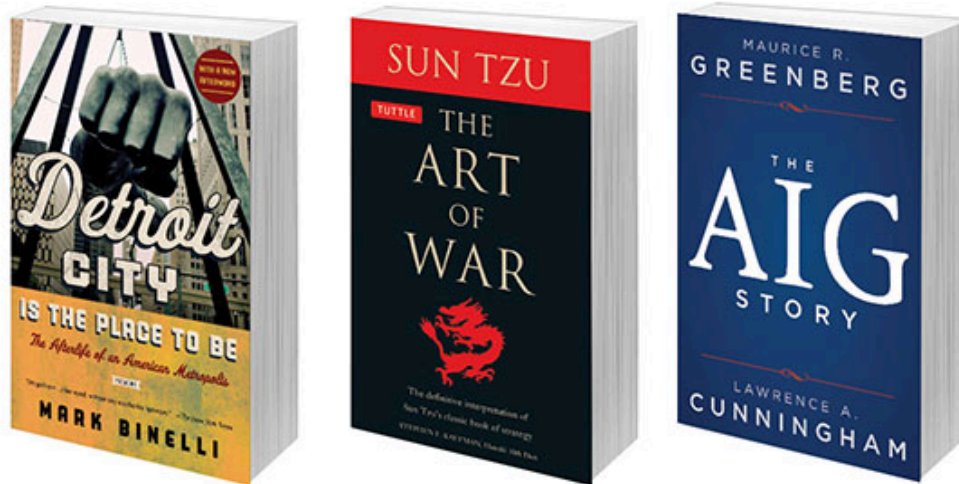


What they're reading now

Insights from the desks of Victoria Rong Kennedy, Robert Dankner and Gregory Cola

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By Ariel Stulberg



Robert Dankner

President, Prime Manhattan Residential

What are you reading right now?

"The Art of War," by Sun Tzu, the sixth century Chinese manual on military strategy and tactics.

What spurred you to read that book?

I re-read it every other month or so. It's fascinating, so current, so real and simply practical.

What in it has stuck with you?

The book explains when and how to engage opponents in order to prevail in difficult situations. Instead of describing the logistics of warfare, the author shows the reader how to succeed by motivating soldiers and leveraging tactical advantages. In short, he explains how to win the battle of wits.

Victoria Rong Kennedy

Licensed associate real estate broker, Citi Habitats

What are you reading right now or what did you finish most recently?

I just finished reading "The AIG Story," by Maurice Greenberg and Laurence Cunningham. Greenberg, the main author, was chairman of AIG from 1967 to 2005, until he was forced out by then-Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. The book chronicles the company's rise and fall from his perspective. Under Greenberg's four decades of leadership, the insurance giant grew to be worth \$180 billion. However, after his ouster, the new management radically changed the firm's business model, exposing AIG to the heat of the 2008 financial crisis, and nearly destroying it. It's a Shakespearian tragedy set in the world of modern business.

What spurred you to read that book?

The magnitude and historical significance of the financial collapse compelled me to read about this topic. As a Beijing native, AIG is of particular interest to me. The company was founded in Shanghai in 1919 and broke ground opening up markets in the Far East.

Has anything you read in it stuck with you? Would you recommend it to others?

AIG's post-Greenberg involvement in the risky mortgage-backed security industry was in sharp contrast to the former chairman's more disciplined style. But as in life, when you gamble, sometimes you lose. What's important is that you take personal responsibility for your actions. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn more about big business, as well as human nature.

Gregory Cola

Director of acquisitions and investments, The Peebles Corp.

What are you reading now or what did you recently finish?

I recently finished "Detroit City is the Place to Be," by Mark Binelli. I just started reading, "The Inevitable City," by Scott Cowen, which is about Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans. Both books have similar themes of leadership and revitalization after crisis strikes a city.

What spurred you to read the Detroit book?

I have analyzed a few properties in the Detroit area. After a visit, I started to fall in love with the city's rebirth and now track what is happening there. I wanted to learn more about Detroit's history of the American Dream (a frequent topic of discussion at the Peebles Corporation) and its future plans. Unfortunately, the story of Detroit reinventing itself is not always the focal point of the media's coverage of the city. Everyone roots for the underdog, and there's none more fitting than the story of Detroit.

Has anything in it stuck with you?

Detroit is a diverse city full of pride. The book is very engaging and gives you Detroit from all angles. Some of the stories within the book are hilarious too.