

BIG DEAL; FOR LOVERS OF THE DARK: ANNE RICE'S MANHATTAN HAUNT

BY WILLIAM NEUMAN • OCTOBER 31, 2004

JUST in time for Halloween, Anne Rice, the writer of creepy tales about vampires and witches, has decided to sell a pair of adjacent apartments she owns at 150 West 56th Street, in a condo building known as Cityspire.

Ms. Rice and her late husband, Stan, bought the first apartment, on the 63rd floor, in 1992, and they used it as a landing pad in Manhattan, where they came to see friends or go to the theater and museums. It has views of Central Park, New Jersey, Queens and Brooklyn. The apartment also looks down on the sparkling blue jewel of the glass-enclosed rooftop pool of Le Parker Meridien Hotel, across 56th Street. In 1996, Ms. Rice and her husband bought the second apartment, which is next door. Mr. Rice, a painter, used the second one as a studio. The two units were never combined.

Mr. Rice died in December 2002, at age 60, and his widow has decided to sell both apartments here, as well as several houses the couple owned in New Orleans.

'It's very sad but it's liberating, I suppose; that's what one says about sad things,' Ms. Rice said by telephone from the new home she bought for herself in Jefferson Parish, outside New Orleans.

Of the Manhattan apartments, she said, "Stan's presence is always there, mingled with sadness." They are also filled with his brightly colored paintings, with their pained or pensive faces and many animals: fish, cows, dogs, a swan.

Ms. Rice said she wrote parts of at least two novels at a small wooden desk in the bedroom of their pied-?erre: "Taltos" and "Memnoch the Devil."

The space, or rather the view, figures prominently in the opening pages of "Taltos," in which its protagonist looks out over the city during a snowstorm: "He loved this view," the narrator says, "it always surprised him when others found it so unusual, when a workman coming to fix an office machine would volunteer that he'd never seen New York like this before. Sad that there was no marble tower for everyone."

The main character, Ashlar, then looks down to see a man swimming in the pool of the hotel across the street: " 'Now that is wealth and that is power,' he mused quietly to himself. 'To swim in the sky in a storm.' "

While it is time to move on, Ms. Rice said, she will miss the views. "You feel embraced by New York when you're there," she said. "You can turn off all the lights, and all the buildings around you are lit up and you feel comforted and not alone."

Ms. Rice bought the first apartment furnished and she is selling it that way too, with just about everything but her husband's paintings.

The buyer will get her writing table and the four-poster bed with a black canopy. The apartment has mirrored walls and black wall-to-wall carpeting ("I thought it was dramatic and beautiful, velvet-like," Ms. Rice said). A sculptured hand that seems to have once belonged to a statue -- you might think of it as a severed hand -- lies on the coffee table.

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The main apartment, which has two bedrooms and two and a half baths, is selling for \$1.995 million. The other apartment, which has two bedrooms and two bathrooms, but is smaller, is priced at \$895,000. Ms. Rice paid \$775,000 and \$539,000, respectively, for the two apartments in the 1990's.

Wendy J. Sarasohn, a senior vice president for the Corcoran Group, is handling the sale.

The Fashionable Spoils From a Global Fraud Case

Seven luxury Manhattan apartments will hit the block next month in an unusual auction held by the city sheriff's office to liquidate some of the holdings of a Turkish family facing a \$4.2 billion judgment in an international fraud case.

The apartments include two new condo units in Trump World Tower, at 845 United Nations Plaza, and five more at nearby 100 United Nations Plaza, all belonging to the brothers Murat Hakan Uzan and Cem Cengiz Uzan or their relatives and associates.

A federal appeals court on Oct. 25 upheld an earlier court ruling against the Uzans, which found they had misused more than \$2.1 billion in loans from Motorola for the expansion of a cellular phone company in Turkey. The courts have ordered the Uzans to repay the money, plus an additional \$2.1 billion in punitive damages.

The brothers may be best known in Manhattan for losing \$8 million in an apartment deal that never closed.

When they were still flying high in the late 1990's, the brothers agreed to pay \$32 million for the 89th and 90th floors of Trump World Tower. But once their legal troubles began, they skipped out on the closing, and a court eventually ruled that the developer, Donald Trump, could keep the \$8 million deposit they had paid on the property.

Since the brothers never took possession of that apartment, it is not included in the auction, but two other apartments in the building are. An associate of the Uzans paid \$1.6 million and \$1.2 million for two 59th-floor units in 1999. The apartments at 100 United Nations Plaza include a 46th-floor unit that cost \$3.8 million in 1996. The auction will take place at the sheriff's office in Lower Manhattan on Nov. 10. A video tour of the apartments is available at the Web site www.steptoec.com/uzan.htm.

"The Uzans are billionaires," said Howard H. Stahl, a lawyer with the Washington firm Steptoe & Johnson, which represents Motorola. "Motorola's case is very clear. We intend to use every available means worldwide to locate and seize and liquidate their assets." At the very least, he said, it's a chance to buy an apartment without paying a broker's fee.

A Good Deed Recognized

Sometimes brokers have to do a lot more than simply sell a piece of real estate.

That's what Leslie W. Singer and John Venekamp of Brown Harris Stevens discovered when they came to the rescue of an elderly woman who had been burned out of her Upper West Side co-op apartment in a November 2002 fire that killed her husband. The apartment, in a prewar building at 277 West End Avenue, sat vacant and uninhabitable for a full year, until Ms. Singer learned of the plight of the woman, Patricia D. Feuerstein, who was a relative of a friend.

Ms. Singer and Mr. Venekamp helped Mrs. Feuerstein recover some of her belongings, then pored over insurance papers and estate documents, hired contractors and supervised the complete renovation of the apartment, which has three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms and a terrace.

The apartment sold last spring for \$2.4 million. "It got the highest price the building had ever seen," Ms. Singer said.

This month, the transaction earned Ms. Singer and Mr. Venekamp the Residential Deal of the Year Award from the Real Estate Board of New York.

"They really did a lot more than brokers usually do in a deal," said Bruce M. Cohen, a lawyer with the firm of Cohen, Ehrlich & Frankel who represented the seller at the closing in May.

"It's one thing where a broker comes in and says change the blinds and put a little throw rug here. They were really involved in the renovation of the apartment."