

Tour the 2018 Kips Bay Decorator Show House

The country's top design talents outfit a townhouse on the Upper East Side

TEXT BY [HADLEY KELLER](#) • Posted April 26, 2018



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Nowhere is there more design power than in a certain townhouse on New York's Upper East Side for a month every spring. That's when dozens of the country's best and brightest designers come together to outfit a *designer show house* to benefit the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club. For the last 46 years the show house, chaired by the inimitable *Bunny Williams this year*, has served as a nexus of design trends, a showcase of the best in the industry, and a launching pad for new talent. This year is no different. Throughout the jaw-dropping seven levels of a *36-foot-wide townhouse* on East 76th Street, 21 designers have devised rooms that run the gamut from modern to classic, calm and serene to colorfully kaleidoscopic. During May, the house is open to visitors in search of inspiration, with all proceeds benefiting the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club. *Get your tickets now!*



Foyer, Michael Herold

"I was thrilled to get the foyer," says Michael Herold. Though some designers have difficulty with the entryway, Herold relished the opportunity to provide the house's first impression. "My goal was to create a space so that when guests walked through the door, they were transported somewhere fabulous." Herold's starting point was a 17th century-painting, which he transformed into a mural with *Iksel*. He kept the original antique mirroring ("it just added more depth") and added prints by Joan Miró and chairs upholstered in a Schumacher stripe for a graphic offset to the painterly mural. On the floor is a carpet from The Rug Company's Alexander McQueen line, with a pattern of butterflies. Says Herold, "I thought the theme of metamorphosis was fitting for a show house."



Basement, Juan Montoya Design

"I'm in love with 1903," declares Juan Montoya from the patio attached to his subterranean room. "It's when the Austrian movement was at its peak." For his multi-room space, Montoya modernized these ideals. "It's the Wiener Werkstatte for today," he says. Vintage furnishings by the likes of Otto Schultz mix with contemporary pieces and graphic curtains, which Montoya "wanted to look like a sail on a boat." Outside, pillows covered in Josef Frank fabric provide pops of color, while a sculpture by Saint Clair Cemin (found via Paul Kasmin) connects the natural and the abstract—"it reminded me of a bird," says Montoya.



Landing, Dan Fink Studio

"The first thing I noticed, of course, was this neoclassical stair," says Fink of the house's undisputed centerpiece, a five-story spiral staircase with an ornate wrought-iron rail. "I'm always looking for a way to make classic details modern." To do so, Fink devised a graphic, metallic wallpaper with Gracie and added casings, molding, and panels throughout the space (which stretches from the first floor to the second). Set against the staircase, behind a desk strewn with various ephemera of an elegant life atop a Doris Leslie Blau carpet, is a near life-size bas-relief of the goddess Diana, found at Newel antiques. "She's the patron saint of this space," says Fink with a laugh. "So I wanted the whole thing to feel elegant, yet powerful."



Photo: Nickolas Sargent



Kitchen, Clive Christian

A massive 12-foot Cambria countertop holds pride of place in the kitchen, which shows off a more contemporary side of Clive Christian, while keeping luxe details like a marquetry hood, lined cabinets, and Baccarat lighting. Dacor's new Modernist line of appliances is on display in the stove and ovens and hidden behind panels for the fridge and freezer.



Garden, Mario Nievera, Nievera Williams

After a winter of clouds, the sun has finally peeked out in time for the show house's opening day. Still, says Nievera, "it was winter up until a few days ago," so planting the outdoor space proved tricky. To make do, the designer made ingenious use of faux greenery, arranging it in a curlicue pattern along the patio's walls. Fresh florals come by way of a grouping of orchids, which make a pretty backdrop for Stori Modern furniture and a tent and pillows in Josef Frank's Citrus Garden pattern.



Sitting Room, David Netto

For his kitchen-adjacent sitting room, David Netto was seeing red. "The New York I grew up in was full of red rooms," he recalls. "There was Brooke Astor's famous library and Mario Buatta's incredible room—was it in 1980?—at the Kips Bay house." Here, Netto channeled this inspiration in a modern way, incorporating his own style through contemporary furnishings, interesting shapes, and many, many books. "I wanted to remember all the red rooms that had meant so much to me in my early life, by decorators I admire like Mario and Albert Hadley, and try to add one to that story."



