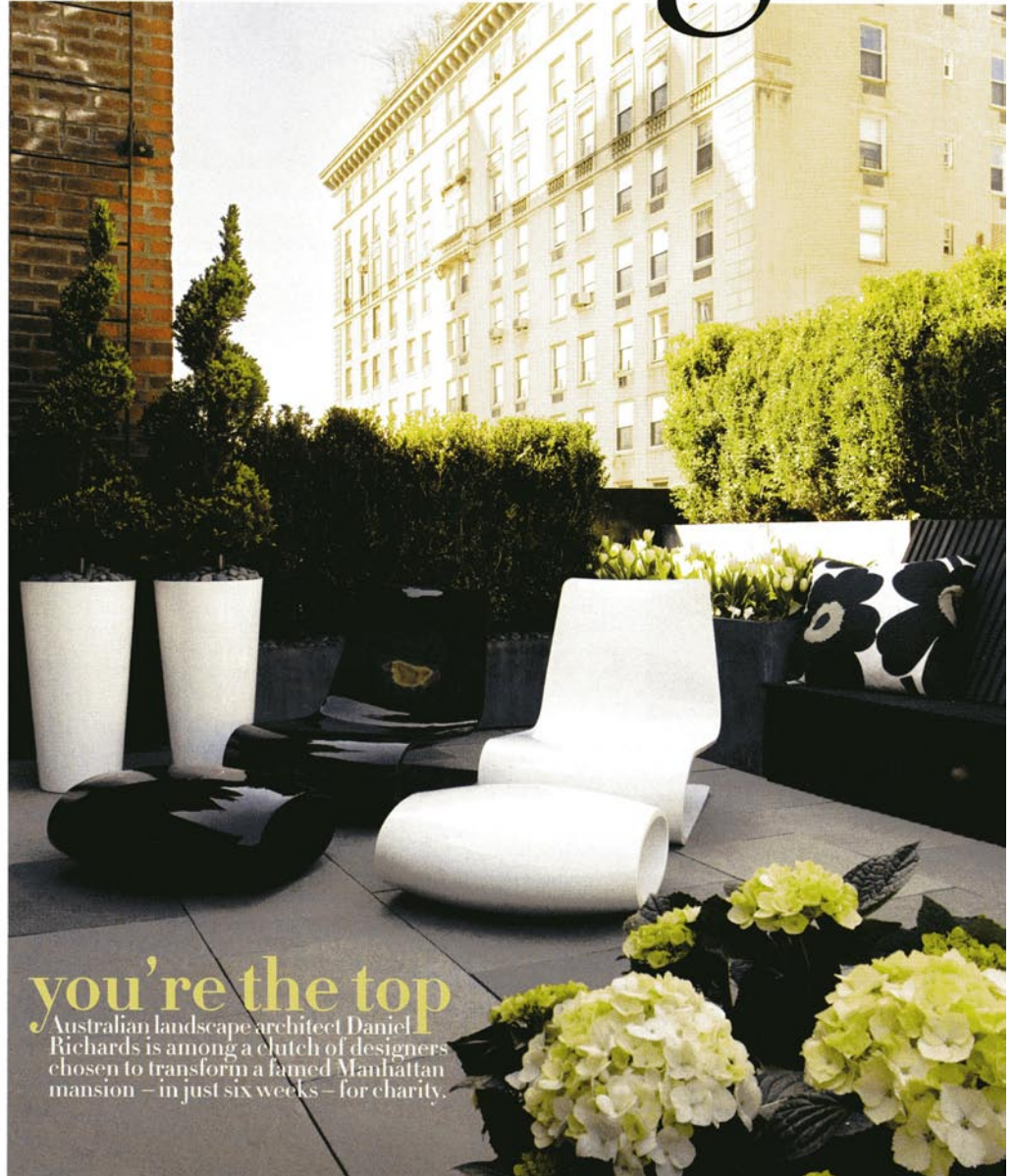




# design

What's new and happening in architecture, craft, interiors and design

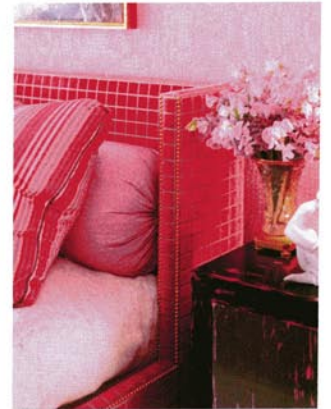


## you're the top

Australian landscape architect Daniel Richards is among a clutch of designers chosen to transform a famed Manhattan mansion – in just six weeks – for charity.



