

GARDEN GLAMOUR BY DUCHESS DESIGNS

THE GARDEN GLAMOUR BLOG IS THE "LITTLE BLACK DRESS" FOR GARDENERS. THE "MUST READ" POSTINGS WILL OFFER GARDEN STORIES ABOUT GARDENING'S BEST PRACTICES INCLUDING WHEN TO PLANT, PUT THE GARDEN TO BED, PRUNING, COLOR IN THE GARDEN; GARDEN TIPS; ADVICE ON WHAT TOOLS WORK BEST; GARDEN DESIGN; OPINIONS ON GARDEN TRENDS; GARDEN BOOK REVIEWS; GARDEN LECTURE REVIEW SNAPSHOTS; LOTS AND LOTS OF IMAGES, AND FUNNY, INSOUCIANT ANECDOTES ABOUT THE HUMBLING, GLORIOUS AND GLAMOROUS WORLD OF GARDENS!

FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2014

Kips Bay Decorator Show House 2014: Sneak Peek



The invitation arrived for the Kips Bay Decorator Show House Opening Night Reception; its doorway graphic seemed to not only whisper a warm Gotham welcome but to arouse a twinkling design-fantasy curiosity about a secret world to be explored just past that portal.

The Decorator Show House is not like falling through the rabbit hole despite boasting Bunny Williams as the Show House Chairman – sorry, I mean no disrespect; chalk it up to irresistible sweet bunny-rabbit springtime thoughts - plus it's also the second time I've run into this icon of design in less than two weeks...

And to continue the reference – the show truly showcases the magic of the decorative artists pulling a rabbit out of the hat.

They make beauty and utility look like two sides of the same coin.

The astonishing compositions wrought by the creative interior designers, artists, and architects will render you gobsmacked and thinking you've stepped into a dream worthy of a Hollywood set.

The press preview Sneak Peek was scheduled Wednesday afternoon and despite torrents of rain that would make any hostess forgive you for cancelling plans - the attendance at the show was rather brisk, confirming that New Yorkers are made of strong mettle.

And Metal - of the precious, metallic and industrial sort - turned out to be a theme spotted throughout a majority of the decorative art installations.

There was:

Glamorous gold

Regal silver

Coveted Copper

Stainless Steel -- and more.

Hmmm... Surely the designers didn't all get a memo about the use of these spectrum altering surface materials.

I asked every designer who featured the metals and while most didn't have a quick reference or answer as to why, Rachel Martin, the confident, knowledgeable director of marketing for Matthew Quinn's (www.matthew-Quinn.com) dramatic Show House Kitchen that flaunted a palette of mixed metals from brass to polished nickel, explained the metal inspiration came to Quinn from the building's industrial feel.

Bingo! Go to the head of the class - or brass, as the case may be!

While initially the cover-girl glamour of the mansion makes the industrial reference rather oblique, the pedigree of the now landmarked buildings helps explain.

The Villard Mansion, home to this year's Show House, was built by railroad magnate, Henry Villard, as a series of townhouses in the early 1880's at the height of the Industrial Revolution.

Today, the McKim, Mead & White-designed Villard mansion that looks like an Italian palazzo is a perfect locale for the Kip's Bay Decorator Show House.

In fact, you can "double-dip" and make it a truly spectacular visit by making reservations to dine at the Villard Michel Richard restaurant, located across the twinkling courtyard in the Palace Hotel, all owned by Northwood Investors.

I wrote a restaurant review when the iconic -- and impish -- chef Michel opened his restaurant here: http://www.examiner.com/review/villard-michel-richard-restaurant-review?no_cache=1398955630

Mother's Day Brunch there sounds divine, doesn't it?

You can float throughout the three floors of 22 inspired room designs, shop in the decorators' Kips Bay pop up and then sashay over to Villard Michel Richard or Pomme Palais and thanks to moi and the Magrino team, you can enjoy 15% off throughout the duration of the Kips Bay Show House, including Mother's Day.

I'll tell you about the cooking class with the huggable Chef Michel, later.

