before?'"