

There's Much To Learn From David Scott's Kips Bay Show House Design

Coming off his success at the 2023 Kips Bay Decorators Show House, NYSID Trustee and alum David Scott '91 (BFA) urges aspiring designers to take risks, get out into the design community, and forge relationships.

If you attended the 2023 Kips Bay Decorator Show House in the historic River Mansion, on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, this past May, you might have entered a parlor with an ethereal quality enhanced by Western light flooding through embroidered, Indian silk curtains made of Pierre Frey fabric. You might have found yourself delighted by each fascinating object in the room, perhaps starting with the polymer resin and glass ceiling fixtures that resemble billowing clouds fashioned by Israeli artist Ayala Serfaty (from [Maison Gerard](#)).



Designed by David Scott

This room was designed by NYSID alumni David Scott, owner and founder of David Scott Interiors. Scott is both a Trustee of the New York School of Interior Design, and a Trustee of the Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club, an organization that provides enrichment and education to thousands of children from disadvantaged circumstances in the Bronx. Scott has two great passions: design and education.

What sparked the idea for Scott's interior was his initial find: an austere yet whimsical bronze fireplace mantel in the shape of a tiger's paw by the sculptor Jean Marie Fiore, from Twenty First Gallery. The parlor might have seemed playful and effortlessly elegant, but it was the product of Herculean effort by many people. To create it, Scott marshaled his team and his vast network of collaborators and sources, from his contractor, Leone Construction, who stripped the room of outdated cabinets and left a smooth oval envelope; to lighting designer Nathan Orsman; to the two female artisans who sewed together vintage kilms for the rug from FJ Hakimian, to the painter Larry Poons, who created the outsized, textured painting sourced through [Yares Art](#).

"My room was all about the artist's hand. It's about the craftsmanship behind each unique item," explains Scott. "Design, for me, is more curation than decoration. Each object must be important, but in balance to the other things in the space." David Scott Interior's two interns from NYSID, MFA1 students Carmen Cruz and Carissa Pintello, were on hand in the parlor for the opening days of the show to educate the many thousands of visitors. Adds Scott, "The point was to tell everyone who the artist was behind each object, why they make these things, and how they're made."

The Trade is a Classroom

"I think that design students must go to these show houses," Scott explains. "Volunteer, find an internship that requires you to work on a show house, be physically engaged in design, not just in the process of drawing and rendering but in the actual making. It's so rewarding." Scott, who was a career changer who graduated from NYSID's BFA program in 1991 and started his firm even before he finished his degree, remembers his first show house experience as transformative. He was relatively new to the business, but he applied to do a room in an ASID show house in the 1990s and he landed the opportunity to do a primary bedroom. "You have to be hungry. . . You have to take risks and put yourself out there. If you fail, so what? You keep trying," he says.

Show houses are expensive and require massive resources. The early experience required him to be scrappy, ask for favors, to borrow everything, to forge relationships with artisans, galleries and showrooms he still uses today. He also found friendships with other designers. He says, "Jamie Drake did the bathroom and he was so encouraging. That's another thing. Show houses give you the opportunity to be with other designers. They are places to find mentors and peers. They are where reputations are made."

He remembers that first show house experience in detail. "I'd be sitting by the door and hear the visitors [gasp] and say 'beautiful' as they walked in. There is nothing like that understanding of how you can affect emotion in hundreds of people through your design." He adds, "With a show house, you borrow from trusted sources. You test the waters for new ideas. You work with craftspeople you want to celebrate. They are invaluable at every stage of your career."



David Scott

Working on a show house or an industry showcase is more than just a pipedream for NYSID students. In the words of Scott, who's on the academic affairs committee of NYSID's board, "NYSID's board believes in student engagement with the interior design community." The College is constantly developing new opportunities for students to participate in major industry events. In Spring 2023, teams of graduate and undergraduate NYSID students created vignettes in the DIFFA by Design and Housing Works' Design on a Dime showcases. This summer, a team of NYSID students will travel to Nantucket to participate in a virtual showhouse as part of the Historical Society's Nantucket by Design event. In the fall, a NYSID student will once again design and build a vignette in Southport, CT's Rooms with a View showcase.

Scott notes that showhouses are just one way to engage with the interior design community. He encourages the young designers on his staff to "Go to galleries, openings, show houses, auction houses, showrooms. You just have to be there!" He acknowledges that the upper echelons of the design trade can be intimidating, but he wants young designers to take risks. When he was new in the design business, he approached and befriended Doris Leslie Blau, whom he considered, "the Queen of high-end rugs." He was polite, inquisitive, and bold. He says, "She was so embracing toward me. She taught me the carpet is the soul of the room and I still design that way because of her." He notes that Kravet Inc. is one of the high-end textiles houses that has opened up its showrooms to students. He says, "Go to the showrooms to see and touch the history of textiles. Befriend the salespeople. This is how you learn about the finest things." He believes that elusive quality of "taste" that used to be the province of the very rich, is really about acquiring the knowledge and connections one needs to source the finest decorative art forms. This is why he focused his Kips Bay parlor on master craftsmanship: he wants to keep great artists and craftspeople working and their artworks alive.



Designed by David Scott

The Connection Between Kips Bay & NYSID

The Kips Bay Decorator Show House is the premiere interior design show house in the country, but that's only one reason Scott is involved. Education is his second passion. He became a board member of Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club because he cares about the organization's mission and its many programs that help children from underserved communities achieve their potential.

One of those programs is a career development collaboration between the New York School of Interior Design, Kravet Inc., and Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club called the "Kravet Pipeline to Interior Design," which is part of NYSID's larger "Open Doors to Design" Pre-College scholarship initiative. Thanks to a multi-year donation from Kravet Inc., and the advocacy of Ellen Kravet, the President of NYSID's Board of Trustees, seven highschoolers in the Kips Bay Girls and Boys Club enrichment program attend NYSID's summer Pre-College sessions each year and receive hands-on exposure to interior design from practicing designers. They learn the basics of hand- and computer- rendering, space planning, and presentation skills by creating the designs for an apartment and/or hospitality space, and they experience decorative arts and design workplaces by going to showrooms, suppliers and offices throughout the city. "Our goal is to give high schoolers exposure to role models in the profession and introduce them to interior design as a career possibility," says NYSID's President, David Sprouls.

NYSID has two trustees in common with Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club, James Druckman and David Scott, and both are committed to opening up the interior design industry to a broader demographic. Says Scott, "A designer must have artistic skill, but that's only a part of it. This is a business of relationships. You have to know a lot. If you want to succeed as a designer, especially as a sole proprietor, you must put yourself out there and be a sponge." As a Trustee of NYSID, Scott is working to provide opportunities for young designers to get exposure to the trade and business so that others have the opportunity to flourish in the profession he loves so much.