Devine Design

Stepping into the Villard Mansion's decorator rooms, I was especially taken aback to see the transformation from the drab meeting space where The New York Botanical Garden had held it's annual fall lecture series when it was the Urban Center -- and surprising -- given the lackluster look of the place, the Architectural League.

Surely, this was magic.

Juan Montoya was the first room I entered -- a habit to turn left into the lecture room, I guess.

The scale of this room is HUGE: with an almost 16 foot ceiling-- it is the biggest room in the show.

The polished stainless steel desk is 12 feet and the double-sided, undulating sofa is also 16 feet.

Titled, "Untitled," (why go there?) Montoya's rep explained the Columbian designer wanted to play with proportion and scale; most of the artwork on display is Montoya's own.





He pointed out the sinuous sculpture by Olga de Amaral, the Bogota-based textile artist. <http://www.olgadeamaral.com> Check out the gold splash page on her web site!

Yikes, it's dramatic. (And I couldn't agree more about the quality of a rock...) Perusing her web site is like a trip to a gallery or museum.

I loved the black and white tones of the Montoya room, especially as seen in the giant, artwork made of resin hanging on the Madison Avenue wall between the two windows.

My dear interior designer friend, Toni Sabatino – and a big fan of my book, *The Hamptons & Long Island Homegrown Cookbook* – Toni has a tradition of placing an autographed copy of the



Homegrown book in her completed, heart-of-the-home kitchen designs as a value add for her clients! <http://www.houzz.com/pro/tonisab/toni-sabatino>

Toni suggested I look up designer John Douglass Eason at the show (she was headed to the Sunshine State) and then, just like that, I turned to the majestic staircase and there he was, holding court, explaining his dramatic use of the space.



The expansive, two-leveled walls are hand-painted brush strokes laden with Benjamin Moore metallic color.

John showed how he and his artisans came up with the pattern design and then blew it up to

scale.

It's a gorgeous work of art unto itself – equal parts wallpaper, trompe l'oeil, and fresco. It's not polite to stare, so look up to the eye-catching, sting-ray sized gold chandelier by Ingo Mauer, (A German lighting designer with a showroom in SoHo <http://www.ingo-mauer.com/en/info/showrooms/new-york>



I can see why Toni recommended John. I liked him tout suite – right off the color wheel. His genuine smile and courtesy a product of his Texas upbringing, I learned in short order. Those Southern manners are also what helped land him that Mauer, gold-leaf chandelier. He explained she told him that she “Doesn’t loan out.” Yet, we see how this turned out...

Clients must love his persuasive and charming style.

John said he determined to participate in this year's Decorator Show to raise his profile in the design community.

With his soaring vision on display, his is a name that will be on design aficionado's lips from Dallas to Dumbo.

I wanted to go straight away to my sweet-pea Swiss school friend's brother's installation: Edward Lobrano.

To get to his third-floor bedroom design, I had to walk up two flights of stairs.

Don't think this is any old 'stairway to heaven,' though.

I thank the artisanal Brooklyn goddesses that the decorative painter **Robin Sacks** (www.robinsacksnyc.com) stopped me to say hello, and point out her work here.



Her two levels of graphic art are colored in black and grey tones.

Sacks explained the faux finish glaze, use of greys, blues, beiges and two sultry metallic: pewter and silver.

"I wanted to transition the colors from a neutral to the industrial metallic so that it 'disappears'."

Pouf. More alchemy.

Reaching the third floor and entering the
Edward D. Lobrano
(Edward@edwardlobrano.com) designed
bedroom was like stepping into serenity.



If all this recent talk of mindfulness has you scratching your head about what it all means, you will be instantly and spiritually transported to the essence of increased joy, reduced stress; mysticism.

At the same time, it will take everything out of you *Not* to jump headlong onto the pouf coverlet of the room's four-poster bed, like Maria in the *Sound of Music*.

Indeed, taking in the earthy colors, textures, scale, proportion, and form, you will be humming "these are a few of my favorite things," too.

