

# Great Photography Sells



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While pitching your property at the right, market-related price is critical, the images used to portray your property on the internet and in advertising material are not to be underestimated, as they can set your home apart from many others in the same price range and area. Given the broad usage of the internet, photographs can either make or break the initial impressions of a property.

Says Lindsay Beck, Pam Golding Properties area manager in Cape Town's sought-after Southern Suburbs: "While we do use drone photography for many of our large properties in areas such as Bishopscourt and Constantia, we also use professional photographers for our website, the property portals, brochures and emails, as it is very important that we showcase these properties to best advantage."

## Best light

Says local photographer Mike Naylor: "Morning has the best light for shooting. If the property has a mountain view in the Southern Suburbs, this time of day is best as the sun shines on the mountain. If there is no mountain shot possible, it is best to photograph east-facing houses in the morning, west-facing in the afternoon and north-facing houses at midday so that the sun is shining on the main façade of the house."

"Good shots to take include an interior entertainment area or indoor living space with a particularly good flow onto an exterior entertainment area, or a lovely open-plan lounge/dining room/kitchen flowing onto an outside patio with a great view."

## Important areas to photograph

Key areas which buyers want to see include entertainment and living areas, main bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, says Richard Smith, Pam Golding Properties area manager in the Hyde Park area in Johannesburg's northern suburbs. "Also important to showcase is a beautiful garden set against the backdrop of a striking and welcoming façade of the property, and remember to have the doors and windows open."

Cape Town photographer Roger Metcalfe says unfortunately, many beautiful homes are let down by below average pictures. "Every home, regardless of value, is deserving of creative, warm compositions that truthfully engage both the eye and heart."

"Living spaces go beyond ergonomics and geometrical structures – they are intimate, personal spaces. The first thing to look at is light, and how to use it. But apart from that, when a photographer first walks through a building, perspectives and compositions leap out and proclaim themselves in ways the owner or agent may never have realised."

"This might involve a distant background scene framed by an arch in the foreground, or a wall mirror reflecting a warm, comfortable room with a mountain view through the opposite window. For example, by careful camera positioning, a wall mirror doubles as an extra 'window', adding a new, yet valid dimension to the room."

## Showcase a unique aspect

Adds Des Hauser, sales manager for Pam Golding Properties in Alberton and Johannesburg South: "Try to look for a feature that is unique to the property, whether an entertainment area or views onto a golf course, as an example. Remember, with photographs taken throughout the home, neatness and cleanliness are essential."

Concurs Smith: "Pack away any children's toys, ensure the beds are neatly made, place some flower arrangements in strategic places and remove personal photographs."

"De-clutter," says Naylor. "Pack away all shampoos, soaps, cleansers in bathrooms, put away all cleaning substances and dishes from the kitchen, straighten curtains and blinds, and remove the pool cover and cleaner for the shots."

Generally, you want to end up with approximately 20 great photographs of the property, so you may take more than that to ensure a good selection to choose from.

## Tips for homeowners taking their own photographs

Says Metcalfe: "On a practical level, especially if you're using your cell phone, first clean the lens with a soft cloth. Cell phone cameras are prone to collect finger marks, and this can make an enormous difference between a muddy image and a clean, crisp one. Again, lighting is important – always allow maximum light to fill the space, open curtains and shutters and switch on any lights in the room.

"Creative control of lighting is what a photographer does, and he or she will make use of the full spectrum of lighting options. I find using a powerful, intelligent flash or speedlight works well, especially when combined with natural light. I think it's really important to always include the existing ambient light, for instance the warm lighting from a lamp, and not to allow your artificial light to over-ride that.

"Also, it's important to balance interior with the brighter exterior light as seen through windows and doorways. If you fail to do this, exterior scenes are easily lost to over-exposure, especially if you set the camera to Auto. Manual setting gives you full control over the lighting.

"Ideally the interior light should balance the exterior light. The eye initially takes in room details (often lit by flash), after which it is led out through the window to green trees, distant mountains, and blue skies. Such lighting balance allows interior and exterior images to merge and flow into one uninterrupted visual experience.

"Then remember to keep the camera level, which may sound obvious, but in a room with different angled walls, finding the horizontal line can be deceptive."

Adds Metcalfe: "Windows naturally draw the eye to the exterior, so clean window glass is imperative, as windows are an inevitable extension of the lens. In addition, all mirrors need to be spotless, especially in tight spaces such as bathrooms, where creative use of reflections can create aesthetically pleasing, multi-layered visuals. Gardens need to be groomed, pools cleaned, and surroundings made neat. Bear in mind that the eye of the buyer doesn't miss a thing."

Image: Roger Metcalfe, [roger@global.co.za](mailto:roger@global.co.za)

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