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Finance guru Leon Black buying \$50M UES townhouse

By Jennifer Gould Keil

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Leon and Debra Black are purchasing 19 E. 70th St.

Photo: PatrickMcMullan.com/Robert Miller



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Private equity titan Leon Black and his wife Debra, a Broadway producer, melanoma survivor and leading force behind the Melanoma Research Alliance, are buying 19 E. 70th St., the former Knoedler & Company art gallery, which shuttered following a major art fraud scandal in 2009 that is still under investigation.

London developer Christian Candy bought the 30-foot-wide, 17,000-square-foot, 104-year-old Italian Renaissance-style townhouse for \$35 million in 2013.

However, although Candy obtained city permits to transform the commercially zoned space back into its original single-family mansion status, he then put it back on the market for \$55 million.

The Blacks are hammering out details to buy the mansion for around \$50 million, sources tell Gimme Shelter exclusively.

The manse, which needs more than \$20 million worth of renovations, would be a fitting home for the couple's extensive art collection, which includes one of four versions of Edvard Munch's "The Scream."

The Blacks and the mansion's unofficial listing brokers, the Corcoran Group's Louis Buckworth and Maria Pashby, declined to comment.

Mo bunnies, no problems

Embattled millionaire landlord Steven Croman and his wife Harriet just held a splashy Playboy-themed party at their Hamptons beach rental on Surfside Drive in Water Mill.

They paid \$650,000 for the month of August to rent the home while their own beach mansion, in Sagaponack, is being built.

The Cromans are also putting the finishing touches on their mega-mansion at 12 E. 72nd St., which they bought for \$5.5 million in 2002.

At the time, the manse had 23-rent stabilized apartments, and over the years, Croman made headlines for kicking the tenants out.

In the Hamptons, some of Croman's guests told Gimme Shelter they wondered what the couple is celebrating.

Croman is under investigation by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman for using illegal tactics to harass and intimidate people into vacating their rent regulated homes.

On Aug. 1, State Senators Daniel Squadron and Brad Hoylman, Assembly member Brian Kavanagh, Borough President Gale Brewer and Council members Rosie Mendez and Margaret Chin applauded the AG investigation with a statement that in part said: "Steven Croman's pattern of tenant harassment must come to an end."



Harriet and Steven Croman.
Photo: PatrickMcMullan.com