

BROWN HARRIS STEVENS

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NEW YORK OBSERVER

DOWNTOWN DESIGN GURU—AND OCCASIONAL VAUDEVILLIAN—SELLS SOHO LOFT FOR \$3.5 M
BY CHRIS POMORSKI • 10/23/13



When Colette Whitney sets to work, it is generally to improve upon the unfortunate—or at least unsalable—tastes of her clients. A home designer and stager of interiors by trade, Ms. Whitney, the proprietress of an advisory firm that bears her name, is “trusted by top realtors” to swiftly move “hard-to-sell”—read: unattractive—properties without imposing onerous investments on sellers, according to The Franklin Report. So when it came time to prepare her keyed-elevator loft in the co-op building at 537 Broadway for market, we can only imagine that she knew just what to do.

The top-floor loft, which was first listed a year ago with Julia Hoagland at Brown Harris Stevens for \$3.5 million, has just sold at asking price, according to city records. It boasts 2,850 square feet that benefit from four exposures, five-by-eight foot windows and a pyramidal 30 square-foot skylight: in other words, the home is unusually bright. Multiple mezzanines shelve a pair of bedrooms and another of baths, and rugged 19th-century brick awaits the

intrepid demolitionist who likes her Soho elegance with a touch of grit. The polished hardwood floors and white walls rising 13 feet to the ceiling that enclose the space lend to it an inviting aura of freshly-scrubbed cleanliness.

Though her day job often consists of toning things down—of neutralizing the potentially off-putting and presenting would-be buyers with blank, soothing canvases on which to project visions of idealized domesticity—Ms. Whitney has been known, when the lights go down, to embrace a bit of wildness. With her husband James Johnson, a “DJ, Motivator, Singer, and Emcee,” in the summary of one satisfied client, Ms. Whitney sometimes takes to the stage to join her mate in song. James Johnson Entertainment has been hired by the National Kitchen and Bath Association (kitchens and baths are among Ms. Whitney’s specialties), Air India and the American Society of Travel Agents, among others, to perform in venues from the Southampton Inn to Tavern on the Green, according to Mr. Johnson’s website.

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No word on whether Ms. Whitney was present for any of these events, but the couple did appear together in the spring of 2012 at a Williamsburg lounge to benefit President Obama's reelection campaign, a performance attendees at the time described to The Observer as "a song-and-dance vaudevillian number."

We cannot say whether buyers Jamil and Alexandra Ezra—Mr. Ezra is the founder of a sizeable crafts-based company—were lured by Ms. Whitney's and Mr. Johnson's crooning, or perhaps by the loft's diminutive \$500 a month maintenance fees. We are certain, though, that we would like to catch Mr. Johnson on stage. The man can do Ricky Martin, Tom Jones and 50 Cent—and all in one set, no less!

