



From Cave To Kennel

REVIEW

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. WSJ



THE MAGAZINE

VOL. CCLVIII NO. 102

WEEKEND

★★★★ \$2.00

A NEWS CORPORATION COMPANY
DOW JONES

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29 - 30, 2011

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DESIGN & DECORATING



HOT HOUSE Istdibs's Fine Homes listings include a \$26.5 million Manhattan townhouse, above, and a \$12 million Los Angeles property designed by Windsor Smith, right.



FRESH PICKS

FOR SALE: BROOCHES, CHAIRS AND NOW, \$35 MILLION HOMES

Istdibs ventures into seriously high-end real estate

FOR MORE THAN a decade, Istdibs.com has catered to shoppers searching for rare collectibles like a \$60,000 ruby and diamond brooch, or a \$124,000 Louis XVI chair from the collections of Versailles. Now, the site is branching out into the equally envy-inducing—and jaw-droppingly priced—world of luxury real estate.

Founder Michael Bruno says the inclusion of Palm Beach villas and Malibu mansions—ranging from \$2 million to \$200 million—is a natural next step for Istdibs, which sells art, vintage jewelry, antiques and home décor by connecting users with dealers and sellers worldwide. The site draws a million unique visitors each month.

For Mr. Bruno, it's also a return to his roots. He worked for years as a high-end real estate agent before launching Istdibs in 2001. "Most of the great houses that get sold are to people who are not in the market to buy a house," says Mr. Bruno, adding that last week, he purchased a home in the Hamptons that he wasn't necessarily looking for. "There's something emotional when you come across a new piece of property; it's

like a new lover. You get carried away."

For the wealthiest homebuyers, the house-hunting process has long involved decorators. Martyn Lawrence-Bullard, a Los Angeles-based designer who has worked with clients like Sir Elton John and Cher, says he often visits homes with clients when they're considering a purchase. "You come in and see the potential or not," he says.

With Istdibs, Mr. Bruno says he wanted to make it "more fun and easier for designers to participate in the process." Users will be able to filter home listings to include ones deemed stand-outs by top designers. One of Mr. Lawrence-Bullard's picks: an East Hampton property listed for \$35 million. "The beautifully proportioned rooms remind me of an English country house," his description says.

For now, listings are culled from Corcoran and Coldwell Banker Previews International's high-end homes in the U.S. But Mr. Bruno says he plans to include additional agencies in the future. Paris listings from Corcoran are coming next month.

—Candace Jackson