



The One Thing a Home Stager Always Does Before an Open House

By **Barbara Bellesi Zito**
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Credit: Donna Dotan

A bedroom staged by Cheryl Eisen at Quay Tower, Brooklyn Heights, NY

A staged home isn't just the stuff of binge-worthy real estate shows on TV. If you're getting ready to list yours, staging could help it sell faster by showing buyers the potential of the space. In fact, 82 percent of buyer's agents credit home staging as making it easier for buyers to see themselves living in that home, according to the National Association of Realtors.

Cheryl Eisen is the founder and CEO of Interior Marketing Group, an award-winning staging, design, and marketing firm specializing in luxury properties. Whenever she works with agents and sellers to stage a visually stunning space, Eisen always does one specific thing — she turns the home into a multi-sensory experience for potential buyers.

Here's how she does it:

Create a Scent-sational Welcome

Eisen likes to light a candle in the foyer to welcome a would-be buyer with a fresh, calming scent as they walk in. Eisen notes that the first 10 seconds spent in the home are the make-or-break time for a buyer to fall in love with a home.

“[The olfactory sense is] actually proven to be one of the most powerful senses,” she explains, noting that pleasant aromas can trigger positive memories. Her scent of choice? SoulCycle’s Grapefruit Pop candle from Jonathan Adler, which has a bright, citrusy scent — nothing too overbearing, but just enough to create a zen-like experience, she says.



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Credit: Donna Dotan

A child's bedroom staged by Cheryl Eisen at Quay Tower, Brooklyn Heights, NY

Turn Up the Lights

An open house is a home’s time to shine both figuratively and literally. Eisen recommends opening up all the window treatments to let in as much natural light as possible. Opt for warm bulbs rather than cool bulbs in light fixtures; warm bulbs are similar to sunlight, she says, while cool lights are more like what you’ll find in an office or commercial space. And of course, everything must be immaculately clean, Eisen says.

Press Play on a Soothing Soundtrack

Instrumental music playing in the background can also add to a calm vibe at your open house — think of those ethereal tunes you might hear while enjoying a treatment at the spa. Pick your favorite soft soundtrack to cue up at a low volume so as not to get in the way of any conversations or questions about the property. Eisen likes a quiet Mozart piano sonata playing softly as people tour the space.

Decorate With Touchable Accessories

Touch is another sense that's important to indulge in a staged space, Eisen says. She's a big fan of draping a cashmere throw on a bed or sofa. Mohair or silk velvet cushions or pillows are a nice addition, too — but be gentle when placing those pillows.

“The karate chop is over,” Eisen says, referring to the technique of slamming the side of your hand into the top edge of the pillow. She suggests instead a soft chop followed by a smoothing out of the pillow's “ears” for a more natural look.

Staging Shows Your Space's Potential

While it's not impossible to sell a space that's completely empty, staging is enormously helpful, because most people have trouble visualizing how they're going to live there. In fact, Eisen says that when a space is vacant, the first thing most people will do is walk to the closest window and stare out. They miss everything — except for the imperfections in the space.

“You're not distracted by the beauty of how you might live in this space,” Eisen says of an unstaged room. “It doesn't feel like home.”

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