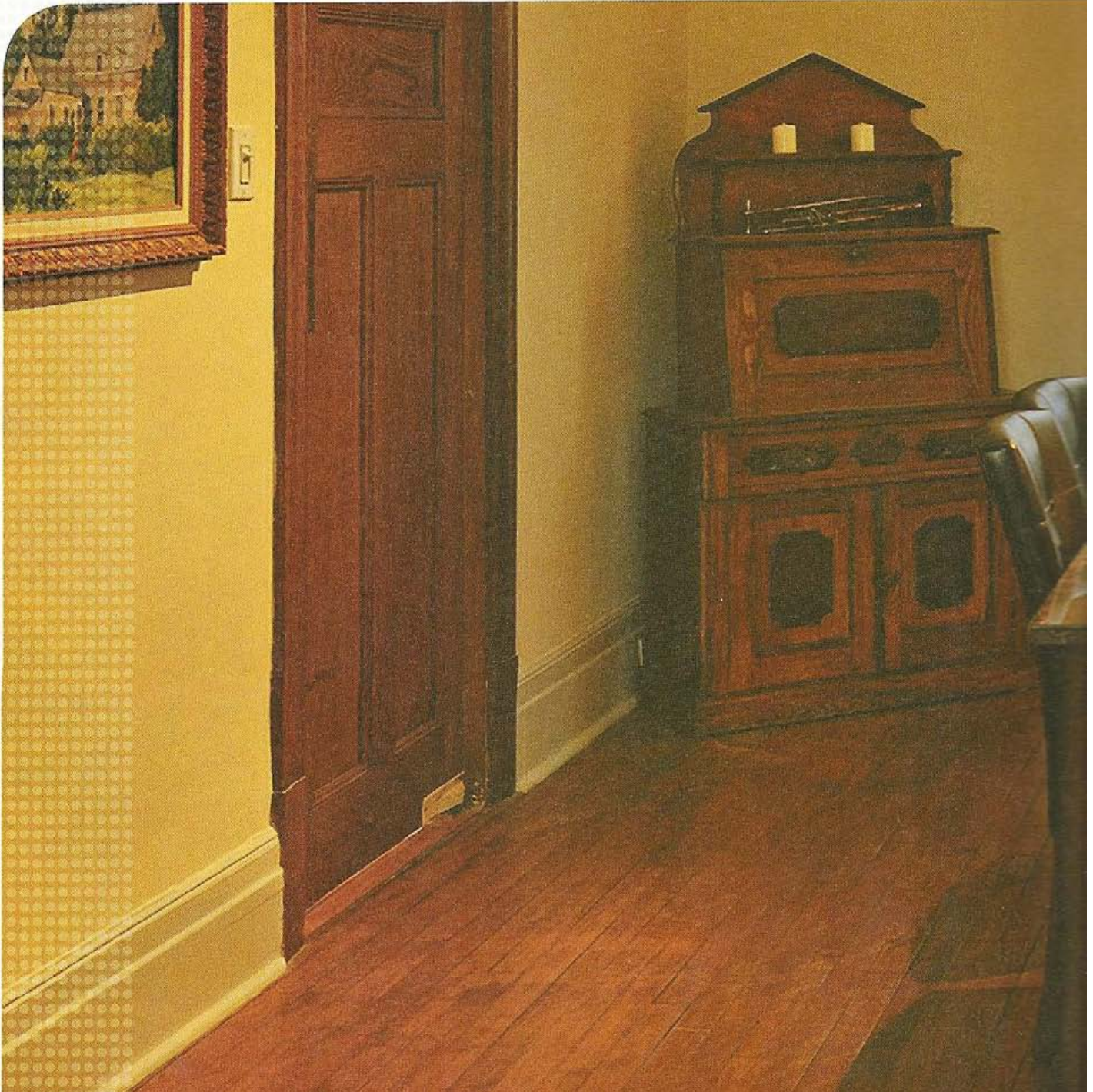


From dull to dynamic

The transformative effect
of home staging

BY GIANCARLO LA GIORGIA
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL GREENBERG



Every home reflects the unique personality and lifestyle of its inhabitants. That's not always a good thing, as anyone who has ever visited an open house can attest.

In recent years, however, people have become increasingly savvy about the impact of décor on home sales, thanks to a crop of television shows about real estate and decorating. That said, home staging — redecorating a living space to improve its salability — is still a relatively new trend in Montreal.

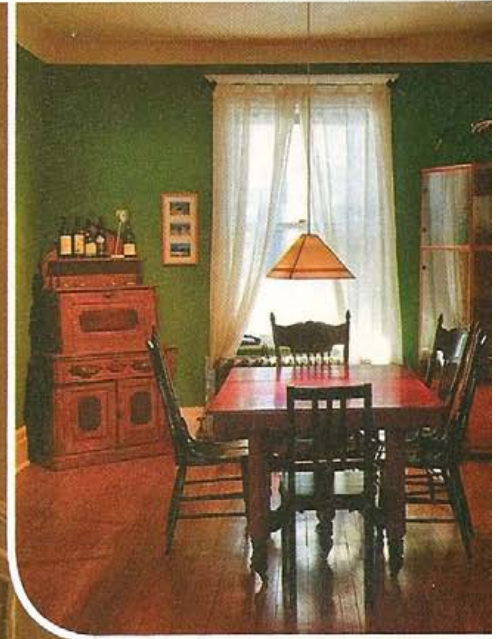
Unlike a decorator, who personalizes a home according to its owners' tastes, a home stager de-personalizes a space so it appeals to the greatest number of potential buyers. Some home stagers claim that their work reduces a property's time on the market by as much as half and can produce sales that meet between 95 and 98 per cent of the asking price.

Marie-Claire Le Pessec, a real estate agent with Sutton Centre-Ouest, regards staging as a competitive advantage. "When a person connects with a house, it's usually because something clicked in the first five or 10 seconds that they saw it," says Le Pessec.

AN INTERESTING OFFER

To demonstrate the transformative effect of professional home staging, Sveta Melchuk, a professional home stager and owner of Home Staging Montreal, offered to stage a detached, five-bedroom, two-storey house that Le Pessec was representing in NDG. Melchuk said the house, listed at \$789,000, lacked 'oomph'.

FORMERLY A DARK GREEN, THE DINING ROOM
WAS REPAINTED A CREAMY YELLOW.



"We all understand that appearances matter. The problem is, most people don't have the time, ability or know-how to dress up a space effectively," says Melchuk.

Originally inhabited by a family of four, the house had been occupied by grown children and a roommate for the past few years.

To gauge the effect of Melchuk's work from a professional perspective, Melchuk spoke with several real estate agents who visited the property before and after it was staged.

REALITY CHECK

Gerda Schieder, of Sutton Centre-Ouest, was blunt in her assessment. "This house has potential, but no panache," she said. Despite its large size and good location, the house grabbed her attention. "That just gives a visitor opportunity to spot the potential."

Yvan Pelland, a colleague of Schieder and Le Pessec, said staging the house was a good idea. "Buyers are more prudent and sellers are less confident, so a house that is perfect in a buyer's eyes," he said. In his opinion, the home's hodgepodge of styles and lack of "flow" between rooms, particularly the adjoining living and dining rooms, was a problem.

Ada Bellini, of Re/Max Westmount, agreed that the house could use some staging but added it should not be too worked over. "When a place looks too perfect, it can make people feel uncomfortable," she said. In her view, professional staging is best done in small doses.

BELOW THE LIVINGROOM WAS TRANSFORMED WITH THE HELP OF RENTED FURNITURE AND ORIGINAL ARTWORK.

