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The quirky and bizarre make themselves at home in open houses



If selling high-end home means letting a prospective buyer take a bubble bath there, that's what you do, the thinking goes. (Ian Hooton / Getty Images)

Michelle Hofmann

Real estate agent Tami Pardee has seen a lot of things in her 11 years hosting luxury open houses. But the naked tenant in the \$4-million Mar Vista listing left a lasting impression.

He was supposed to be out of the country. Pardee had the key. She knocked. No one answered, so she opened the door.

“The tenant was at the top of the staircase, which was right in front of the door, completely naked, with a glass of red wine in his hand. It was 10 in the morning,” the Halton Pardee + Partners founder recalled. “He said, ‘Hello, darling.’ I said, ‘You need to get dressed, and I need to show this house.’”

When it comes to open houses, brokers and agents say expect the unexpected. Sure, they know to put out the lemonade and the fliers and to deal with incessant questions about the property. But then there’s the unusual: sticky-fingered shoppers looking to pocket some bling, buyers with outrageous oddball demands and couples seeking to make a love connection in someone else’s million-dollar master suite.

Liz Bourneuf, a Venice-based buyer’s agent who works with Pardee, said her most memorable open house involved a \$2-million property and a high-end shower aficionado.

Bourneuf didn’t give much thought to the man with the bag who wandered into the Venice open house and headed up the stairs. Then she heard water running in the bathroom.

She went upstairs and knocked on the bathroom door. “Through the door, I said, ‘Hi. What’s going on?’

“He said, ‘I noticed the tub was dirty, so I decided to clean it,’” Bourneuf said.

“He wasn’t cleaning the shower. I don’t even want to clean my own shower. I’m certainly not cleaning someone else’s shower. He was taking a shower,” she said. “He didn’t even try and hurry. He wasn’t like, ‘Oh, crap, she caught me.’ He just kept showering for about 15 minutes.”

After calling her office to request backup, Bourneuf went outside and tried to contact the police.

The man eventually emerged, fresh as a daisy, in new clothes. But by the time Bourneuf got through to the non-emergency police number, he was gone.

Open house antics happen at every price point, but Bjorn Farrugia, a broker associate with Hilton & Hyland, who has sold \$20-million estates and an \$80-million building, said unique requests tend to increase as prices rise.

While viewing a \$15-million Bel-Air estate, Farrugia said, the buyer fell in love with the bathroom and asked if she could stay the night and have a bubble bath in the master tub.

The high-profile seller was receptive. Farrugia arranged it.

“We put out rose petals and candles and made the room smell good,” he said. “Whatever was in the bath water did the trick, because she loved the house and ended up buying it.”

Other times, it’s the sellers who are the problem.

Pardee, who oversees 60 agents and three offices, said it can be challenging when owners want to stay for their open houses.

During one Mar Vista sale, the sellers decided to pretend they were buyers.

“They would go into every room and say, ‘Oh, my God, I just love this.’ And every person that walked through was like, ‘Is that the owner?’ Then the owners would say, ‘No, we’re not the owners.’” Pardee recalled. “That was awkward.”

<http://www.latimes.com/business/realestate/hot-property/la-fi-hp-open-house-shenanigans-20160723-snap-story.html>