



Interior designer Ginger Atherton offers advice on how to increase the desirability of your home for an

EASY SELL



By **VERONICA HILL**
Staff Writer

In L.A., looks are everything. So it's not surprising that some of Southern California's richest homeowners and top Realtors are turning to interior design Ginger Atherton to dress up their vacant homes for a quicker sell.

Believing empty homes do not sell quickly, Atherton turns unfurnished estates into luxury retreats, complete with fine antiques, *Frette* sheets, *Pratesi* towels and French-milled soaps.

"As you walk into my homes, your emotions are attacked," says Atherton. "We have candles burning, music playing, sensual fabrics on the beds, and all the correct lighting. We tell a story."

To stage her clients' homes, Atherton draws on her multimillion-dollar inventory of home furnishings, which range in style from contemporary to traditional, and everything in between.

Staging takes about one week at a cost of \$25,000 to \$100,000 — which explains why most of her clients are in Bel Air and Beverly Hills. An additional monthly maintenance fee pays for fresh orchids, fruit and candies to "keep the home in perfect showing condition."

Among Atherton's special touches are "a pool area with monogrammed bath robes, iced tea and newspapers with ribbon tied around it; bathrooms with milk chocolate bubble bath in crystal bottles and the softest towels; kitchens with fresh fruit displayed and the finest chocolates to nibble on; and an exercise room with fresh fruit and a juice bar."

So do her efforts — and the money spent by her clients — pay off?

"Realtors swear by the service," says Atherton. "You get your money back times five because all the homes sell for close to the asking price, and even go into multiple offers. We create a very emotional sale."

Sellers who can't afford a professional stager can still increase the desirability of their home on a smaller budget.

"When people walk into a messy home with messy closets it's distracting," says Atherton. "The potential buyer feels like they are imposing, instead of wanting to linger and look at the space."

Tips from Atherton

- Fresh paint is one of the least expensive things to do and it really brightens up a home. "I almost never use white paint," says Atherton. "I very much believe in color. It's very emotional and attractive."

- Make sure all your windows and window treatments are very clean.

- Make your home as light and bright as possible.

- Candles give a really homey feel. If you're trying to mask pet odors, use strong vanilla candles with essential oils. During the holidays, use a lot of spiced candles.

- Spend a lot of money on real plants, magnificent trees and floral arrangements.

- Bathrooms and bedrooms should be cleared of all personal items.

- Family pictures are fine if they are grouped nicely in a decorator manner, but they should not be scattered about in unmatched frames.

- Everything should be clean and organized.

Atherton's showroom/retail store offers a continuously circulating inventory of beautiful model furnishings at discounts of up to 80 percent. It is located at 352 North Robertson Blvd., between Beverly and Melrose Ave. in Beverly Hills. Call (310) 652-9728.

