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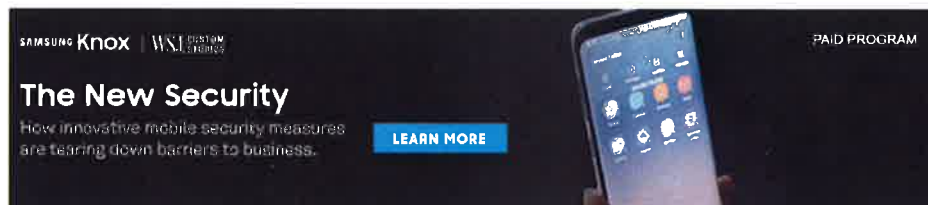
THE TRADE

From Rock Stars to Real Estate

Colette Harron now caters to wealthy Connecticut home buyers, but she got her start as a muse to music legends

By Amy Gamerman

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Colette Harron doesn't hang out with rock stars anymore. A 66-year-old real-estate agent in Essex, Conn., who favors beige knits and Ugg boots, Ms. Harron tends to the wealthy, well-bred people who inhabit the quiet enclaves of privilege bordering the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound.



Colette Harron is shown at the late Katharine Hepburn's estate, which she is representing. The property is on the market for \$30 million. ADAM GOLFER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Her biggest listing on the market now: the late Katharine Hepburn's seaside compound in the Old Saybrook borough of Fenwick, for sale for \$30 million. Ms. Harron knows the place well: In 2004, she brokered its sale to construction magnate Frank Sciamè for \$6 million, a record amount for Middlesex County.

Mr. Sciamè said that Ms. Harron's personal, low-pressure approach in that deal led him to list the property with her when he decided to sell last spring. "Despite the fact that there were significant commissions involved, that seemingly wasn't on her mind," Mr. Sciamè said. "She allowed one to see it, sort out their thoughts."

"You've got to give out good vibes," said Ms. Harron, with a husky French accent that's a remnant from her childhood in Casablanca.

This time around, she's marketing the Hepburn property as a luxurious 3.4-acre compound that will include a yet-to-be-built 2,750-square-foot gatehouse. The original home, which was prone to flooding back in Ms. Hepburn's day, has been entirely renovated, its foundations raised 5 feet.

A new open floor plan and numerous terraces take full advantage of sweeping views of Long Island Sound. "I had been in the house once for drinks, in the 1970s," Ms. Harron confided. "It was dark, like camp."

Ms. Harron seems to know everyone, which may explain why she is "a big player" at William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty, says President and CEO Paul Breunich. Her portfolio of properties now on the market have a combined list value over \$63 million.



An exterior view of the Katherine Hepburn Estate in Fenwick, Conn. ADAM GOLFER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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past is tattooed on her left hand: a faded blue star, a souvenir of the days when she was Colette Mimram, muse to rock royalty.

A former model and stylist, Ms. Harron and a friend opened a boutique of one-of-a-kind clothes in 1967 on New York's East 9th Street, near the legendary Fillmore East club. The store had no name and no regular hours, but everyone came: Ali MacGraw, the Allman Brothers, Hubert de Givenchy and Miles Davis.

One day, Jimi Hendrix walked in. A white leather jacket dripping with fringe and blue beads hung on the wall. "He looked at it and said, 'This is my jacket,'" recounted Ms. Harron. That jacket would become part of rock history in the summer of 1969, when Mr. Hendrix put it on at Woodstock and played the Star-Spangled Banner.

By then, Mr. Hendrix and Ms. Harron had become "best friends," she said. Mr. Hendrix hung out in her store, invited her on tour and surprised her by joining her on a trip to Morocco, an episode described in Charles R. Cross's biography of Mr. Hendrix, "Room Full of Mirrors."

Ms. Harron brought Mr. Hendrix to meet her grandfather, then married to a famous clairvoyant. "When she read his cards, she saw that we were not going to be friends a year from now," she recalled. The prophecy haunted Mr. Hendrix. A little more than a year later, he died from drug-related asphyxia at the age of 27.

The store closed soon after. "I didn't want to be there anymore," Ms. Harron said. In 1976, she married Peter Harron, a photographer and filmmaker, and moved to Essex, an insular, well-heeled town where his family owned a house in a converted 1750 mill.



Ms. Harron is pictured with Jimi Hendrix. CATERINE MILINAIRE

As she always had, Ms. Harron quickly made friends. About 10 years ago, she started selling real estate, encouraged by her close friend Dominick Dunne, who lived nearby: "He started his career at 50—I started mine at 55. He really inspired me," she said. Mr. Dunne, in turn, was inspired by her to create the character of Lil Altemus, an old-guard society lady turned real estate agent in his last novel, "Too Much Money." After Mr.

Dunne died in 2009, Ms. Harron sold his house overlooking Whalebone Cove in Hadlyme: "I was crying there all the time."

It was the 2004 sale of the "Ka-trine Hepburn place," as she calls it, that put her on the real-estate map. Ms. Harron had known Ms. Hepburn casually. Their mutual friend, Cynthia McFadden, the ABC "Nightline" anchor and Ms. Hepburn's executor, "opened the door" for her to represent the property. "As charming as she is, she is also extremely direct, no-nonsense," Ms. McFadden said.

Now Mr. Sciame has put Ms. Harron at the helm of another transaction: his purchase of 12 acres of pristine Essex waterfront now on the market for \$7.8 million. Once the deal is complete, he plans to divide it and sell it, through Ms. Harron, as eight individual lots, priced between \$1.2 million and \$1.8 million. As she often does, Ms. Harron also represents the sellers of that parcel of land. It's a fine line to walk. "You want to make everything pleasant for everyone, so everyone stays friends," she said.

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