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THE GUIDE TO LUXURY LIFESTYLES IN THE TRISTATE AREA

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DEFINING International Style



Louise Sunshine at the Galerie Mark
Opposite page: Framed illustration of
the Mark by Jean-Philippe Delhomme.
Photographs by David Paler.



Louise Sunshine Global Real Estate Visionary

by Steve Cutler

"All square feet are not created equal," Louise Sunshine declared famously when she launched The Sunshine Group in 1986. It was clarion song with which she revolutionized the marketing of lifestyle-amenity-rich condominiums in New York City, such as One Central Park (Time Warner Center) and One Beacon Court.

"Great homes and great art live together," she proclaimed soon after that, helping to usher New York City into the era of the signature architect, collaborating with legendary designers such as Richard Meier, Philip Johnson, Cesar Pelli, Charles Gwathmey, Philippe Starck, David Childs, and Peter Marino to produce iconic new residential buildings whose apartments Sunshine branded and sold as works of live-in art.

But now, New York City's doyenne of luxury residential real estate belongs to the world. "'Real estate is global' is my new mantra," says Sunshine. And her latest venture, an international marketing company called Domineum.com aims to make buying an apartment in New York City from anywhere in the world as easy as clicking through a Web page. The Web site is set to launch in the spring.

"The significance of the international buyer to New York City is major," observes Sunshine. "I believe they comprise about 50 to 60 percent of the purchasing profile of the major condominium buildings."

Sunshine describes Domineum.com, which she is creating in partnership with her son Paul and branding guru

Richard Pandiscio, as "a global condominium exchange that will provide an extensive database of luxury condominiums, condominium hotels, and fractional interests in the top 50 global and resort markets. The site will facilitate sales transactions through its curated property inventory listings, original market research, vetted market resources, and inspirational editorials. It will integrate art, architecture, and design into the presentation of properties, presenting each in the appropriate luxury lifestyle context."

Global Insiders

The beauty, she says, is that "at the end of the day, we will have a select group of individuals who we call 'global insiders,' who will be able to take advantage of our expertise and very favorable purchase opportunities all over the world. We'll offer a level of detail and presentation that allows the buyer to totally understand the project in a way that has never been done before."

The key is to make the foreign buyer feel they know the property so well they can buy it without having to make a special trip to New York to see it.

Sunshine has created a prototype of the Domineum.com marketing concept on the Web site for a building she is developing and marketing with Alexico Group, with which she serves as development director: The Laurel, a 31-story condominium designed by Costas Kondylis and Brian Callahan, at 400 East 67th Street.



Thanks to the “Residence Finder” on www.laurelcondominium.com, says Sunshine, more than a dozen of the units at The Laurel were sold to foreign buyers before the condominium opened for sales on December 3.

The site offers a virtual tour throughout the building, including every room of every residence, so that, she says, “the buyer can zero in on the home of their dreams without ever having to come to the sales office. Then they can simply e-mail or call to say they want to purchase apartment 7A, for example, place an order, and send in a check.”

How Much is That Penthouse in the Window?

Alexico is trying another unique approach to selling apartments at The Laurel: storefront marketing. They set up displays at the sales office this past holiday season to rival Bergdorf Goodman’s.

The condominium’s sales gallery windows were adorned with Ralph Pucci–designed male manikins with laurel wreaths on their heads displaying athletic prowess, a reference to the serious, giant “Trophy Club” fitness facility at the condominium. The club includes a triathlon training center with an uninterrupted running, swimming, and biking circuit designed by fitness specialist John Sitaras, plus two resistance pools, a 50-foot infinity lap pool, and poolside cabanas.

“In the evening,” says Sunshine, “all along First Avenue, from 63rd Street to 64th Street, our lights were blazing and you’d see a crowd of people — families with children. And the next day those families would come in to buy apartments.”

This penchant for window displays seems to run in the family. Sunshine’s grandfather founded Barney’s New York, whose Seventh Avenue store was famous for generations for installing some of the most creative holiday window displays in the city.

They’ve Always Loved New York City

While it seems international buyers have suddenly fallen in love with New York City, Sunshine claims it has always been thus. “It’s not new,” she insists. “I’ve been catering to the international buyer since the 1970s, when Donald Trump and I sold a major part of our portfolio to Japanese buyers.” Sunshine got her start in real estate with The Donald, for whose fledgling real estate company she was director of sales and marketing, handling such luxury properties as Trump Tower, Trump Plaza, and the Grand Hyatt Hotel.

“Today it may be the European buyer,” she adds, “but in the 1970s it was the Japanese buyer and in the 1980s it was the Middle Eastern buyer. The international market



is a direct result of socioeconomic conditions in different parts of the world," observes Sunshine. "There's always a pulse and the pulse just beats more rapidly in different parts of the world at different times." This time around, with the devaluation of the dollar next to the Euro and the pound, Europeans are swarming New York City to snatch up properties at deep discounts.

International Cultural Exchange

New York City is exporting another invaluable commodity in addition its real estate: talent. For example, says Sunshine, "architect Costas Kondylis, designer of The Laurel — a real New Yorker — is doing much of his design work in Europe, Russia, and Dubai."

Since he relocated here from Greece more than 30 years ago, Kondylis worked exclusively on high-rise buildings, designing more than 70 of them, and urban planning, in New York City. But much of his latest work is for the global market, including towers in Moscow, Qatar, Istanbul, and Kazakhstan.

"We are entering a new golden age of architecture," Kondylis said in the *International Herald Tribune* this fall. "Modern-day architecture is about a synergy of crosscultural ideas, luxury lifestyle living, and, most exciting of all, emerging global markets."

Of course, the talent is flowing in both directions, as more and more of the world's great architects and designers are working on buildings in New York City. Sunshine's Alexico Group, for one, has its own cultural exchange program going.

The Mark Hotel & Residences, Alexico's conversion of the historic Mark Hotel at 25 East 77th Street into a 118-room five-star hotel with 42 hotel condominium suites, features interiors by renowned French designer Jacques Grange and contains furnishings and original art by a United Nations of artists, curated by Pierre Passebon, including Mattia Bonetti, Patrice Dangel, Guy de Rougemont, Paul Mathieu, and Anne and Vincent Corbiere.

Sunshine's newest project, a 57-story condominium tower at 56 Leonard Street, features a daring stacked-glass-cube design by French architects Herzog and de Meuron, the legendary team introduced to New York City by Ian Schrager for the first time two years ago with the more modest-sized luxury condominium 40 Bond Street.

Plus, boasts Sunshine, "56 Leonard rests on a sculpture by Anish Kapoor," the Indian-born, London-based sculptor who has won international acclaim for works that blur the boundaries between architecture and art and Eastern and Western aesthetic influences.

"Need I say more?" ■