

REAL ESTATE INSIDER



JULIETTE HOHNEN

OF DOUGLAS ELLIMAN REAL ESTATE

AS TOLD TO DANIELLE ACCOVELLI
PHOTO COURTESY OF JULIETTE HOHNEN

With an international perspective on sales and a keen eye for interior design, Juliette Hohnen has quickly risen as one of LA's consistently top-producing agents. Combining her business savvy with innovative marketing strategies and impeccable design skills, Hohnen creates an enjoyable and truly one-of-a-kind experience for her clients.

Here, Hohnen divulges to *DIGS* her inspiration for becoming a real estate agent, passion for interior design and what she loves most about selling properties in LA.

How has your London upbringing and international perspective influenced your real estate career in the U.S.?

Having lived in London, New York and LA—I also spent time in France (where my mother lives) and Australia (where I have more family)—has given me an incredible network all over the world. LA has become a major destination for international buyers, and knowing how to find, relate and connect to those buyers gives me a great advantage over other agents selling houses in LA.

I studied interior design at the Ingham School of Art and Design in Eaton Square, London, and part of the course included traveling to beautiful houses all over the country and studying their design and architecture.

What prompted you to pursue interior design?

My mother was a nursery school teacher, but she was also the bread-winner of the family and put all three of her daughters through private school. She supplemented her income from her business (The London Montessori Center—an international teacher training college) with house flipping, which she basically put me in charge of. I would preview all the homes and only show her the best ones, then we would move in and I would decorate them. When I left stage school and realized that I didn't have the 'look at me' gene you need to be a performer, I wasn't sure what to do, so she said, "You seem to love design, why don't you study that?" Honestly, if you could give me my dream job it would be finding a dilapidated house, completely renovating it, designing and furnishing it down to the towels, sheets and the flatware then selling the whole lot. I did this while I was having children and I have never been happier.

You describe yourself as a true "houseaholic." What initially fueled your passion for homes and real estate?

I guess deep down I am a homemaker. I love finding properties, seeing their potential and figuring out how to improve them and make them beautiful. There is a creative and business side to this, so it is really the perfect combination. I used to flip houses, and then my friends would ask me to help them find homes. I found Madonna Cecil Beaton's house in England, which now belongs to Guy Ritchie. My clients will tell you how passionate I am about houses. I want to buy at least a house a week, and luckily I can channel my house lust through my clients. I get into their heads and then find the house I would want to live in if I were them. It's a fun job!

How did you come to join Douglas Elliman Real Estate, and what is unique about the firm?

I moved to the firm because it allows me to offer my clients much more in terms of marketing exposure and networking—both locally, nationally and globally—than any of the other companies in LA. There are two types of firms in LA: the big firms like Coldwell Banker, which are large and corporate, or the boutique firms that have one or two offices and a small collection of agents. Douglas Elliman is the best of both worlds: it is a huge national company with offices all over America (New York, Miami, Aspen, the Hamptons, Connecticut, Westchester, Long Island), and has true international reach as a result of its association with Knight Frank from Europe. There are 17,000 agents across 441 offices, 55 countries and six continents. When you list a property with Elliman, you are really getting that listing great exposure, certainly more than any of the other agencies in LA. Half of the other companies say they offer this type of global reach, but having worked at some of those companies and having friends at those companies, I can tell you they do not. At Elliman, I am part of a national networking team who represent the most affluent and well-connected people in America. If I have a listing, I can personally pitch it to these agents on our bi-weekly call. This type of networking really does work.

Why choose to base your real estate career on the Westside—what draws you to work in this area?

I actually work all over LA. Right now, I have listings and buyers in Venice, Marina del Rey, Brentwood, Santa Monica, Malibu, Silverlake, Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Ojai, Studio City and Encino. I do not have a firm where I bombard people with my flyers and postcards. I am referral based, so I work everywhere. I don't have a battery of assistants who show my houses, I do it myself, and that means whoever hires me knows the job will be done properly. I turn up early and make sure the houses are shown and presented in the best possible way. Working all over LA is a lot more fun, although it does put more miles on your car!

Will you elaborate on acting as an entrepreneur to create new and innovative ways of marketing properties for your clients?

I used to be a journalist and produced a weekly TV show called *The Big Picture* on MTV. I would have to come up with different ways to cover the same topic each week. Same thing when I worked as an editor for various magazines (*Tatler*, *British Harpers*, *Esquire*) writing covers on stars who had already been written about year after year. I would have to come up with another way to sell that film or star to the public. This is the same with houses. If the house does not sell immediately you have to come up with another angle to entice buyers through the door. Most realtors just plop their sign up, put an ad in the paper and wait for calls to come in. I look at who the sellers are and actively go out and find the buyer, because chances are the buyer and the seller are going to be similar in some way. In Venice, houses over three million take 90 days to sell. The last one I sold took 30 because I found out who the buyers were that were looking in the area and I literally dragged them to the house until I sold it!

Do you still dabble in interior design while selling real estate? Does one pursuit inspire the other?

Yes. I love designing houses and being inspired by other people's designs. I am doing several houses at the moment. It is the way I express myself creatively. My style is eclectic...I love wallpaper, I hate upper cabinets in kitchens and I love using natural materials. I am building a house in Venice, and because I have so little time to really focus on it I keep putting it off, but it is my true love. I feel really lucky that most of my clients are creative people and so their homes, which I get to sell, are incredible and unique.

Are there any particular homes you are excited about selling, or past properties that still have a hold on you?

I love all the homes I sell, but right now I love my Frank Lloyd Wright Jr. house that I have listed on Benmore Terrace in Brentwood. It is so unique and beautifully restored. Not only are you buying a home, you are buying a piece of art that will appreciate over time. It is so ripe to be taken to the next level with the addition of a pool and guest house. I have a fabulous house in Beverly Hills in the Hidden Valley Estates area, designed by Scott Mitchell, and every realtor who came to my broker's open loved it. This is a very hot area at the moment, as every other house is owned by a movie star. I also have a fantastic traditional house in Brentwood Park for \$12 million on a huge lot. One of my favorite houses that I sold was one of Ron Radziner's houses on Glencoe, east of Lincoln. The house is really a beautiful example of modern architecture.