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TANYA MEMME  
WANTS TO *SELL*  
*THIS HOUSE*

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# REGAL EAGLE

She once wore a crown and walked the red carpet, but these days you'll find **TANYA MEMME** inspecting crown moldings for cobwebs, or carpets for rat droppings

BY DAVID DICENZO

**C**LEANING LADY IS JUST PART OF TANYA MEMME'S current job description. As host of the A&E home improvement show *Sell This House*, the spunky, former Miss World Canada helps homeowners get over the hump when it comes to prepping their humble abodes for a potential sale. And that often means doing the actual grunt work to spruce up a place in desperate need of a makeover if a deal's to be done.

But even Memme has her limits. She figures her most memorable episode of *Sell This House*, now in its third season, came when her and co-host designer Roger Hazard trekked down to Hawaii to film a show. What they found will forever be burned into Memme's memory: Visible toenail clippings, thick cobwebs, rat droppings in the oven, and mould *everywhere*.

"They were so unclean," Memme says with horror. "This was the most disgusting house ever. I usually do some of the cleaning myself. This place, I refused."

That may seem like a predictable response from a former beauty queen, yet Memme is hardly typical of gals that had a shot on the pageant circuit. Feminine, she certainly is. But there's a rough-and-tumble side to the energetic host, a character trait that's the product of an interesting childhood. Memme was raised on a 200-acre sod farm in Wainfleet, Ont., near the

St. Catherines area. Her massive Italian family lived among four houses on the farm, and with so many male cousins around, Memme was more apt to test her will on a dirt bike than put on a frilly dress.

"It's not like I had a girly-girl upbringing," she says. "I was very influenced by nature. I was tomboyish. It came out of me as a kid."

Ambition has been a constant characteristic for the thirtysomething farm girl and by the age of 11, Memme already knew she wanted to get out and see the world. She'd been into dance for years—tap, jazz and ballet—and at 15, she left Wainfleet behind to pursue a career in entertainment.

Memme got a tremendous break when she was crowned Miss World Canada in 1993/94, but the whole experience, despite opening doors, proved to be disheartening. The bad taste stemmed from accusations that her victory over 45 other girls from across the country was set up by her father, who by then was a big player in the real estate business. It wasn't set up, of course, but after traveling to the Miss World pageant in South Africa, Memme decided to give up her crown.

"I went into it with the purest of intentions," she recalls. "The whole thing was a disaster."

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A former Miss World Canada, Tanya Memme hosts *Sell This House* on A&E.

## WHAT A DUMP

Whether you're looking to improve your living space, or manage a massive overhaul before putting your digs up for sale, here are the shows you need to watch for helpful hints and great tricks. *All times eastern.*

### Clean Sweep

Pack rats beware! People with way too much crap toss each other's cluttered goods, while host Tava Smiley and a team of design experts come to save the day.

**Fridays, 8pm on TLC**

TLC



Tava Smiley

### Queer Eye for the Straight Guy

Not solely about home improvement, but the design aspect of this major makeover show is mind boggling given the unbelievably tight schedule. Thom Filicia, owner of Thom Filicia Inc., faces the task of fixing up the space of style-challenged heteros. If you can stomach the bitchiness of fashion guru Carson Kressley, *Queer Eye's* worth a look.

**Daily episodes on Bravo**

BRAVO!



Carson Kressley

### Generation Renovation

Some see it as a money pit but you have other ideas. *Generation Renovation* follows starry-eyed homeowners as they get their hands dirty giving old homes a fresh, new look.

**Wednesdays, 8pm on HGTV**

### Extreme Makeover: Home Edition

Emmy-nominated reality series that squeezes a massive four-month reno project into a week for deserving families living in run-down homes.

Megaphone-toting host/carpenter Ty Pennington, formerly of *Trading Spaces*, provides the good news to the unsuspecting folk. The hard part is getting the work done on time.

**Sundays, 8pm on ABC**

ABC



Ty Pennington

Memme was 21 when she went to New York City to attend the famous American Musical & Dramatic Academy, where she honed her skills as an actor, singer and dancer. They were tough times: She held down three jobs doing whatever she could to get by and, after accustomed to walking down red carpets wearing a crown, Memme found herself sweeping and scrubbing floors.

But she persevered and went west, where she landed a slew of gigs thanks to her natural ability in front of a camera, including hosting both *DirecTV News* and *Robotica*, a show pitting maniacal inventors and their battling robots against each other. Then came *Sell This House*. Memme had been the runner-up for a lot of jobs at the time and on the day she went to audition, the bad karma continued when she was given the wrong address.

"I was late, I was in a bad mood," she says. "The audition was hard. They told me to do a fake walkthrough and be funny. I think because I didn't care, I gave a good audition."

The show has earned a dedicated fol-

lowing, thanks in part to the chemistry between Memme and Hazard, though a booming real-estate market hasn't hurt either. The premise is simple: Memme and Hazard visit owners, who have an open house. After listening to the pooh-poohing of the guests, the pair uses its creative expertise to make the dwelling more presentable for a second open house, all within a modest dollar amount.

"I'm sort of the therapist/host," says Memme, suggesting that Hazard is a touch more straightforward in his critiques. "The key to our show is a \$500 budget."

With almost 30 episodes per season taking Memme across the U.S., the schedule is chaotic. *Move This House*, another A&E project, will keep her extra busy, and Memme also recently shot a pilot for her own talk show tentatively titled *In The Know*, which gave her a taste of another dream, showcasing her Lucille Ball-like physical comedy skills.

Memme just bought her first home in Santa Monica—which Hazard is helping design—so there's been little socializing time for the single gal, who mentions

"I'm sort of the therapist/host," says Memme.



she's been proposed to twice (not surprising). Her hands are already full with cats Tommy and Oscar, the latter of which is her 14-year-old "child" with a heart problem.

As for tips to help the resale value of a home, Memme has two: "Declutter and clean," she says. "They're both equally important," and, "People cannot smell their own stink."

*Sell This House* airs Sundays at 5 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. (ET/PT) on A&E

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