

Sloane Mansion

The \$64 million house that Henry T. Sloane built



The drawing room, with original details still intact

MATTHEW ROBERTS

Forget Madonna and A-Rod. Henry T. Sloane had the scandal of the day in 1899. That was the year the man whose furnishing company dressed the White House divorced his wild wife, Jessie. Five hours after the ink was dry on the papers, the modern woman, known for her taste in alcohol, married another man.

Sloane was devastated, but not for long. Two years later, he commissioned one of New York's greatest homes at 18 E. 68th St., between Madison and Fifth Aves. Thirty-six feet wide, 19,350 square feet big, with a ballroom as large as a small hotel, 30 rooms, 17 baths, 11 fireplaces, 14-foot ceilings, three terraces, a garden and a perfectly proportioned limestone façade, the Sloane Mansion remains New York's most prized property. On the market for a whopping \$64 million, it's among the highest asking prices ever for a Manhattan home.

"Divorce, death and birth generated real estate then and now," says Paula Del Nunzio, the property's listing broker for Brown Harris Stevens who recently set the record for fetching the top price paid for a New York townhouse, \$53 million for the Harkness Mansion on Fifth Ave. and 75th St. "Five original rooms in the Sloane still exist just as they did in 1905. No other home in New York has this impression of the past still intact. They exist at the Frick or the University Club, but those aren't for sale."

Even if you wanted to see this home, you couldn't. Until now, no newspaper reporter has been inside the mansion, nor have detailed pho-



Paula Del Nunzio of Brown Harris Stevens stands on the mansion's stairway.

ALLISON JOYCE



By Jason Sheftell
Daily News
Real Estate
Correspondent

tographs been allowed. Del Nunzio still has strict orders not to allow us upstairs.

"Only qualified buyers get to see the entire home," she says. "Part of my job is to protect

the property. No unqualified buyer has been allowed this far in."

With a track record of branding regal New York homes in such a way that the buying pool wants specifically what the property offers, Del Nunzio has a reputation for writing historically detailed, architecturally accurate descriptions that get at the soul of the property.

"My job is to describe it in the perfect way so that the buyer, who could be in Russia, says, 'that ... that is the perfect home for me,'" she says. "This home is grand and perfect. It's the golden

mean of proportion inside and out. There is absolutely no aberrant part here. There's nowhere you can look or nothing you can point to and ask what they were thinking building that there."

She's right. The home is an exquisite 20th-century palace. The original paintings are still on the wall and the study, once a studio apartment when the building was broken up into rental units in the 1950s, has facing reflective surfaces similar to the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

In the foyer, your voice echoes. Just standing in the vestibule, you feel as if you have millions



The Henry T. Sloane Mansion

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The first room one enters on the ground floor

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of dollars in every pocket. Billionaires could be intimidated here.

So who looks at the most impressive single-family home in the city of New York? First, you have to be a qualified buyer, meaning you have to be able to afford it. Second, you have to be who you say you are.

"There are people out there entertained by pretending that they can purchase large mansions in New York City," says Del Nunzio. "I need to be sure I am not speaking to one of them."

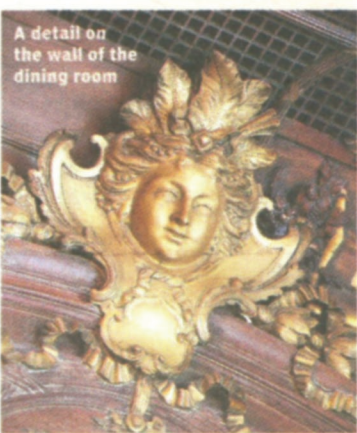
Once buyers go through credit checks, Google searches and other identity-establishing procedures, they usually send an assistant, decorator or architect to look at the property for them.

"We often have a lot of layers between us and the principal buyer," says Del Nunzio. "If everyone does their job correctly, and my property description is accurate, eventually we get to the principal. They can come singly or in an entourage that could fill bleachers on the street. And if it's the right building for the buyer, it's immediately clear."

She won't say who has looked at the property or how many offers have been tendered, not even responding to who I think has seen it.

Has Madonna looked? Royalty? What about the richest men in the world? Top people from entertainment and sports? Brad and Angie? Tiger Woods?

She still won't budge, but it's safe to say yes to all. One of those people who doesn't realize how entertaining she can be, Del Nunzio is defiant, demanding and razor-sharp as an adult version



A detail on the wall of the dining room

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of Nancy Drew or Hermione Granger. Before real estate, she produced television commercials for Ogilvy & Mather, finalizing the trailer for "Midnight Express" and more than 20 other films for Columbia Pictures.

According to Del Nunzio, houses of this magnitude can take up to a year to sell.

"This purchase goes well beyond the mere need for housing," she says. "Buyers at this level are seeking the ultimate home, one that is utterly rare, and utterly irreplaceable. Plus, I feel a deep responsibility to the seller to get the price he's asking and deserves."



The dining room

ALLISON JOYCE

If interested in purchasing the Sloane Mansion, call Paula Del Nunzio at (212) 906-9207. The house's original plans are available to qualified buyers, as is a tour of the upstairs.