The



chocolate brown wood in the bed, armoire, and an alligator crackled wood table top; the beige slipper chair and ottoman, along with the anchor accessories, including a fusion of Asian sculpture, African masks, alabaster chandelier and marble chess set are enriching details that combine to create a textured ambiance that you can readily see yourself living in.



Sadly, Edward was not there when I was touring. I missed the maestro of design. Before leaving, I couldn't help take some shots of the framed photos, and sent them to my school friend, Jennifer, Edward's sister, hoping there was more to the narrative.

I was not disappointed.

Jennifer gleefully wrote back that indeed, the photos are of their mother and Edward and his dog Spencer, saying of her mother: "We miss the grand ol' Dame, she was a classic." And I can't think of a better way to characterize the room's look; it too is a classic. With a bit of its whimsical personality winking back at you...

Designer Gideon Mendelson, the **Mendelson Group** (www.mendelsongroup.com) is a natural born storyteller.

His smooth as glass, Alistair Cooke delivery is more "masterful" than fairy tale.

After all, his installation is called, "The Lady's Lair."

And don't even think this is about some damsel in distress.

No.

Gideon says his imaginary client shouldn't be underestimated; she runs her household and her own company. "She's an organized hostess, a reliable friend and an involved parent. And, sometimes, she needs a break," he offers.

Gideon's design gives her a sanctuary that is bold, assertive, and comforting – in grand style. Even while workers were installing a few last-minute items, Gideon never broke his cool.



He enthralled me with his tale of “The Lady” while pointing out the rich materials, furnishings, and color palette.

Who doesn’t love a story about a strong, successful woman?

He uses the narrative – and the client’s personality – to weave a tale of intrigue and haute design.

He described the contrast and pull of the feminine and masculine sides of “The Lady.” I tossed in a good quotable for him that he immediately made his own: “tension.”

As in the tension between the two worlds of masculine and feminine, right brain/left brain, the ying to our yang...

I don’t know what side of mine fell for the wall covering but I LOVE the teal-colored ultra suede walls by Phillip Jeffries
www.phillipjeffries.com

It is glamorous, sensual and something you can pet with abandon!

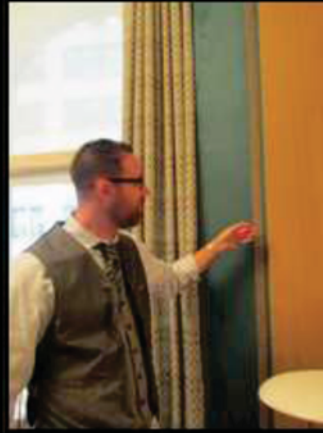


The oak paneling sets it off like a cocktail ring and its show-stopping gem placed just so... As does the patterned ceiling-as-baguette.

The wall trim is made of hand woven burlap. It’s a subtle accessory that adds so much.
www.samualandsons.com

Gideon explained the space he started with was altogether raw – irregularly shaped, and small.

So it's all the more remarkable to learn that not only is this his first Kips Bay show, and that he whipped out the design in about five weeks, but to see that the space is now filled with at least five distinct areas: work desk, a personal assistant work station, a conference or dining table, a sitting area, and "time-out" area in front of a fireplace.



Soft leather colored in lavender -- bordering on cherry blossom pink (www.jerrypair.com) – cover the Italian, Paula Buffa conference table chairs tip the scales to feminine luxury.



The chairs' glam gams only adds to the pretty girl look.

Gideon describes their angles and curves while caressing the cherry wood chair back.

Speaking of curves, there is an artful collection of busts gracing the bar's glass shelves.





And I do mean busts in the literal sense – as in T&A...
There is even a Joan from *Mad Men* mannequin bust – with all her, ahem, "assets," on display!



And the original "Babe" -- Barbie -- is the artful Welcome mat at "The Lady's Lair" installation -- the creation of feminist artist, Shirley Klinghoffer.
(www.shirleyklinghoffer.com)
Now located in Santa Fe, Klinghoffer's work is featured in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum.
Designer Gideon borrowed the Barbie mat from one of his clients.

