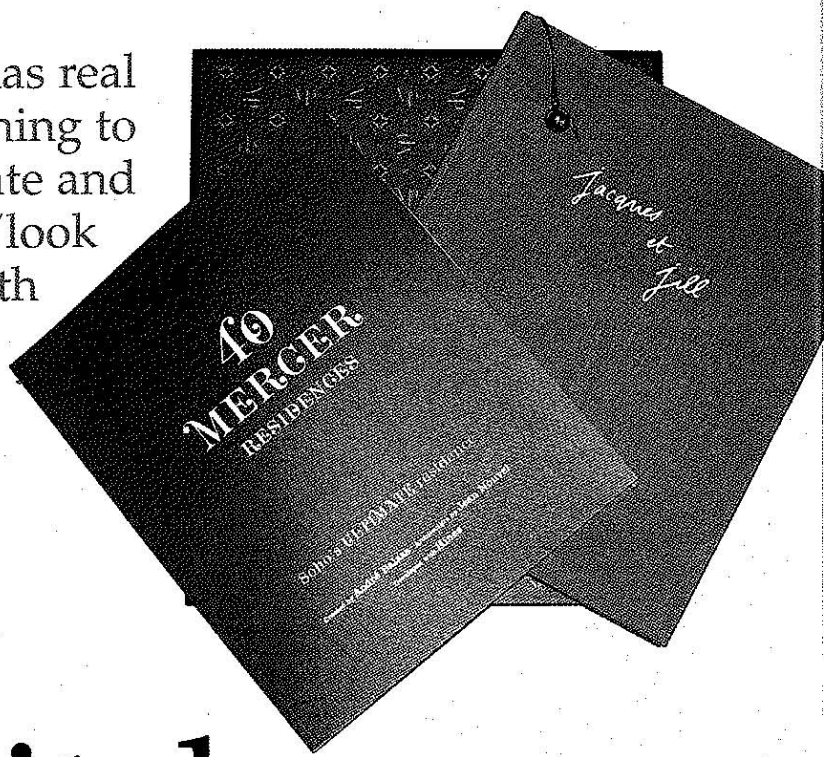


The pressure to sell has real estate marketers turning to ever more elaborate and over-the-top “look books”—usually with little or no info. Sales prices? Ha!



Hit by a Wild Pitch

“Hey! Look at this, can you believe it? What a deal! Get in now, on the ground floor. And, *psst*—if that sounds good, wait’ll you see the bridge I’ve got to sell you!”
[by Lois Weiss]

EVERY DAY WE HEAR ANOTHER SPIEL FOR A CONDOMINIUM PROJECT. Some brag the building is 40- or 80-percent sold, some gush they have 50 contracts out (out of 200), some proclaim there are only two, four, six, or eight units left, or that the penthouses are *finally* being released for sale. But while well-located Manhattan properties continue to do dandy, others just can’t seem to get their sales off the ground.

One Chelsea property is so in the middle of nowhere—between 14th and 23rd Streets, in a mid-block location not near Chelsea Market—that buyers simply haven’t warmed up to it. The developer doesn’t understand what’s gone wrong, other than the fact that there are many, many competitors.

We’re not alone in our thinking. Leonard Steinberg of Prudential Douglas Elliman writes in *LuxuryLetter.com* that the same old boring things are being touted in projects. Commenting on “development drivel” he says, “If a building has to define your lifestyle, you obviously have no life or little style.” He also weighs in on engineered wood floors that later “buckle embarrassingly,” a chef’s kitchen that’s defined by a

Sub-Zero refrigerator but doesn’t have anything else a chef needs, and spa bathrooms, of which he says, “A rain shower in itself does not make the bathroom a spa.” Touché.

SALES KITSCH

The pressure to sell has real estate marketers turning to ever more elaborate and over-the-top “look books”—usually with little to no info. Sales prices? Ha! But there are typically drop-dead gorgeous renderings of the apartments-to-be.

For example, the oversized Barbizon 63 book has a tan suede cover and would look dandy lying about as a coffee-table book (if my coffee table weren’t already buried in newspapers).

One of my recent favorites was the *Jacques et Jill* storybook for the 40 Mercer Street project being developed by André Balazs. The oversize book (big really *is* in this season—first sunglasses, now sales books) occupied a spot on my office floor, where every so often I would accidentally kick the little bell tied to it with a ribbon and smile. The cat also showed an interest in swatting it just to hear the tinkling.

I started really pondering this trend the other

day when the most spectacular book came from Ian Schrager’s 40 Bond Street. It’s amazing you can’t even begin to figure out how much it cost to produce. Nestled inside a padded white board box was a library slider case of the building’s Coke-bottle-green glass façade. But there’s more: Slide it out and the actual building is an aluminum cover cut out to resemble a “graffiti” sculpture used for the building’s house privacy gates, lobby walls, and shower floors. Inside are computer-generated images of the building and apartments. I’m trying to figure out where to put it so it won’t break it.

Considering the number of Ian Schrager “lectibles” that are around—hotel promos, purple cubes—I’m puzzled that he has started selling these items on eBay, but always a first time.

Remember some years ago, when my guru Louise Sunshine dreamed up the e-paper promos for Trump International Tower, and we all thought *those* were amazing? Can only imagine what will be delivered.

Will the Skyscraper Museum ever have