Pantry, Steilish Interiors & Architecture

Steilish principal Stefan Steil drew a tricky straw with this windowless, L-shaped space. His solution? "I tried to make it visually more interesting by creating focal points throughout the space and giving it an outdoor feel with the limestone pattern on the walls and branches on the ceiling." For the walls, Steil hand-tore wallpaper to give it a rough edge that mimics natural stone. The molded plaster ceiling has the effect of branches overhead.



Landing, Wet Bar, and Pantry, Wesley Moon

"I have the trifecta of jewel boxes," says Moon of his landing pantry-elevator-bar combo on the second floor. A feathered mirror from Jonathan Burden gives vivid texture to one wall. (In a small-world design story, Moon's show house neighbor, Bunny Williams, recalled once bidding on the same piece at auction.) A custom de Gournay wallpaper mimics natural striation and ties in the earthy hues of the pantry beyond, of which, Moon says, "I wanted to create a contemporary version of a Gilded Age butler's pantry."



Living Room, Bunny Williams

"We call this the Gilded Knot," says Williams of her airy space, which she designed with partner Elizabeth Swartz. "I had Bob Christian come and do this faux bois with gold accents and then I said, 'Well, this feels sort of like a treehouse!'" So she and Swartz carried the theme through, incorporating more leafy natural accents, like a chandelier by Rosie Li. "Originally, there were two chandeliers in here, which didn't quite work," recalls Swartz. "We wanted something natural and this is two fixtures that look like they're growing together." To cover an "unattractive" mirror panel, Williams and Schwartz worked with Art Groove to devise a playful spider artwork with a bit of uncharacteristic glitz, an aspect echoed in curtains from Fabricut, which contain sequins ("Don't you love a curtain with sequins?" says Williams). s

Though glitter might not be the first word you'd associate with Williams, the designer (who's the show house chair) is hopeful that this room will prove the myriad options for mixing styles and trying new things. "I want people to look at how good period pieces look with modern," she says. "This beautiful brown furniture is going for nothing. And this room doesn't feel old-fashioned at all."

As for the healthy mix of objets and accessories, there's a simple explanation: "I think rooms should get more interesting over time," says Williams. "If you walk into a room and you can get it all in one glance—you're going to be really bored."



Bedroom, Barbara Ostrom

"I wanted to create a place for dining with an art lover," says Ostrom of her rosy-hued space, which encompasses dining, living and—with the use of a wide daybed by A. Rudin—bedroom. In her eighth Kips Bay room, Ostrom married antiques from Hyde Park with Christopher Guy sofas and art of different periods. On the ceiling, she enlisted Andrew Tedesco to paint a kaleidoscopic mural based on a Frank Stella work. "I wanted it to feel like someone really lives here," Ostrom says. "Someone interesting."



Staircase, Sasha Bikoff

When Sasha Bikoff first drew the staircase, she had a brief moment of disappointment ("There's not much you can do in terms of furniture," she explains), but she soon decided she'd use the shape and scale (the spiral staircase stretches a whole five floors) to create a celebration of Memphis style. "I loved the idea of this wild, wacky Memphis thing with the traditional setting," she says. First, she devised a custom carpet with The Rug Company, whose "trippy" patterns are echoed in three equally colorful, pattern-happy wallpapers she made with George Venson of Voutsas. She pulled out colors from the patterns and painted them onto the ceiling in Farrow & Ball paint to create a rainbow effect when visitors look up. "It was important for me to do something fun and inspiring for the kids of Kips Bay," Bikoff says. "I wanted them to walk in and relate to it and see that design can be loud and fun and colorful."



Salon, Drake | Anderson

"Welcome to our salon and bar," says a dapper Caleb Anderson in the moody, yellow-hued room he and Jamie Drake devised. "We wanted to create a space that felt a little grand but also intimate," Anderson explained. Fabric-covered walls (by Jouffre with beading by Ankasa) and ceiling (in a Doug & Gene Meyer fabric for Holland & Sherry) and a sumptuous, curved sofa (custom) give the space a soft, sensuous feeling, while a slew of antiques, sculpture, and artful furnishings—sourced at the likes of Newel and Bernd Goeckler—add visual interest. In the adjacent bar, mirrored panels lit with Apparatus fixtures cast a hazy glow.