Gideon pulled out the black rubber mat for me, saying, "People either loved or hated Barbie..." I said my feelings ran both ways. There's that tension again.
"I had rather a love-hate relationship with my Barbie doll," I demurred.

But it's all love with this conversation piece of a welcome mat cum art.



Be warned: Don't even think of calling Barbie a "door mat!"

More art that inspired Gideon is the Geo Ponti curvy bull he pulled off the display, ordering me to "Hold it."



While the bull sculpture was all smooth, curvy lines, it possessed heft. "See, it's like 'The Lady' -- it packs a punch," he said.

There is also the tension between the geometric – the floor is a perspective-altering chevron pattern and the curvilinear shape of furniture.





The settee is a

sensuously curved Gideon design;



the mirror topped 40's era cocktail tables are antique.

As I think you can see, "the Lady's Lair" captured my heart.

Until I turned to the next installation and then I fell in love again.

I'm weak.

The Villalobos Desio (www.villalobosdesio.com) designed space is nothing short of breathtaking. The teeny, tiny room is practically a dollhouse, surely meant for a Hobbit. Or a typical New Yorker.

If anyone ever says they don't have the space for true design, pull out the images of this decorative art home design. I am particularly attracted to design solutions that overcome situations and challenges. With discerning aplomb.

The designer described the myriad design challenges besides the closet-sized room (8 x 12'): the need to cover the electrical panel boxes, no window.



The result is it's all moody and dark. And mysterious.
And oh so much more.

The inspiration was the Studiolo Renaissance room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the transporting, diminutive Studiolo, from the Ducal Palace in Siena.
The designers perhaps were further influenced by the Villard's Italian Palazzo pedigree.

So too with this room.
Seems counterintuitive, however, it works.
The designer explained that the objects occupy or help lead the eye in this "Cabinet of Curiosities."

The room's reflective surfaces are a study in elegant solutions. Unlike the Studiolo's intarsia walls, here the walls and floors are infused with reflective surfaces.



The ceiling is cork with gold leaf.
It looks like a star-filled night sky.



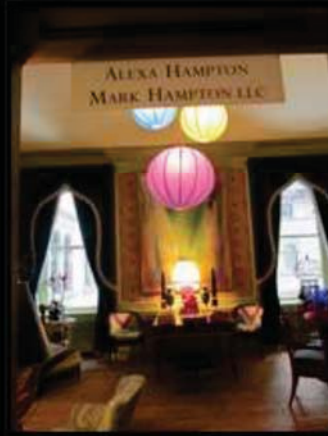
The walls are shimmering silk, playing with the light and shadow.
The lighting is a mix of soft spot fixtures and LED strung inside baffles and a chair rail that were created to wrap the room at unconventional height levels.
That element is truly worth noting for future design work.
And then there is the transcending light art: an H.A. Isle French illumination available at Etos www.etosnyc.com



Alexa Hampton, Mark Hampton, LLC
(www.markhampton.com) who was celebrating her birthday yesterday, is a doll. I attended an Architectural Digest Home Design Show panel she participated in, moderated by AD editor, Margaret Russell. She is witty, classy, and exuberant. I guess it's safe to say that about her designs, too.

Alexa's room looked like it was inspired by the "pink city" of Jaipur. As was the room designed by Markham Roberts. Theme two.

Hampton's room was charged with the bold colors of an Indian wedding sari: fuchsia, indigo blue and punchy, happy, tiered paper chandelier, a sisal wall to wall carpet, lots of pattern on pattern tiles, and I'm "crazy for paisley" chairs.



The window treatments made me think of the romance of the Taj Mahal.





The third floor hallway transition area is not to be overlooked.

The Brooklyn-based firm **Span Architecture** showcases a geometric, or algebraic, patterned rug infused with sparkly Lurex along with clean, modernistic copper lined oak box seats -- no, not the Brooklyn Nets kind -- rather for pausing in this salon space.



