

Art Notebook

Thinking Inside the Box

Striking Spaces at the Architectural Digest Home Design Show

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Published July 2008



Architectural Digest transformed that pier! It never looked so fabulous,” New York designer Joanne de Guardiola raves about the seventh Architectural Digest Home Design Show. Held March 6 through 9 at Manhattan’s Pier 94, the event featured a gallery of one-of-a-kind and limited-edition furnishings by notable artists, design consultations and culinary demonstrations. Innovative and stylish products—many of them recent introductions—were there too, from exhibitors such as Viking distributor Delia, furniture and accessories firms Lorna Lee John Muller Designs and Brown Jordan, and appliance manufacturer Liebherr.

At the heart of it all, though, were three overscale room vignettes done by de Guardiola and fellow AD 100 designers Mario Buatta and Geoffrey Bradfield.

Their visions ranged from a sleek loft space for a young, city-dwelling couple, to a fanciful outdoor bedroom, to a 1940s-inspired room in a chic boutique hotel.

With 30-foot open ceilings and aisles stretching into the cavernous distance, the space, says de Guardiola, “was very much a challenge.” She relied on a wallcovering with a pattern of gray, beige and taupe squares to give [her room](#) an architectural presence.

She contrasted the roughness of a limestone disk from Indonesia and pierced-wood end tables with sleek, contemporary furniture. “The smooth and the rough made a layering of textures,” explains de Guardiola. Looming over the space and lending it a touch of humor was an enormous desk lamp, a witty play on the form “we’ve all seen for years,” she says.

Mario Buatta’s solution to the two-walled, roofless room was a very [formal bedroom](#)—complete with Rococo-style furniture and luxe fabrics—which, in the imagination at least, was open to the sky. To heighten the illusion of al-fresco living, he called on landscape designer Michael Walter, of Lexington Gardens in Manhattan, to cover the walls in an expanse of greenery and to craft a mantelpiece out of twigs.

“The scale of the project made it fun,” remarks Buatta, who broke the room into several separate seating areas and added a tester to the bed. “Everything had to suggest comfort and intimacy in a wide-open space.”

Geoffrey Bradfield was delighted by the opportunity to give his imagination free rein. “It’s rare that you get the chance to do something a little crazy,” he notes. His [Harlequin Lounge](#), with walls in which faux treillage alternated with mirrors, including a 1940s Venetian example, was “something truly whimsical.”

“When I see a harlequin, I think of mischief,” he says, and so the laser-cut harlequin figures mounted on the mirrors doubled and redoubled the fantasy in the room. Color, fantasy spaces, stimulation for the imagination—like a medieval trade fair, which was as much a festival as a market, the Architectural Digest Home Design Show 2008 turned Pier 94 into a carnival.