

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Bowen puts his art into selling

BY LIANA GREY

When prospective buyers enter the lobby of 125 North 10th Street, a pair of six-story luxury condo buildings in Williamsburg, they're greeted with artwork fit for a Manhattan gallery: paintings, a whimsical glass sculpture, and a hand-made light fixture.

But don't be fooled. The pieces here are the handy work of Brooklyn artists — all part of the organic marketing strategy hatched to draw creative professionals and local interest.

The recently installed exhibit tapped local talent to market the building, developed by New York-based Savanna, since construction was still underway.

In order to boost the project's street credibility in a neighborhood crowded with new high-end developments, CORE Group vice president Doug Bowen, the building's exclusive sales and marketing agent, wheat-pasted drawings by local artists on the property's construction fence.

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The display succeeded in generating buzz and building ties to the neighborhood. "People would literally walk by and ask when the building's opening," Bowen said.

The artwork proved so popular, he said, that it was eventually moved to the condo's sales office. And the soaring, light-filled lobby at 125 North 10th Street has recently taken on the role of art gallery, with regularly rotating exhibits.

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And that included teaming up with a local designer to give the com-



mon spaces a "made in Brooklyn" stamp. David Alhadeff, owner of Williamsburg-based furniture supplier and interior design firm Future Perfect, furnished the entire lobby and amenity areas.

And in keeping with Bowen's emphasis on art, Alhadeff transformed a courtyard separating the development's two buildings into a sculpture garden. Featured pieces include a metal egg-shaped structure designed by a Williamsburg artist, and trees ensconced in metal décor.

Even the building's online presence has a local flavor. At one point, Bowen said, podcasts produced by Brooklyn residents were posted on the 125 North 10th Web site.

When Bowen leads prospective buyers on tours of the property, he emphasizes its strong ties to the Brooklyn art scene, and also emphasizes the host of architectural features with local origins. Sustainable stone countertops manufactured at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, for instance, have appealed to both the environmentally-conscious crowd and those interested in supporting the local economy.

Bowen's organic approach to marketing, coupled with price cuts introduced last September, has boosted sales in recent months. He reports that 65% of the building's 86 units, which include one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments, have sold. And some recent open houses have generated traffic of 30-plus people.

What contributed to the increase in activity, Bowen said, was a straightforward approach to buyer incentives. Bowen actively publicized the price reductions (in some cases, discounts of more than \$100,000 were offered), announcing in a press release that "the benefits go directly to our buyers; no give-a-ways, no vacations, no gimmicks, just good old-fashioned lower prices."

The buyers, so far, include artists, designers, and fashion industry professionals — precisely the types that would be attracted to a building rooted in the art world. "We're moving people in every week," Bowen said. "Now we're watching the building come to life."