The idea of salon as Span sees it, is a “gathering of people in the home of an interesting host, and assembly of inspiring art and ideas and a meeting space to debate art, design...”

Nice.

The custom benches, fabricated by Philadelphia’s Amuneal are said to be made of sustainable wood. www.span-ny.com

The gold-dust fairies worked overtime in the room designed by **Carrier and Company**. The couple utilized the precious metal in subtle and sophisticated ways: with gold-stacked tables,

gold-flecked marble walls.





The mirror over the mantel looked like a gold ink splat.

An animal throw covered a polished gold-toned daybed perched in front of the fireplace that was filled with gold tree branches. The bookshelves were filled not with books, rather gold square planters and green grass.



The agate stone side table from Matthew Studios was fancy and a precious accent. I must get one of these.



Carrier and Company's husband and wife team

www.carrierandcompany.com work with some of the city's top style and design celebrities, including Vogue's Anna Wintour, Bob Pittman, Jason Wu and Jay Fielden on town and country interior designs.

The Markham Roberts composition was another favorite highlight of the Kips Bay Decorator Show House.
www.markhamrobers.com



This Indian-themed or inspired room was a rich, layered, earthy look: tiger upholstered chair and floor treatment, peacock blue walls punctuated by oversized white mirrors with rounded arches, surrounded by framed horticultural and animal prints, grosgrain ribbon bordering the moldings, and a dark, exotic cocktail table elaborately crafted from a tree.

The marble-topped bar was sided by white tusks that I trust are imitation ivory.



The gold lamp looks like so many swirling nuggets.

This library was surprisingly book-free. Not a tome or Dewey Decimal system or tome or two, could I see.

Still, the warm tones and bar made this room one you'll like and want to spend time in.



The White Room was a stark contrast to the other rainbow saturated ones. **Darryl Carter** designed the cool, arctic white room, laced with hints of grey, and contrasting rough-hewn woods and a dark wall hanging.



The space looked not unlike a stage-crafted set for an Ingmar Bergman film. Austere yet dignified.

I liked the large daybed



perched in front of the fireplace, the console table, and the humorous mouth gags painted on the portraits.



The

Kitchen

Curious that there was only one kitchen in the Decorator Show House.

But then, with the massive space and extraordinary design details of the Matthew Quinn installation, it's "one and done."

This "heart of the home" kitchen and the scullery is all you'll need.

Quinn is a kitchen, bath, and product designer.

With obvious pride and delight, the company's previously noted marketing guru, Rachel Martin, skillfully took me on a tour of this culinary opus.

Quinn's attention to detail while creating a broad sweep of space that has to not only look good but serve an oft-used functionality will leave you deeply impressed.

Now I felt like I was in the land of Gulliver's Travels.

The room is 20 feet by 25 feet with a 13-foot ceiling.

The windows are grand, too, coming in at about 11 feet.



I was curious about the arresting window valances.

As I stepped closer for



inspection, Martin tells me they are custom-made brass pipes that have the look and feel of a pipe organ.

Really?

Before I can absorb why these handsome window treatments should have anything to do with an organ, Martin has already waved me over to the floor-to-ceiling, custom-made 10-foot cabinets, stopping only to point out the quatrefoil front glass design.

"See where Quinn's inspiration came from?" she asks while laying out an arm, Vanna White-style, beyond to the Madison Avenue-facing window.

"Not really," I gulp.

"Well," she starts to explain.

"Before that scaffolding and building scrim went up over at St. Patrick's, Matthew stood here looking across the street to the parapets and quatrefoils of the cathedral."

"Brilliant," I exclaim, grateful for the clarity.

I love inspiration stories.

And this one can lay claim to what can only be characterized as "divine inspiration."

I'm all in now.

The cabinets have a brass inlay table top, and custom draw pulls.

Everything here is custom so I'll stop saying that.

"It's all about the detail," Marin trills, adding, "And function, function."

Besides the Industrial Revolution-inspired use of metal material used here for the show: Martin says Matthew often mixes metals.

