

## AT THE DESK OF: MIKE NAMER

**M**ichael Namer, founder of Alfa Development, made his name with condo projects like **130 East 12th Street** and **Village Green at 311 East 11th Street**. But six years ago, Namer made headlines for a very different reason: While working on the 12-unit condo conversion **151 Wooster Street**, he found a wall covered in graffiti by famed street artists, including **Jean-Michel Basquiat**. Namer, who studied art in college, still has the Basquiat and ended up starting a gallery in the basement of the building. When Namer's not admiring graffiti art, he's working on projects such as the eight-story condo

building 199 Mott Street, the 51-unit **Chelsea Green condo**, and 27-unit **Village Green West at 245 West 14th Street**. Last year, Alfa expanded into the hospitality business with the purchase of the 90-room Hotel Grand Union on 32nd Street. Namer's office is located at 15 West 18th Street, an art nouveau building Alfa redeveloped. The building also houses the eatery **Alison Eighteen**, which Namer co-owns with restaurateur Alison Becker. Namer, who grew up in Cuba, sat down with *The Real Deal* to talk about his three loves: art, capitalism and real estate. **BY GUELDA VOIEN**



**1** Neo-expressionist artist John Platt painted this portrait of Namer as a gift for the developer last year. Platt is represented by Namer's Gallery 151, which focuses on young, contemporary artists.

**2** The late New York artist Dominique Philbert drew this graffiti work, which reads "Mike," for Namer about three years ago. Known by the pseudonym ERO for "Ever Rocking On," Philbert was briefly represented by 151 before his death in 2011 of congestive heart failure.

**3** Alfa just completed the sell-out of Chelsea Green, a 51-unit condo at 151 West 21st Street, and construction is slated for completion this fall. Namer started building and converting homes in 1980, getting "addicted" after an easy initial success — he bought a Westhampton property for \$19,000, built a home there and rented it out the next summer for \$25,000.

**4** At Namer's first-ever co-op conversion, 46 East 83rd Street, angry tenants complained when a pipe burst during construction.

Their leader? A woman named Chris, who became Namer's girlfriend and later his wife. "I must have done the right thing eventually, because she married me," he said. The couple has two sons, both of whom work at Alfa.

**5** Namer keeps bottles of wine in his office in case anyone wants a glass after work. He also dines downstairs at Alison "too often," which he said "has really messed up my girlish figure."

**6** Namer is an avid skier, though he does not own a home near his favorite slopes — Utah's Snowbird resort and Telluride in Colorado. Instead, he owns a house in Sag Harbor in the Hamptons. "I'd rather have a beach house," he said.

**7** Namer did these three oil paintings in his free time. He studied art at Queens College but decided a career in real estate would be more lucrative. His background as an immigrant — he was airlifted from Communist Cuba at age eight and placed in foster care — has given him a strong belief in the "right to make money," he said.

