

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## The Latest Real-Estate Trend? Coloring Books for Grown-Ups

Real-estate buffs can try their hand at adult coloring books dedicated to architecture and cityscapes. Some agents and developers are using coloring books to help sell property



Adult coloring books are drawing real-estate buffs who color to relax or experiment with color palettes. PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/ THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By *Candace Taylor*

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**Looking for that perfect country cottage? Or is a grand Victorian more your style? Whatever your taste, here's a chance to create the home of your dreams. Just break out the crayons.**

An increasing number of adult coloring books focus solely on real estate and cityscapes. With titles like “Houses, Houses, Houses,” “Color at Home” and “Fantastic Cities,” the books offer a creative diversion as well as a way to experiment with color palettes. Real-estate agents and firms are taking it a step further, using the books in business.

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Full-color illustrations in the ‘Victorian Houses’ architecture coloring book. PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Last year, New York City developer Naftali Group released a coloring book featuring images of its projects, including the Seymour condominium in Chelsea and 210 West 77th Street on the Upper West Side. Luxury brokerage Christie’s International Real Estate is preparing to distribute its first coloring books of for-sale properties to clients in their showrooms world-wide. As an added touch, the brokerage includes a box of crayons—branded with the Christie’s logo—with the books. Christie’s agents can also special-order

additional copies to hand out to customers.



A ‘Victorian Houses’ illustration that’s ready for creative coloring. PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Dan Conn, the brokerage's chief executive, said the company's affiliates and agents can pay \$3,500 for a two-page spread in the book, which will have a full-color listing photo across from a black-and-white illustration that can be colored in. He said that the proceeds will be donated to a charity benefiting hurricane victims in Puerto Rico.

When reminded of the popularity of coloring books among adults, Mr. Conn joked that the company may have misjudged its audience. "We thought it would be a nice thing for kids," he said. "I guess there's a scenario where the adults also say 'I'm going to color that in.'"

In New York, Fern Hammond, an agent at Halstead, said she bought about 10 adult coloring books when she first saw them a few years ago, thinking "this would be great to give away at an open house." Ms. Hammond, who studied art in the past, also enjoys working on the coloring books herself. "They're very relaxing to do," she said. "I find it much nicer than watching television."



This tropical backyard is the inspiration for an illustration that can be downloaded and colored. PHOTO: ALEXIA FODERE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Her first batch of adult coloring books had images of nature and patterns, not homes. But she loves the idea of the "Color at Home" coloring book, she said, and plans to buy some to give to clients, who often ask her for suggestions about how to decorate their homes in preparation for a sale or after buying a new place. "That would be a great tool," she said.

Real-estate agent Janine Bear, of Coldwell Banker Distinctive Properties in Sun Valley, said she recently started attending coloring events hosted by a local women’s group. Aside from being a fun social activity and networking opportunity, she said she also enjoyed the coloring. “It allows me to go mindless and focus on the peacock feathers,” she said.

Coloring books for adults are a far cry from those aimed at children. “Fantastic Cities,” by illustrator Steve McDonald, features intricate line drawings of building exteriors around the world. Mr. McDonald said the drawings are “insanely detailed,” as he tried to depict every window and door of the neighborhoods he saw while traveling, from East 60th Street in Manhattan to the Rocinha favela in Rio.

He had modest expectations. “We thought we’d maybe sell 10,000,” he said. Instead, the 2015 book had four reprints in six months, eventually selling more than 400,000 copies, he said. “We couldn’t keep up” with demand for the books, Mr. McDonald recalled.



The black-and-white illustration of the tropical backyard—ready for color. PHOTO: JAMES GULLIVER HANCOCK

He believes that the book is appealing in part because it depicts real places. “You get to see into everyone’s backyards and rooftop patios,” he said.

Jennifer Feldman of Dover Publications, one of the largest publishers of adult coloring books in the U.S., said its title “Victorian Houses” has had strong sales. For adults, the appeal of coloring homes may be that “it feels personal—it feels comforting,” she said.

Some 12 million adult coloring books of all themes were sold in 2015, up from 1 million in 2014, according to Nielsen BookScan. But Ms. Feldman said overall sales of adult coloring books have waned recently. While her company is still committed to producing coloring books for grown-ups, she said, “the peak of the adult coloring book craze is a little bit behind us.”

To stay relevant, some coloring-book authors go beyond mere illustrations. Just a few months ago, Henry and Kate L. Harrison, a father-daughter team, released “Houses, Houses, Houses,” a coloring book with early-American homes and definitions of architectural styles and terms, such as “balustrade” and “nogging.” The Harrisons envision the book being used by real-estate agents, appraisers and others to learn basic architectural terms. “It’s a really fun way to learn,” said Ms. Harrison, 39, who lives in St. Mary’s City, Md.

Two years ago, Sherry and John Petersik released “Color at Home: a Young House Love Coloring Book,” which their publisher, Peter Licalzi of Blue Star Press and Paige Tate & Co., said is one of the company’s top-selling books.

In addition to coloring pages, it contains exercises to help readers make design decisions at home, with the goal being “to have fun and get a better idea of what they’re attracted to,” said Ms. Petersik, 36, who with her husband started the popular home-improvement blog “Young House Love.” One page asks readers to color the same group of household accessories in four different color combinations, for example. “It’s zero commitment to color your curtains a bright color in the coloring book, versus buying the curtains,” said Ms. Petersik, who lives near Richmond, Va.

She also quipped that real-estate coloring books have some practical advantages over real-life homes: “It’s great for turning off your brain and coloring beautiful rooms you never have to dust.” Even better, she added, “the plants will never die.”