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Designer Showhouse of Westchester opens door on grand Scarsdale home

By DEBRA BANERJEE

If you've always wondered about that gorgeous house on the hill beyond the tennis court and the banks of rhododendron, now's your chance to take a peek inside. Daisy Buchanan could feel right at home at 2 Cooper Road, the impressive white Georgian colonial where the Designer Showhouse of Westchester is currently under way. Over 20 designers and decorative artists have magnificently transformed the 1915 estate of Gatsby-eque proportions on 4 acres of rolling lawns in Murray Hill.



ERIC PIASECKI PHOTO

Foyer space "Martini Alley" is designed by Mendelson Group, Gideon Mendelson, principal, for the Designer Showhouse of Westchester.

The third annual designer showhouse to benefit Cerebral Palsy of Westchester opened Thursday, May 2, after a gala evening the night before, and will continue through Sunday, June 9. Sponsors are New York Cottages and Gardens, LX TV Open House and Houlihan Lawrence.

The show house features three floors of elegantly and imaginatively designed rooms, spacious living and dining rooms, six bedrooms, two rooms for recreation, a library, conservatory, morning room, breakfast room and more.

Visitors bypass the service entrance to enter through a porticoed doorway at the back of the house, ascending a few steps into the middle of a hallway that runs the length of the house. The entry and hallways are papered in a vintage metallic wallcovering in silvery gray tones with Asian floral motifs.

Stepping into the foyer with windows that look out onto the front lawn is the sleek and sophisticated "Martini Alley" designed by Mendelson Group of Manhattan. Principal Gideon Mendelson, a 1992 Scarsdale High School grad, is a graduate of both Columbia University with a degree in architecture and the New York School of Interior Design. Mendelson grew up in Murray Hill and has memories of playing tennis at 2 Cooper Road as a young teen, he told the Inquirer.

"Martini Alley," between the living room and dining room, "wasn't usable space," Mendelson said. "I envisioned it as a place to have drinks. I gave a modern interpretation to an old-fashioned idea," he said. Perfect for any modern Mad man or woman to chill after a long day.

The soft palette was "driven by the wallpaper," Mendelson said. Dusty aqua banquettes, a geometric-patterned carpet, custom cabinetry and a vintage but modern-looking light fixture create a welcoming space at cocktail time — or tea time. An art deco silver tea set completed the décor.

Mendelson Group's goal "is to create functional, comfortable spaces that are not only aesthetically pleasing, but also timeless in design, youth and energetic," the show journal said.

The kitchen was not on the tour, but there was a breakfast room by Kim Freeman Style & Design of Bedford Corners. The room, with an eastern exposure, was "sunny, soothing and restful," "a cozy place to have breakfast," Freeman said. The walls were painted with Farrow and Ball "Mizzle," a soft blue gray, and "Cornforth White," a white with graytones that is one of the company's hot colors for 2013.

A planter with kitchen herbs like sage and rosemary added a pleasing accent of greenery to the room.

Maggie McManus Kitchens & Baths designed the butler pantry space. "The concept was to make it a functioning room for a modern household," she said. "It's a useful place for breakfast, to grab plates, cut flowers." McManus worked with the existing mint green tiles on the walls to create a simple, yet cheery space with touches of nature, colorful Buddhist prayer flags serving as a window treatment, a statue of the Buddha, and delightful artwork of swimming koi.

The dining room, designed by Debra Gottlieb of Finesse Interiors of Armonk, was inspired by its many

architectural details, reminiscent of icing on a cake, Gottlieb said. "It's a serious, traditional room," she said.

Her romantic and whimsical wedding theme, "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue," was carried throughout.

The Levar Kerman carpet from 1910 served as a base. The walls were layered in the color of buttercream. A 1900 English settee pairs with Louis XV chairs slipcovered in teal and chartreuse. The colors were unexpectedly, but charmingly echoed in the drapes, one side teal, one side chartreuse.

The conservatory at the end of the house by Lillian August of Norwalk was a sophisticated, bold room done in a dramatic green mimicking the outdoors, with black and white striped walls and chrome accents.

Carey Karlan of Last Detail Interior Design in Darien, Conn., was "getting sexy back" in her pink ladies sitting room, the former music room. Dressed in pink tones to match her room, the designer said the sitting room was a "fantasy," overfeminine. The wall treatment was a pink venetian plaster with an inlay of abalone shell in gray tones. A J.D. Staron carpet picked up the gray with silver thread running through it and the window treatment, "reminiscent of a ball gown," was where "fashion meets design," she said.

The timelessly elegant living room was designed by Ken Gemes of Ken Gemes Interiors of Bronxville. French doors lead out to the patio that overlooks the pool. Gemes used texture and clean, modern lines in the furniture to create an airy, comfortable room painted in silvery green. A huge shell mirror over the mantel was a touch of the natural world. The repainted ceiling molding added architectural interest.

The mezzanine sunroom leading to the second floor was designed by Rachel Laxer Interiors Ltd. of New York and London. Laxer's husband grew up in Scarsdale, graduating from Scarsdale High School, and the couple has a home here.

"When I design my goal is to create a feeling of relaxed elegance, a space that is both grown-up yet inviting for families to enjoy. My thoughts on the sunroom were to introduce 'barefoot luxury' to a grand house and that the room was to be a chill-out space where the owners could have their morning coffee or drinks before/after dinner. I wanted to make sure the items I selected created a balance between the masculine and feminine elements in the room," Laxer wrote in an email to the Inquirer.

The livable lounge area featured "a pop of black and wood," sable pillows, and black and white photography. Laxer pays close attention to detailing in accessories, down to the beaded passmenterie on the window treatments.

Upstairs each designer put his or her unique stamp on the bedrooms, although "50 shades of gray" could have been the theme for the palette. The designers all kept to a soft, neutral palette to complement the house's wallpaper.

The little girl's bedroom by ZoyaB of Manhattan was fit for a budding czarina with its "Sleeping Beauty" theme from Tchaikovsky's ballet. Designer Zoya Bograd commissioned eight pieces of art based on the ballet. She designed the fantasy "bed of roses" in silvery pink wood with pale pink upholstery and linens.

Charming stuffed toys handmade in Russia lined the shelves, including a doll named "Anna Karenina," and an 8-foot-tall baby giraffe stood in a corner. The wall treatment was painted and glazed a pale green with an ornate stencil bedazzled with Swarovski crystals. On the dressing table was the hand-painted sign "Let Them Eat Cake."

Quaker Ridge resident Debra Funt of Debra Funt Interiors designed the bright and comfortable third-floor attic bedroom.

"When I first saw the attic it was dark but the view of the trees and property inspired me. I envisioned an elegant serene space a guest could retire to, after being the 'perfect guest' downstairs with the family. I wanted to separate the room into different living spaces — the bed area of course, a lounge with comfy slipper chairs and a deep window seat to curl up in," Funt wrote in an email.

"To accomplish this I used a large-scale damask wall covering to give the room a soft airy feeling. I used a contrasting viney wall covering in the dormers to mimic the trees outside. I used reflective materials to bounce light around the room — a mirrored desk, a silver and glass ball chandelier, handblown glass bedside lamps and a glossy white epoxy floor.

"This is the first showhouse I have participated in and I have enjoyed every moment. I'm so pleased that I had the opportunity to work with so many talented designers to make this showhouse happen," Funt wrote.

The showhouse runs until June 9. Hours are: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday; and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. The house will be closed on Mondays. Children under 6, infants, strollers and pets will not be admitted. Admission is \$30 and includes a journal. For information, visit cpwestchester.org/designerevent.htm.

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