

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2006

# VERANDA





*As I walked through the ornate, iron tracery door and over the threshold into the vast foyer with its faux inlaid floors and trompe l'oeil murals, I had the sense I should be conscious of my facial expression. Had I not exercised a*

bit of self-restraint, I most certainly would have gaped at the stunning detail bombarding my eyes. The 2006 Kips Bay Decorator Show House put to rest any doubt that you *can* make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Not only was this New York show house fashioned out of the best silk, it was bejeweled in finery. A beautiful marriage of form and function, it did not bear the label of just one famous designer, but of more than twenty-six of the East Coast's most sought-after interior designers, who left an indelible imprint on the 75th Street residence.

For the last thirty-four years, the nonprofit Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club has hosted this charity event, inviting designers to come together and harness their creative energies to transform a Manhattan residence for the purpose of raising money for the organization. Proceeds from the show house support an on-site dental program and benefit thousands of Bronx-area children and teens who participate in recreational and educational programs. Over the years, it has become one of the premiere show houses in the country.

Part of my initial astonishment when walking into the 20,000-square-foot space emanated from the fact that just a couple of months before the grand opening, this Upper East Side townhouse was an empty shell with few traces of its past glory. Moldings and period details had been replaced with standard materials, such as plywood and drywall. Though it was built in 1896 for a shipping magnate and had an illustrious history, this prime piece of real estate, currently on the market for millions, had been

vacant and in cosmetic disrepair for decades.

"It was raw," says Eric Cohler, who reworked a twenty-five by fifty-foot landing into a French-inspired *entresol*. "There were holes in the ceiling and holes in the walls. There was nothing there except partial black and white turn-of-the-century marble flooring."

As I moved from room to room, I was struck by the degree of fantasy that went into creating each space. Striking, too, was the fact that nearly every designer juxtaposed different styles and periods. After years of minimalism dominating design with its cold white-on-white, sharp edges and oversimplification, there was a freshness and definite sense of departure.

"It's happening not just in interior design but also in fashion with twenty different hem lengths," says designer Katherine Newman who designed the living room. "There is no longer one definition of beauty."

Although each designer worked in a vacuum of sorts, with no allegiance to a particular theme or knowledge of what others planned, there was a sense of luxury that made the home cozy and livable without being overly clever or cute. This surely reflects the design of the times. And what a visual feast it was! □

THE FOYER: RED BRANCH DECORATIVE IMAGING. Custom Faux Inlaid Floor, Faux Inlaid Doors & Commode, Trompe L'Oeil Architecture & Mural: Red Branch Decorative Imaging. Antique Chandelier, Sconce, Chair: H.M. Luther Antiques. Decorative Hardware: Design Source Ltd. Hardwood Flooring (border only): Exquisite Surfaces. Fabric: Cowtan & Tout. Paint: Benjamin Moore & Co. Imaging: Think Big Color.





**KIPS BAY SHOW HOUSE**

ROOM DETAILS. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Red Branch Decorative Imaging's Entrance Hall. Larry Laslo's Bedroom and Bath. Cabinet by Gio Ponti: Karl Kemp & Associates Antiques. Bath. Tub: Neptune. Stone & Tile: Walker Zanger. Mario Buatta's Sitting Room. Fireplace: William H. Jackson Company. Shaver/Melahn Studios' Reading Room. Tapestry Table: Mercantile. Eric Cohler's Landing Lounge. Mantel: Samuel Marx. Katherine Newman's Living/Dining Rooms. Jules Leleu Lacquer and Bronze Cabinet: Maison Gerard. Klismos Daybed: Robsjohn Gibbings. Dining Room. Table and Chairs: Lona Design.

