

FLAGSHIP SAILS

Steve Cuozzo



REALTY CHECK

HAMMACHER Schlemmer will soon be history on East 57th Street.

The Hammacher Schlemmer building, the fabled gadget emporium's flagship since the 1920s, has been sold to a Brazilian real estate company, all but guaranteeing that the famed store will be gone from the location by year end.

Sao Paulo-based Malzoni Group snared 145 E. 57th St. for what retail sources said was \$34 million.

Hammacher Schlemmer is in the last days of a long-term net lease at the 12-story, 62,500 square foot address between Third and Lexington avenues, previously owned by a New York partnership.

The net lease expires in September, and Malzoni plans to find a retailer willing to pay today's market-rate rents — up to \$400 a square foot for ground-floor store space on East 57th.

Although Hammacher could theoretically get a short-term extension, "it would be very short if it happens," an insider predicted.

Hammacher currently uses only the first three floors and subleases the higher floors to small office tenants. Hammacher is now mainly a catalogue retailer, but a store executive told The Post last February that it hoped to find a new Manhattan location when its lease expired this fall. The East 57th Street location was built for Hammacher around 1926.

Malzoni Group, a player in Brazilian real estate and retail, was represented by Prudential Douglas Elliman Vice President **Louis Puopolo**, who said the purchase was Malzoni's first in New York and not likely to be its last.

"They've wanted to be in this market for a while, and it's a big deal for them," he said.

Puopolo said Malzoni "plans to upgrade and restore the building and rebrand it. They want to shop the branding and naming rights based on the retail anchor."

The sellers were represented by CB Richard Ellis' **Darcy Stacom** and **Robert Garrish**, who could not be reached over the holiday weekend.

The deal reflects Prudential Douglas Elliman's growing commercial profile.

Chairman **Howard Lorber** noted, "We've done some healthy deals over the years, but didn't define ourselves as having a commercial unit. Now, we're on our way to having a full-fledged boutique commercial division."

Although mainly known as a residential brokerage powerhouse, Prudential Douglas Elliman has also brokered such transactions as the sale of the land under 400 Fifth Ave. to an Italian company for the new Setai hotel. Its commercial players also include retail star **Faith Hope Consolo**.

Now, Lorber said, his firm might create a "niche" commercial division with its own name:

"We've put together the people we have and are hiring new people," he said.

NEW LEASES: Home Insurance Co. took a full floor with 23,750 square feet at Broad Street Development's 61 Broadway, moving from 59 Maiden Lane. The asking rent in the building is \$34 to \$37 per square foot.

Copenhagen-based Danske, Denmark's largest bank, is returning to the city after several years, signing for 8,700 square feet at 280 Park Ave.; CB Richard Ellis' **Matthew McBride** repped Danske and CBRE's **Gregg Rothkin**, **Peter Turchin** and **Paul Amrich** repped landlord Broadway Partners.

Meanwhile, the French American Chamber of Commerce took 3,426 square feet at 1350 Broadway, moving from less space at 122 E. 42nd St. CBRE's **Snezana Anderson** repped the tenant, Newmark Knight Frank repped the landlord.

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GADGETS GONE: Hammacher Schlemmer may be leaving the East 57th St. flagship building it has occupied since the 1920s. Angel Chevrestt

Census workers share their horror stories

JOHN CRUDELE



A guy I'll call Mike has worked for Census 2010 several times in California over the past two years. The last time, he was trained at a facility that was an hour's drive from his home. He was paid for his commuting time at \$17 an hour — which is what he also got while working and training.

Mike says that he, like everyone else, was also given 50 cents a mile for gasoline.

The last time Mike worked for Census, the job lasted two weeks. He and the rest of his class had been promised eight weeks.

Mike says that after each stint

with Census he, like everyone else, was given an official "termination" notice. And every time he was rehired Mike had to fill out a new employment application (more paperwork to be processed by paid workers).

A couple weeks ago I found out that Census was repeatedly hiring and firing workers without any apparent reason. I questioned if this was being done to artificially boost the nation's employment figures since the Labor Dept. considers it a new job created whenever someone is hired to work as little as one hour in a month.

Was Census churning jobs to make the economy look healthier than it really is?

Here are some other workers' stories.

■ I was hired four times by the Census Bureau: spring 2009 for address canvassing; fall 2009 for general quarters verification; late winter 2010 as a quality assurance clerk; and, spring 2010 [as an] enu-

merator non-response follow-up. I've just been laid off. In each case I spent more time training and going to meetings than actually working. Please don't use my name, I still may be called back.

■ I was hired four times, counting last year and this. There's lots of waste and poor management. I've wondered about the handheld computer (used by door-to-door workers.) I've no idea how many of these were purchased. They were only used last year in one effort and my understanding is there were a lot of problems.

■ I'm in south Orange County in Southern California and I'm going door-to-door to people the Census says have not turned in their form. At least 60 percent of the people I speak to swear they've turned it in. We are supposed to visit a residence three times. (If we can't contact anyone) we are supposed to try up to three proxies (neighbors or other people) to get information on a particular resident. So ba-

sically your neighbor can report how many people live in your home.

■ Everything you reported is absolutely true. I was fired three times and rehired. I earned more going to training classes than (working). Several classmates didn't get any work after completing training.

■ I was hired by the Census on March 16 and my last day was April 19 at the bilingual question answering center in Rome, Ga. We had two days of training, of which one was just to get hired officially as a federal employee. I had a total of two people come by my location and ask a question — costing taxpayers \$250 per question.

■ I am a Census worker. I, too, can confirm that they are checking and checking. I checked homes that have already been checked by the "enumerators." The next phase is

to go and re-check the checks that we already did twice.

■ It's not much better in Florida. Our first day of training was a total joke. The supposed crew leader knew nothing. She didn't even open the manual to prep herself. We spent four hours signing six pieces of paper, one of which we signed on the day of the initial testing. The nightmare didn't end when we got to the field. No work was available so we would sit in a meeting waiting for work for hours, which went on our timesheet.

■ I have personally experienced the very same thing (in Missouri) and have said from the beginning that this is strictly political and for jobs numbers. It is a waste of our tax monies. Our area appears to be very disorganized. However, I believe that it is intentional. Just another way to increase outlays and jobs.

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