

Ep #26: The Value of an Art Consultant for Your Home with Carol Romanoff



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With Your Host

Harriet Libov

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Welcome to *Your Real Estate Connection in Westchester*. A show for people looking to buy or sell homes in the Northern Westchester County area. Join local real estate expert Harriet Libov as she shares her professional advice on the local real estate market, connects you with knowledgeable community residents, and gives you helpful insights behind the home buying and selling process. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Today's episode is about a part of the home process that is fun, at least for me. When you stop renting one of the real perks of homeownership is to design and purchase furnishings and art to make your house into your home, creating a sanctuary that reflects your personal taste and surroundings that are pleasing to your eye and to your heart.

I've collected art as family heirlooms and pieces we bought from our travels, and one purchase in Soho for my 20th anniversary. All of the art in my home has meaning to me, and I love that. But that takes time. If you are furnishing with blank walls, it's so nice to buy art that complements your home, but is reflective of your personal taste. Purchases like that will last a lifetime and bring you pleasure.

A dear friend of mine is an art consultant, an artist's representative for her company Romanoff Elements. Carol Romanoff's education and experience in design, fashion, art and art history, and home decor brought her to this moment. She is able to provide the context that enables her to bring a client's vision to life. I really think you will enjoy her perspective on curating art for her clients. So let's settle in and start the conversation.

I hope you're enjoying a relaxing August outdoors. But as we all know, the fall, football season, Thanksgiving, and the holidays will bring us indoors soon enough. If you are thinking about creating a new environment that warms your heart and your home, today's episode will be for you. I will be speaking with Carol Romanoff from Romanoff Elements, a New York based

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company that brings select art and design elements together with the individualized needs of each client.

Carol is an art consultant and an artist's representative. She works with private clients, interior designers, and retailers both residential and commercial. Carol assists them by editing the creative elements, fine art, photography, paintings, prints, sculpture, and accessories. She selects the pieces that are just right for each project with a focus on reflecting a client's personal preferences or a business's professional profile.

Carol explores a variety of artworks to provide options for her clients. In the process, she will arrange studio visits, provide digital mockups, and encourage clients to see art in their own environment, home, or office. Carol suggests artworks to complement and enhance each client's interior spaces. Partnering with her clients to find art that suits their taste, reflects their vision, and respects their budget. Ultimately, it is a collaborative process.

She works with retailers and other venues to provide and rotate art that complements their merchandise and business, offering their customers access to original artwork. You can also find her artists offering to purchase on first dibs. Carol's education and experience in design, fashion, art and art history, textile design, and home decor provide the context that enable her to bring her clients vision to life.

In addition to being a fan of her work, Carol happens to be a dear friend of mine. We raised our families together in Armonk where she currently resides, and I have watched her business evolve into the exciting business it is today. A second chapter career, much like myself, that has given her identity and a purpose, much as my real estate career has done for me. Let's talk to Carol and learn about her background and Romanoff Elements.

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Harriet: Hi, Carol.

Carol: Hey, Harriet. How are you?

Harriet: I'm good. Happy August. So thanks so much for joining me today. I've already told our listeners that we're longtime friends. Today I'd like for everyone to get to know the special person you are but also the talented and creative person that you are, and how you bring talented artists into your client's homes and offices. So I would say first, just tell us about your education, and your work in the textile industry early in your career.

Carol: Thanks for having me, Harriet. We've chatted so much about all this over the years about art and design and homes. It's a pleasure to join them. So, as you know, my early interest was in art as an art student and learning about art history and Fine Arts. My direction evolved to incorporate design. I was never clear where that was taking me. I studied art a little bit at RISD early on in high school. What I saw, as much as I loved it, I wanted a broader education and exposure to incorporate both art design and business.

I found a really interesting program that I studied apparel design, but with a functional clothing focus. Meaning we learned apparel design, but with a focus on people with special needs. What that program gave me and a big takeaway from my education was that it stressed interdisciplinary partnerships throughout the creative process. We designed clothing for steelworkers and worked with engineers.

Harriet: This is all in school?

Carol: Yes, while I was at Cornell.

Harriet: Right.

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Carol: Clothing for the elderly and the handicapped. So what this did was gave me a foundation that made me realize the importance of working together with different disciplines and for an end use. So where I ended up was as a textile designer in the men's clothing industry. What I learned through all of this, that it's so much about—The creative process is not just about the art and the design, but it's integrating it for the end user.

So we needed our clients to be happy. We worked as a design team with sales, marketing, and production to get to an end product of textiles for men's clothing. Fast forward, what I feel my education prepared me for that my interests were very varied, but all about art design and style. As the years went by, I was looking for where to take this after textile design.

Harriet: Okay, so what I haven't mentioned in this episode is our brief tenure together as the founders of *Modern Tradition*, still love that name, a Judaica catalog that was distributed in synagogues. It didn't work out as we planned, but I gained so much respect for your attention to detail an eye for design.

Although good design is a passion for me, I don't have an educational background that supports my passion. Just good observation, I think, that led me to staging and seeing potential renovation possibilities for my clients in real estate. But your education absolutely led you to this second chapter. So how did Romanoff Elements evolve? How long have you been in business, and how is it grown? I know all the answers as your friend, but I think everybody else should hear.

