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Fu Manchu Décor? I'll Take It!

An agent tries to sell an elaborately decorated New York apartment once used as a movie set; another gets a California house with a strong identity.

Tami Pardee, founder and chief executive officer, Pardee Properties, Los Angeles's West Side

This was a \$2 million Mediterranean-style house in Marina del Rey, five or six years ago. A woman contacted the office and requested a listing presentation. She was a very sweet woman in her 60s, very pretty, but a little overdressed and overly made up.

I walked into the house and I saw this picture of her. It was a professional modeling head shot—she mentioned she had modeled when she was younger—where she looked to be in her late 20s. It was a really nice picture and she looked beautiful in it, with blond hair and blue eyes.

Then, as I walked through the house, I realized that this same picture was all over. There were huge blow ups of it on the walls, and framed versions of it in the bathroom, the living room, everywhere. There were maybe 40 copies of the exact same picture around the house. It was so creepy.

I didn't address it then, but when I went to stage the property and shoot photos, I had to deal with it.

“Oh my God, you’re so beautiful,” I said. “But we don’t want people to know who you are, so we need to take these pictures down.” I took down about 35 versions of the picture, and brought my own framed pictures to mix in—photos of sunsets, of celebrities, of my own family. I also brought paintings. When we shot the photos, we tried to keep that picture out of them.

I’m sure it hurt her feelings, but I tried to do it in the nicest way. She was super sweet. She just said, “Oh yeah. I just love that picture.”

—*Edited from interviews with Katy McLaughlin*

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