

THE CUT



Anatomy of a Show House The challenge: Turn a blank-slate townhouse into a high-design home. In eight weeks. For charity. Two designers explain their creative processes.

By Wendy Goodman

Juan Montoya's gleaming redo of the basement room used to feel like a neglected rec room, that forlorn place where toys are stashed and boxes that will never be opened are stored. *Photo: Eric Piasecki/Juan Montoya Design*

The 46th annual [Kips Bay Decorator Show House](#) is now open until May 31 at 110 East 76th Street, and features spectacular rooms created by 22 top architects and designers. Every year, each designer starts with a clean slate and has less than eight weeks to bring his or her vision to life, so we asked international legend Juan Montoya and rising star Wesley Moon to take us through the process.

“I can do a pretty room,” Montoya said, “but I thought a pretty room with no purpose is not really going to fly.” Instead his idea was to create “a family room for people to enjoy with others and by themselves.” And how does even a legend create bespoke rooms in such a short amount of time? Step one: Montoya invited his trusted contractor from [Myriad Construction](#) out to dinner, explained the project, and got the rest of his team onboard. Then he divided up the millwork between two different cabinetmakers. The main room, pictured above, is by [Aucapina](#), and the entry foyer is by [CQ Design Studio](#). He concluded, “You can be a great designer, but in the end if you don’t have the right people to work with, you are doomed. I think that is very important.”

As a first-time participant in the Kips Bay Show House, [Wesley Moon](#) didn’t have the luxury of choosing his rooms. (Even though there had been a “room-selection party” back in February where designers got to list their three top choices after touring the house, he didn’t get any of his.) He was assigned the elevator landing, pictured here, the wet bar, and the butler’s pantry. “I have to admit I was devastated,” he said. “But I snapped out of it. Kips Bay is bigger than my rooms. It’s first and foremost a fund-raising event for [The Boys and Girls Club of America](#). I actually think I lucked out getting this space.”





For his magical transformation of the elevator landing, Moon says, "I instantly thought of this giant mirror by Bill Cunningham that I saw at [Jonathan Burden](#). It's huge and festooned with feathers." He framed the mirror with a pair of chiseled glass sconces from [Caspere Asaro](#) and added a contemporary bronze bench from Wexler Gallery. The wallpaper, a custom adaptation of an existing design, is by [de Gournay](#). The antique area rug is from [F. J. Hakimian](#) and the eye sketches on either side of the mirror are by [Leah E. Martin](#). The wall sculpture at the upper-right-hand side of the doorframe is by [Ted Larsen](#). Photo: Marco Ricca (right)/Courtesy of Wesley Moon



The butler's pantry had heavy, dark millwork before Moon gutted the space with his contractor, [Silver Lining Inc.](#) "I wanted you to see the butler's pantry from the stair hall, and I was determined to have a little romance, so I removed the existing cabinetry and countertops and started from scratch." Photo: Courtesy of Wesley Moon



It's hard to believe this is the same room. "I wanted to create a modern take on a Gilded Age butler's pantry, keeping in mind that today this is a room that everybody uses, so it had to be beautiful as well as functional," Moon said. He installed new cabinetry and a china cabinet by [Clive Christian](#). The limestone countertop and mother-of-pearl backsplash are from [Paris Ceramics](#), the Calacatta-gold-marble floor tiles are from [Akdo](#), and the wallpaper is from [Fayce](#). Photo: Marco Ricca/Courtesy of Wesley Moon



The other end of the butler's pantry continued with more of the same perfectly nice but nondescript millwork. Photo: Courtesy of Wesley Moon



Moon created what feels like an additional room at the opposite end of the butler's pantry by adding a glass-fronted china cabinet lined with fabric from [Holland & Sherry](#). He placed a small tile-top bistro table from [Maison Gerard](#) along with Memphis chairs covered in [Fortuny](#) fabric. The *Two Flags* window painting hanging on the concealed door is by John Moore from [Hirschl & Adler](#). "It adds airiness and a 'view' to the otherwise windowless space," Moon said. Reflecting on his first Kips Bay experience, Moon was philosophical: "There were so many times that things just didn't go my way, so I'd change directions and try another path, and every time I did, something better came along." Photo: Marco Ricca/Courtesy of Wesley Moon