Bedroom, Mark Sikes

"The room is called Sleeping Beauty," says Sikes. A tented entryway (in blue and white, of course, this one his own fabric for Schumacher) leads to a serene room covered in Gracie wallpaper. Sikes enlisted Vladimir Kanevsky to create porcelain potted flowers that echo the wallpaper "for a 3-D effect." A four-poster bed, custom-designed by Sikes, is surrounded by various books and magazines; a painting by Kit Ruther hangs on the wall above. "At show houses you want to create something really innovative, but I also wanted to make something that will look great in 30 years," Sikes says.



Photo: Costas Picadas



Dressing Room and Bath, Marcia Tucker

To devise a modern take on the traditional concept of the dressing room, Tucker looked to a modern fashion maven: Marina Larroude, the fashion director at Barneys. The pink-hued dressing room is imagined as a sanctuary for a busy, stylish woman like her, while the adjacent bath serves as a sanctuary, complete with a live wall and diffused scent.



Bedroom, Brian del Toro

"This is my version of girls and feminine," says del Toro of his bedroom, whose inspiration started with a Robert Chowder screen he bought at auction. "I based the whole room around it," the designer says—from the Farrow & Ball wallpaper (cleverly hung upside down to evoke wisteria and visually raise the low ceiling) in the room's entryway to the green-rimmed sheets to the twin topiaries flanking the room's windows. A subdued graphic fabric by Quadrille on the bedroom walls gives the room an organic, serene feel.



Living Room, Alexa Hampton

Hampton's room (theme: Olympia's Folly) began when the designer approached de Gournay about creating a custom mural that tied in draped tenting with a scenic view. Add in a ceiling painted by Chuck Fisher and voilà, a Grecian campaign tent. The lightness of the tent is anchored by several brown antique furniture pieces and items from Hampton's own collection (like a Roman-style helmet and sword) that contribute to the overall effect.



Lounge, BA Torrey

"My room is the afterparty," says Torrey, who used the low ceilings to his advantage for a sexy lounge vibe. A Kehinde Wiley painting looks over the bar and its lush green velvet stools, while a low-slung velvet sofa borders the rest of the room (which is covered in a black-and-gold cork by Phillip Jeffries). "I filled the room with a lot of textures," says the designer. "The sofa is very soft, but it's bench seating so no one gets stuck in the crack." An Ellen von Unwerth photograph overhead "captures the feel perfectly." For the other wall, above a dramatic Cambria fireplace, Torrey commissioned a custom video work called "Bondrian," in which clips of James Bond mid-embrace with various Bond girls are cast in the primary colors of Piet Mondrian.



Guest Bedroom, Katie Ridder Inc.

"The whole idea started with the Wiener Werkstatte exhibit at the Neue Galerie that had a fuzzy lampshade," says Ridder. "I wanted to use pink and fuzzy details." She did so throughout the space, in the form of stenciled pink walls, furry lampshades, and blinds trimmed in fuzz. "The bed was inspired by the silhouette of a 1920s chair," she says. Anthony Lawrence Belfair made it and upholstered it in—what else?—a faux fur.



Drawing Room, Philip Mitchell

"We were inspired by the history of family and a love of collecting," says Mitchell. "We filled the room with things we love." Among them? Several collections—including paperweights, blue-and-white Chinese pottery, and hip flasks—board games, art, and, on preview day, Mitchell's two dogs, Jacob and Wylo. The pups are the subject of a children's book Mitchell created with Mark Narsansky about the Kips Bay show house, which they are selling to raise funds for the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club.



Bathroom, Scott Sanders LLC

For his bathroom, Scott Sanders turned the right space into a handsome jewel box that takes its cues from a gentleman's library with dark woods, brass details, stately Kohler fixtures, and—the ultimate finishing touch—chic black toilet paper.



Spa, Pavarini Design

"This is a wellness retreat for mind, spirit, and body," says Charles Pavarini of the top-floor aerie that he has transformed into an in-home spa. "With all the clutter out there, we think the home should have a place to decompress." And this is it: Replete with a massage table, healing crystals, and an outdoor fountain, there's no more relaxing setting—visitors might just be hard-pressed to leave.