Carol: How long is this podcast? There's a long answer. I loved what we did in *Modern Traditions*. It's a great memory now Harriet, but it was another step for both of us towards our next chapter. I learned, from you, you spoke about what you learned from me, but I learned from you what it meant to create a business from the ground up. All of the aspects of the business aspects that I had some education but minimal. I have a lot of

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intuition about it, but I saw you with the x's and o's and really had to put it together. I mean that experience definitely contributed to my being able to evolve a business.

Harriet: Okay, then hold it right there. I learned that I needed a brokerage firm to do my book work because QuickBooks was not my forte. So let's just continue.

Carol: I struggled, but I have learned QuickBooks, and I have put on that other hat to try and learn those marketing and business pieces. But different than *Modern Traditions*, Romanoff Elements evolved, I say organically, because it was not as planned as *Modern Traditions* was. It was a linear, but an unplanned process. I kind of reevaluated where I was going. Now that I left textiles business, I was living in our community, and in a world of interiors and homes were integral to everyone's lives.

So I felt that my next chapter was in the interior design world, but I didn't know where. There were a whole lot of home furnishing stores 12/15 years ago, and I worked for two of them locally. I did merchandising and sales, and it gave me some insight into the local community of home buying.

Because of my interest in art, I brought in some artists, particularly there were photographers, and I did art exhibitions in the furnishing stores. We created vignettes that told stories. I loved watching customers come in and saying wow, that would look great over my sofa, over my console. It initiated conversations and dialogue about buying art and how to bring art into the home.

From there, people were asking me to come to their home, would this size work? Do I like it? Is it what I want? I responded to that, and I responded to people's questions. As I explored it for a while found a niche of connecting people with these new and fabulous homes and how to bring art into it. Because of my background. I always knew a lot of artists or artists to be.

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Harriet: That was my next question. How did you find the artists?

Carol: So because of my background and what I love, I knew many artists from all different aspects of my education and interests. I always attended art fairs, art exhibitions, home design shows, design show houses. So I was always kind of just remembering all of the elements of both art and design.

I reached out to artists that either knew or was meeting along the way with a growing understanding of my clients and our general community, and what would work in their homes. It was just an intuitive thing that I developed by my own gut and my own experience. People just started asking me. Like early on, I worked with artisanal furniture and lighting designers also. So I was doing furniture and lighting and art, but I just started focusing on the art piece.

Harriet: Right. So what's been most gratifying doing the art piece?

Carol: I love every aspect of what I do. I love developing relationships with artists, the conversations with artists, and understanding the stories behind their development as an artist and what their artwork means. I meet clients. It's a great way for me to connect the two and help people who—It's all sorts of people at different stages of life, whether it's a new homebuyer like that you work with buying their first piece of art, or someone who's collecting for many years. People can love a lot of art. I help to guide to put together a collection to buy that first piece.

So for me, it's been gratifying to put together my many years of learning and loving art and design and putting together the clients and the artists, and helping people to find art that speaks to them. It's a personalized process, and that they will live with and enjoy for a long time.

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Harriet: Right? Lucky us that in this later chapter of after having kids and motherhood that we have these careers that just are the culmination of a lot of hard work and interests and passion. I mean, as you know, I mean, most of our friends are talking about retirement, and we're absolutely loving what we do. Which is pretty cool.

Carol: Yes, yes.

Harriet: So can you share with everybody how to find you on Facebook, Instagram, 1stDibs, and your website so all of our listeners can find you.

Carol: Sure. You can find me on Instagram at Romanoff Elements. My website romanoffelements.com. I have a gallery on 1stDibs or a storefront on 1stDibs, which is a great way to see different artworks and some of the artists that I work with. Instagram is a great way to see some of the art installed, to see different looks, and to find inspiration. I'm also on Facebook Romanoff Elements.

Harriet: Okay. I'm also going to add because actually as I'm talking to you, I'm realizing we didn't talk about it, that your home residential work is a large piece of your business. But you've also just branched out and been doing some huge office projects, which I know has been the next challenge.

So for anybody out there, just know that if you have blank walls in your office, that's a possibility for Carol to help you with. So thank you so much for joining me today. I forgot to mention that you are also responsible for providing my production company for me to create this podcast through a designer you knew that was podcasting. So thank you, thank you, and have a great day.

Carol: Thanks, Har. It's nice to continue, over all these years, continue to chat about art design and homes.

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Harriet: Okay, and my next podcast is going to be about the art show. So I'm sure any of our local residents will see you there walking around getting new ideas.

Carol: If I can add, last year I worked with them and did a guide to how to attend art shows. How to attend the art shows, what to look for.

Harriet: That's cool.

Carol: So that might be something you can provide.

Harriet: Okay, great.

Carol: Okay so good to talk.

Harriet: All right.

Carol: Have a great day.

Harriet: You too. Bye.

Carol: Bye-bye.

I hope you enjoyed this episode with my friend Carol Romanoff from Romanoff Elements, and the value of an art consultant for your home. Ironically, one of the biggest art events in Westchester County is coming up in our neighborhood, the Armonk Outdoor Art Show, and they are celebrating their 60th anniversary this year.

Our next episode will be with Nicole Blum, who is the new chair of the show, and Marian Hamilton, who has been working on the show for many years. There is not a house in Armonk or surrounding areas that does not

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own something purchased at the art show. I hope you will listen. Here are the plans for the show this fall in 2022. Enjoy the remainder of your summer. Until we meet again.

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