

DEEP DISH FROM THE DESK OF... REAL-ESTATE PLAYERS



LOUIS DUBIN
CEO
Athena Group

Today's real-estate developer is much like a modern-day warrior—with many battles to fight before and after breaking ground. To the best of these civilian generals come the hard-fought spoils of war, especially in a trying economy. And nowhere is that spirit of combat more prevalent than in the Fifth Avenue corner office of Athena Group founder and CEO, Louis Dubin.

Surrounded by glass-encased battle scenes with vintage miniature soldiers, military medals, Roman maps, Indian war elephants, regal Russian military flasks, even an ornate horse whip at the ready, Dubin appears very much in command of all he oversees.

"They're inspiring and beautiful," he says of the intricate re-creations, the culmination of a

hobby that began at the age of nine. "They're very articulated figures, and it's the old-style craftsmanship I love so much. Very few people are capable of producing these kinds of military miniatures today. To me, they're pieces of art."

And as with all good art, a major collection doesn't come cheap. A set of five soldiers—some from the 1800s—can range between \$200 and \$25,000. And Dubin has thousands of such figurines, overflowing into the conference rooms and offices of his employees and partners.

The Athena Group, a private real-estate investment and development company, has projects that include 838 Fifth Avenue, 43 West 64th Street, the 400-unit Waverly condominiums in South Beach, a project in Boston, and an office building in Washington, D.C.

On top of one of the cases are a number of Russian military flasks, picked up by Dubin during his numerous visits to the former Soviet Union. "They're quite attractive with these great emblems on them from the officers of the KGB, special forces, and submarine and tank corps."

But Dubin's décor is not all blood, guts, and grog. "I picked up these watercolors in Central Asia," he says. "These pictures of the Himalayas are quite beautiful." That menacing whip on the wall was used by the descendants of Ghengis Khan. "It's a Kyrgyz horse whip." He grins.

Has he had to use it lately? "We don't talk about that." He grins a little wider.—BRADEN KEIL

PORTRAIT BY PETER MURDOCK