ALL THE HOME'S A STAGE

The Province

By Kerry Moore

As the real estate market begins to correct itself, homes may be on the market longer and sell for less than they would have during spring's peak. An edge is always useful; now it's important, too.

Home staging is an edge. "No matter what condition of the home, it is your advantage to prepare it for sale," says John Carter.

Carter is one of the principals in DEKORA, (www.dekora.com), a Lower Mainland home staging company. Carter's background is in marketing, while his colleague, Ron Sowden worked in film set decorating as well as marketing.

DEKORA is consulted by companies setting up display suites in developments for sale, by people who own units they will rent to professionals (visiting execs and film actors) and by people wanting to sell their homes.

The latter are the more emotionally involved and require the most tact. "We explain that this isn't about home sweet home. It's not about (their) taste, it's about selling a product. That's it."

Speed is important, Carter says. "It's important to get the home on the market quickly so DEKORA doesn't have time to look at carpet samples and renovate."

What the company does is assist with carpet cleaning and painting (with colours they know have sell-value). They will bring in furniture, lights and small carpets on a rental basis to create a show suite look.

"The place has to connect with people immediately. Buyers like to feel they can see themselves in there," says Carter.

"To create generic touchy-feely spots, I'll add a book, a wineglass a throw over a chair near the fireplace," adds Sowden. "They are cues to a life – anyone's life."

As a recent example of the impact of staging they mention a home in Tsawwassen that was on the market three years and went through several realtors.

Sowden: "We went in and updating its 25-year-old face. The house sold." As if they needed proof that staging is convincing, "the former owners bought the rental furniture we'd put in their Tsawwassen house and have asked us to discuss decorating their new home."

Some places they are called to consult on are "a disaster," offers Carter. "And on some we just make one or two suggestions, that's all that's needed."

To prep a house for sale, a detached view is needed. See it as a buyer, they advise, "and if you can't separate yourself, get in professionals to advise."

TOP: Remove all the visual clues that relate to residents.

"Take out the photos, the personal stuff like doll collections, the religious icons, toys and pet stuff. The way you live in a home is not the way to sell it."

What staging creates, say the partners, is a strong first impression, "and it's something you don't get a second chance to make."