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# Lifestyle

[ THE ENTHUSIAST ]

## THE BEST LIGHT POSSIBLE

Cathy Hobbs sets the stage

For developers and real estate agents looking to sell property fast, home staging is an invaluable marketing tool. Enter interior designer Cathy Hobbs, accredited home stager and founder of *aphereā* ([www.apherea.com](http://www.apherea.com)), a full-service interior design firm in Brooklyn, New York. Hobbs, also an Emmy Award-winning, 18-year television journalist, stages designs in luxury residential and commercial properties and provides design services to home and business owners. Her goal is to showcase a unit's best features with designs that allow potential buyers to conceptualize their ideas. "Many buyers see only the physical space. Staging enhances the appeal and benefit. I present a cohesive look in keep-

ing with the look and feel of the apartment potential owners are contemplating," says Hobbs.

Co-host of *NY Residential*, a weekly morning show on WPIX Television CW11 that explores real estate trends, Hobbs also holds a bachelor of fine arts degree in interior design from Fashion Institute of Technology. She first conceived of a business in home staging at the suggestion of the broker who sold her an apartment during Brooklyn's development boom. Now *aphereā* gets a healthy boost from New York's fiercely competitive market and the current downturn in real estate. More developers are using staging as a reliable technique to increase sales and prop-



erty equity. Hobbs says, "The staged model is a blueprint for the potential of the other units and, on the strength of this, can sell out a multimillion-dollar building." She oversees staging for approximately 25 projects a year; in the first quarter of 2007 alone she completed 16 new developments.

Staging entails more than just aesthetic furniture placement. Hobbs and her team use furnishings, bedding, color schemes, accessories, fabrics, and artwork as well as supervise purchases, delivery, and installation.

Price is based on the number of rooms staged, the amount of work involved, and the level of furnishings required.

To make design concepts accessible to a wider audience, Hobbs created the service Design On Delivery. For \$795, clients receive a one-hour on-site consultation, two hours of studio time, and a full retail package suggestion including paint colors, fabric, and design and furnishing options delivered by mail or e-mail. Design Recipes ([www.design-recipes.com](http://www.design-recipes.com)) is a resource guide Hobbs developed to help individuals create and implement their own design ideas.

"When I opened *aphereã*, I wanted great design ideas to be available to everyday people, not just the elite."

—Denise Campbell