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NEW YORK'S ANNUAL Kips Bay Decorator Show House is a reality TV series waiting to happen. Hundreds of interior designers and a handful of landscape architects submit proposals to transform 19 rooms and one rooftop terrace in an Upper East Side Beaux Arts mansion. Only 20 designers are selected, and they have six weeks to install their luxe vision. Oh, and it's all in aid of a children's charity.

The company, who scored the rooftop terrace, counts Julia Roberts and Gwyneth Paltrow among its clients and recently installed a miniature ice skating rink on a Manhattan rooftop complete with Zamboni (ice resurfer) for another client's daughter.

"Being a landmark building everything has to be temporary, so within a day everything has to be removed," explains Richards. You're not allowed to touch any of the walls or bolt anything in. Even the bluestone paving," he taps the floor with his pointy boot, "is on shims [pedestals] so it can be taken out very quickly."

This year, to amp up the drama, the building's lift was out of action so everything from Kohler toilet fixtures to a delicate, handcrafted botanical mobile by artist Kevin Inka, had to go up six flights of stairs. To cramp the scores of tradesmen and infuriate designers further, the stairway was part of the decoration challenge too, with designers painting trompe l'oeils and installing intricate wood panelling above banisters.

The Plant Specialists' roof deck is serene. "We wanted to keep the colour scheme very monochromatic, lime green on green," he says. A shield of English box hedge is set back on the terrace to give an illusion of space. There are custom-made planter boxes crafted from lead-coated copper filled with Purissima tulips and white pansies. A tub of full-headed hydrangeas sits nearby, adjacent to Christophe Pillet's 'Nouvelle Vague' shiny resin lounges. >

"The program was so tight," says Australian Daniel Richards, who is a senior designer with Long Island landscape architecture firm Plant Specialists.



**PREVIOUS PAGE:** Plant Specialists' idyll includes shiny Christopher Pillet lounges and Marimekko cushions. **THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT:** Jamie Drake's boudoir design includes a matching pair of saddlebag chairs covered in 'Babe Paley' pink wool tweed. **TOP RIGHT:** Drake's interior in pinks was singled out for praise. Michael Tavano upholstered the checked velvet bed in a Drake fabric. **ABOVE:** in two short years, Australian ex-pat Daniel Richards' career has reached heady heights. His terrace, **RIGHT,** is an antidote to "fluffy" competition schemes.





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The Drake-designed 'Sweet Dreams' boudoir, RIGHT, features a Russian writing table, teamed with a clear acrylic chair by Andrew Martin. The pink tweed covered chair can be seen at left. BELOW: the Kips Bay show takes over this grand Upper East Side Beaux Arts mansion each year. BOTTOM: a Kips Bay Show House veteran, David Barrett designed his nostalgic 'Cocktails in a Townhouse Potting Shed' for the ground-floor conservatory.



Truman Capote's society swan Babe Paley who is tied to the adage "you can never be too rich or too thin" gets two direct style nods - a slender lounge and the pink tweed on a pair of chairs

< The black and white lounges are a pair of exclamation marks on the balcony, softened by Marimekko cushions. "I wanted it to be very graphic," says Richards, "because Kips Bay is traditionally very fluffy, very stuffy."

On the ground floor of the Kips Bay manse, beyond the nifty Christopher Peacock-designed kitchen, is an arboretum. Created by David Barrett, who participated in the first Kips Bay Decorator Show House 35 years ago, the conservatory is called "Cocktails in a Townhouse Potting Shed". Barrett's fanciful sanctuary, with a bubbling water fountain under a glass skylight, is a place where the lady of the house, a Babe Paley-like character, can tend to her orchids and sip a mimosa with friends.

Truman Capote's society swan, Paley (who is tied to the adage, "you can never be too rich, or too thin") gets two direct style nods in the house. In a pale, polished lounge on the fifth storey, James Rixner named a slender couch after her. And in Jamie

Drake's outstanding master bedroom and dressing room, the pink tweed on a pair of chairs is named after the socialite. An inductee to the Interior Design Hall of Fame, Drake's high-gloss violet bedroom is for a woman, who "may or may not invite her lovers in," (as he told the *New York Times*), and appears to be a scene straight out of his 2005 monograph, *New American Glamour* (Bulfinch).

As for Australian art and design, Jed Johnson's "A Collector's Bedroom" features Brisbane's own Tracey Moffatt's *Love* video playing on a flatscreen TV and Eve Robinson's lounge features antipodean Antony Todd's coffee table of floating bronze disks. "Isn't it wonderful?" says Robinson. "I can't believe it's not vintage."

Richards, who has no garden of his own in Gotham, gives the final word on what's in vogue in New York. "Fire pits," he says. "Fire pits in New York are what reflection ponds are in Australia." FELICITY LOUGHREY