Witness, the brass chandeliers, polished nickel faucets, stainless steel cabinets – all skillfully interpreted as part of the complete look.



An "aha" moment was discovering one of the designer's signature elements: corner end sinks on both sides of the island.

The corner sinks allow easy access for more than one and is a real conversation spot, too.

Given this design consideration, now you can just look across at your cooking cutie.



The island itself is from Silastone
(www.silestoneusa.com)

The Helix countertop design looks not unlike a good Roquefort cheese – and the finish feels like suede, Martin tells me. Soon, we are both petting and rubbing the countertop. Ahem.

Time to check out the hood oven.
This is BIG!



I learn it is made from limestone and crushed marble with brass straps.
It's like a Volkswagen Beetle over the stovetop.
Seriously, it's a very gorgeous hood.

The Dacor refrigerator is a 48" side by side.
Nice enough.

But the added design genius I discover is the extra panel Matthew provided to give the room balance.



Cabinets sit on either side of the refrigerator designed with pin doors that open and slide in to create a breakfast nook on one side and reveal a wine station on the other side.



I learned Dacor is the only one to make a residential wine station.

This one is stocked with wine from Bouchaine Vineyards.
Martin's husband works for Bouchaine.
I love wine.
I love Carneros.
I can see Rachel loves her husband – so a "shout out: was in order, don't you think?
www.bouchaine.com



The kitchen's walls are big subway tiles in a glamorous, greenish hue.

Whew.

Just when you think you're all kitchened out – there's the scullery.

It's a sweet room off the kitchen; the custom cabinets there are painted in a glossy, dark Benjamin Moore paint (I did this in my former kitchen and I love the glamour).



There is an herb garden filling the extra casement space in the window and I'm stealing this design idea as soon as I post this news.



The last highlight is from Ingrao. (www.ingrao.com) Tony Ingrao and Randy Kempner have created a signature statement in the 40-foot space on the first floor.



The 17-foot chenille sofa snakes its way through the middle of the room, anchoring the space, as does a fabulous resin and metal table they designed; inspired by leaves.

The fire screen chair-



inspired installation at the back end of the room is something out of a futuristic movie – or perhaps a slinky on drugs.

The Ron Arad fire screen with a video of a fire burning inside was made for an Ingraio client in Aspen but then things changed.

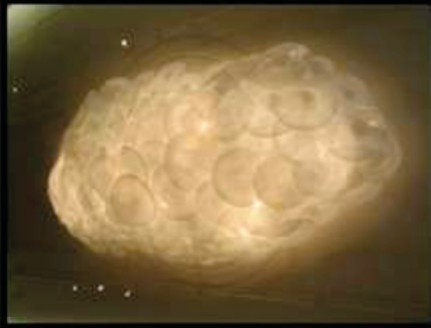
Wow, I hate to cancel a nail appointment. I can't imagine the designers' response to this change of art heart.



If you like the fire screen – you can take it home for something a little north of a million. On the more modest budget scale, you can Google the Yule log and watch a fire www.theyulelog.com

Another big highlight in the room is the Jeff Zimmerman chandelier.

A white, frothy organic decorative art piece, it looks not unlike an undulating jellyfish.



Simply gorgeous.

The walls here are combed plaster.

The look is fantastic and can be produced at a fairly reasonable cost.

A petrified wood



table here looks like a semi precious jewel - which after all, it is... This beauty is from East Hampton artist, Mark Wilson.

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The rug is a beauty too, designed from Doris Leslie Blau

www.dorisleslieblau.com Its cool, grey, geometric pattern would work in a variety of rooms.

This is a must-see experience for anyone interested in dialing up their passion for the decorative arts.

The show runs from May 1 through May 29, 2014.

For more information, go to www.KipsBayDecoratorShowhouse.org for tickets.

Make your reservations at Villard Michel Richard.

Chef and the restaurant have created a lovely Mother's Day brunch, too.

<http://www.villardmichelrichard.com/villard-bistro/menus/villard-mothers-day-buffet>



