



Inside the 2017 Kips Bay Decorator Show House

What to expect at the 45th annual show house, a must-visit for design lovers

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SHARON RADISCH** FOR CURBED



Kirsten Kelli's sitting room for the 45th annual Kips Bay Decorator Show House.

The [Kips Bay Decorator Show House](#) officially opens to the public tomorrow, unveiling dozens of impeccably and innovatively curated rooms that will help set design trends for the year to come. This year, the 45th annual show house is being held at the sprawling 35-foot-wide Federal-style townhouse at 125 East 65th Street, between Park and Lexington avenues.

The building was designed by prolific architect Charles A. Platt in 1905 as a single-family mansion for Dr. Frederic S. Lee, who, according to the Upper East Side Historic District designation [report](#), was a “noted physiologist” who researched the role of different parts of the ear on equilibrium. Lee lived in the home for just shy of 40 years, and relinquished it to the China Institute in America in 1944. The China Institute only recently vacated in 2014, when it [listed the townhouse](#) for \$32 million.

Its years as an educational and office facility took a toll on the house. While glorious in its stature, the house's layout is now far from ideal for a single-family home with its sparse and poorly sectioned-off bathrooms and other layout conundrums.

While original details like paneling abound, the house is in need of all new systems. (Just check out the safety water mains that designers were dismayed to learn they couldn't remove.) One rep for a designer estimated, half joking, that recreating the home as a grand mansion would require \$53.6 million: \$26.8 million to purchase the townhouse at its current asking rate, and an additional \$26.8 million to make it livable in the way someone of this financial stature might want.

Designers had six weeks from getting their room assignment to create their space. Few of the townhouse's rooms were left untouched: Everything from the back patio to the stairway landings have been decked out in new paint, lighting, tiling, art, and furniture by the designers to help them achieve their vision. Designers drew on influences from menageries to speakeasies, and have crafted playful backstories to go along with their designs.

RECOMMENDED

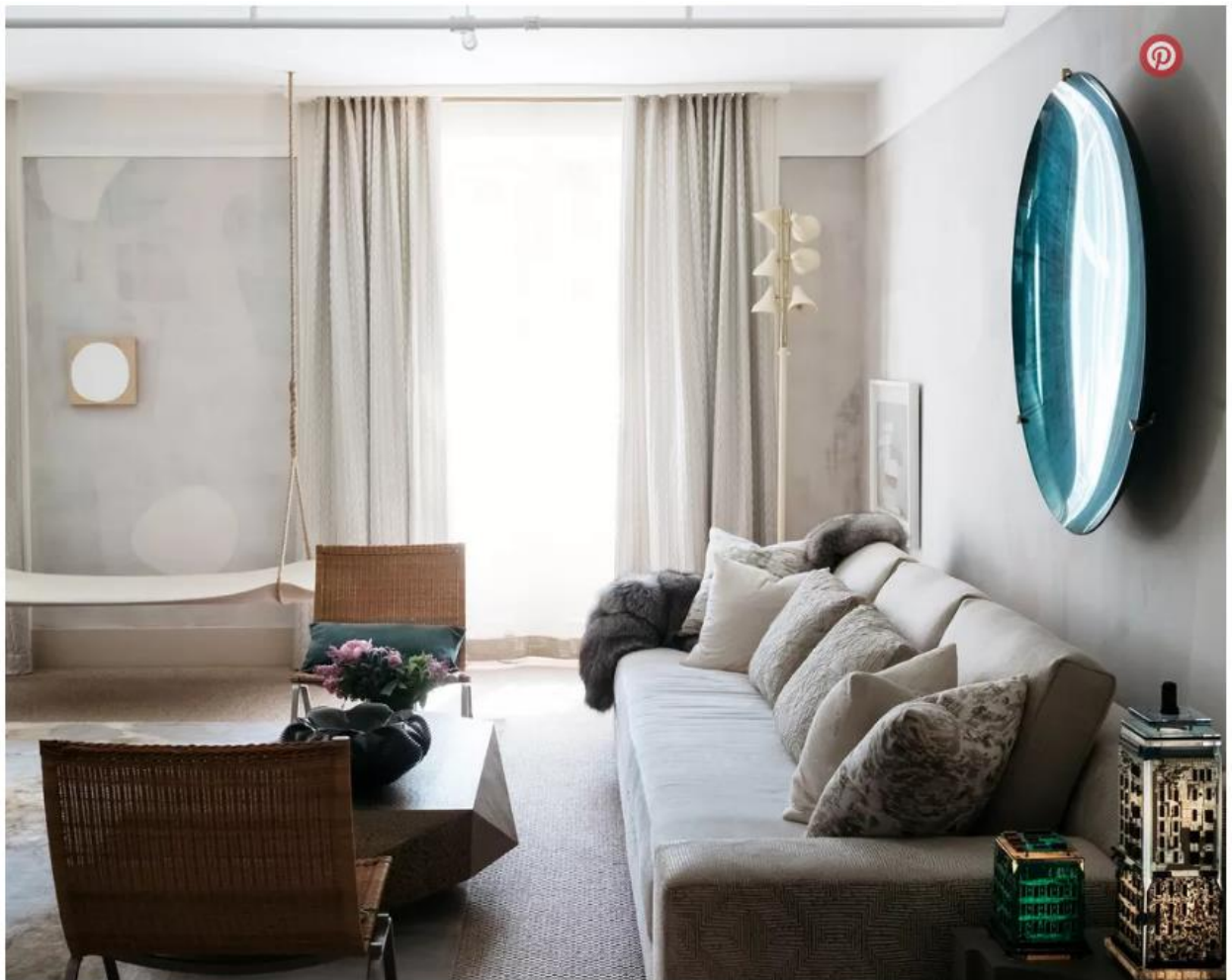
A visit to the townhouse will set patrons back \$40, a somewhat steep fee that's alleviated by its purpose as a major annual fundraiser for the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club. Here's what to expect.



↑ **Robert A.M. Stern Architects** are well known for their classic approach to architecture, but the firm also has a lesser-known interior design arm. Two framed Andy Warhol wall coverings in yellow and hot pink, not pictured, served as a jumping-off point for this living area, where contemporary art and cheerful colors play off of the room's original wood paneling.



↑ A sitting room by **Robert Stilin** was designed with a relaxed, yet savvy collector in mind. “Robert wanted design a place where people can sit down and live. It’s not meant to be precious,” a rep for the designer told Curbed. Modern art mingles with antiques here, particularly seen in the 18th century Georgian chandelier modified by artist Eve Kaplan.



↑ A bedroom by **Dineen Architecture & Design** stands out from the rest with its light palette and airy furnishings. The haziness that accompanies dreams informed the palette and wall treatment, the latter designed by Eva Buchmuller. A floating sculpted wood bench adds a little bit of whimsy to the room.



↑ An entry foyer was elevated into a seating nook by **Powell & Bonnell**. A painting by Thrush Holmes lights up the dark corner.



↑ A windowless room off of the kitchen on the garden floor is transformed into a dimly lit and sumptuous bar area by **Lichten Craig Architecture + Interiors**. The marble counter sourced from ABC Worldwide Stone is replicated in an adjacent mural by Anne Harris that draws on Old Masters style.



↑ “All good things go together,” designer **Richard Mishaan** says, explaining his design philosophy for his parlor room. Here, textiles new and old mingle: The sofas were made for the room with fabric by Old World Weavers while the rug dates to 1889. A painting by Walton Ford, above the sofa, tells the [true story](#) of a black panther escaped from the Zurich zoo in 1933.



↑ For **Susan Ferrier of McAlpine**, the starting point for the palette of her calming master bedroom was a set of lithographs that date to the 1800s. A large-format drawing of an Ammonite that once hung in Ferrier’s office served as the intellectual starting point, and the room’s natural accessories follow suit.



↑ A small sitting room off of Dineen's bedroom designed by **Neal Beckstedt** embraces the global aspect of design. Well-known pieces like an Aragon coffee table by Jean-Michel Frank and a Fornasetti folding screen brush up alongside contemporary pieces like a floor lamp by Apparatus.



↑ **Ken Fulk's** whimsical dining room was inspired by the factitious story of an eccentric Upper East Side socialite who keeps a secret menagerie in her backyard. The story comes to life through its hand-painted wall coverings, a collaboration with lauded British firm de Gournay, and its resplendent furnishings and Hermès dinnerware.



↑ The kitchen room and sitting area go together, but were designed by separate firms. The sitting area is the work of **Kate Singer Home**. The kitchen was designed by **Bakes and Kropp**.



↑ On the left, an office by **Nick Olsen** was inspired by Parisian salons of the 1920s and '30s. The room is meant to emphasize the push-pull of masculine and feminine design sensibilities.

The home's garden, on the right, was created by **Janice Parker Landscape Architects**. Parker commissioned a bamboo moon gate for the space. It frames Luna Mantle, a sculpture by British artist David Harber.



↑ An eclectic sitting room by **Kirsten Kelli** aims to maximize the home's natural light. The firm painted the townhouse's dark original mantling white, whitewashed the fireplace surround (pictured above), and brought a cyan blue to the ceiling beams in attempt to enliven the stuffy space. A painting of a diamond by artist Kurt Pio stands in for a mirror.

The show house is open to the public from May 2 through June 1.

- [Kips Bay Decorators Show House](#) [official]