

Rooms with a view for a good cause

(AP) — Spring arrives and decorator show houses pop up around the country as reliably as the daffodils.

The show house is the decorator's chance to shine. Generally, the house is on loan to a charity. The charity assigns each room to a different designer who decorates it without constraints of client budget or wishes. The decorator donates his time and talent and usually borrows the furnishings — often expensive antiques.

Once fully decked out, the home is opened for public viewing for a specified number of days for an entrance fee.

The house pulls in clients for the charity, potential clients for the decorators and possible buyers for the furnishings. It also provides a wealth of ideas and a couple hours' entertainment for the ogles who can cluck at what they don't like and sigh over what they adore.

If decorator show houses didn't exist, designers would have to invent them, says Chris Casson Madden, author and lecturer on design.

"Designers see the show house as the perfect platform to show off their best work," Madden says. "So if a charity doesn't bring it

up, they plant the seed themselves."

A show house is the ideal place for someone decorating a home to get ideas because it's three-dimensional, Madden says. Her new book, "Rooms With a View," (PBC International, 1993, \$46), covers two decades of rooms from the Kips Bay Decorator Show House in New York.

"People come to Kips Bay each spring from out of town and even as far away as South America to see the rooms," Madden says. It takes 2

Madden, who has been through dozens of decorator show houses, says you need to go through each house twice to get your money's worth.

"I'm overwhelmed the first time I go through," she says. "But I go through the rooms a second time and make notes in the journal of the things that appeal to me."

The fact that you can't afford to duplicate the rooms shouldn't keep you from borrowing good ideas, she says. Her journals include scribbled entries on various ways to roll towels in a bathroom container and to arrange flowers.

Though not every house has so many internationally famous decorators or expensive art as Kips Bay, most offer a chance to see

the elements of design used in novel ways.

At Kips Bay, rooms sometimes dictate the latest design trends. There are always unusual window treatments to ponder, and you can see what you like and don't like in period and furniture styles. Finally, many Kips Bay show houses are done in architecturally interesting spaces normally closed to the public.

Madden says the idea of decorator show houses has spread to London, Paris and various locales in South America. But it's an American innovation.

The first modern show house appears to have opened in April 1958 in San Mateo, Calif., to raise money for the Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education. In June of that year, another in Menlo Park raised money for a children's aid society.

By the early 1970s, show houses opened in Boston and St. Louis. Kips Bay, which is the best known, opened in April 1973 when the Women's Committee decided to substitute it for the regular spring dance. The show house and benefit gala now generate about \$500,000 annually for the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club Inc., a youth center for inner city kids.

The first Kips Bay show house attracted 4,000 people at \$3 apiece, to look at the works of 15 interior decorators and one landscape designer. Madden was among the crowd, as she has been each year since. The 1993 edition (now through May 16) is expected to welcome 20,000 at \$15 each.

History of decorating

Show houses reflect the decorating preoccupations of their era. In the 1970s it was minimalism. Black-and-white schemes, accented with plastics and shiny, hard-edged Eurostyle furniture were the last word in modernity. Bright colors such as lime green were attention getters, and the latest technology was prominently displayed.

The 1980s brought the opulent look. Electronics were behind closed doors so nothing could detract from the luxury of fine antiques. They also brought an ever-softening color palette as pastels and glazed walls were featured.

The 1990s have begun with the dawn of the age of ecology. Designers put recycling centers in show house kitchens that will never generate garbage and use nature's green as an emblem of their attachment to the environment. But the specifics really don't matter.



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Office from page 1F

"We are looking for substantially high-identity tenants who are financially capable," Jack Hamburger said. "I think you'll find a majority of tenants who get into a building like this would normally be law firms, brokerages, financial services."

Rents, which include everything except telephone and electricity, will start in the low to middle \$20 per square foot, he said.

"In the present day economy, we're certainly on the high end compared to other prestigious locations," he said.

"What they're paying for is a prestige location," John Hamburger said.

The exterior of Bloom-Wood Centre will be similar to that of

the Bloomfield Centre building owned by Jonna Companies directly south on Woodward.

Jonna has received site plan approval for two office buildings. Jonna completed one office, some 137,000 square feet which opened in January 1989, then sold the other parcel of land to Kogan.

"We decided we had our hands full with what we were doing and it was best not to take additional risk," said Gary Steven Jonna, executive vice president of that company.

Brick and stone will mark Bloom-Wood's exterior. Some windows will be surrounded by brick, others will extend across the structure in curtain wall fashion. A walk-up plaza with brick-scape and some natural landscap-

ing will lead to the main entrance from the parking lot behind the building.

An atrium will extend through much of the building all the way to the roof. The ground floor, in addition to tenant space, will have a restaurant, sundry shop and an automatic teller machine.

"All interior furnishing will be top of the line," Jack Hamburger said. "The lobby floor will be all granite, two kinds, Baltic brown and black. We're using cherry wood in the lobby. All hardware on the elevator doors will be brushed bronze."

Kogan said he's currently financing construction out of his own pocket, but he will be looking

for a construction loan and a permanent mortgage a little further down the line.

Office building activity has ground almost to a halt in the metro area as a whole due to a vacancy rate in the range of 16-18 percent depending on the survey.

"We're fully leased, so we don't see it (Bloom-Wood) as an impact," Jonna said.

"That building will be leased fairly quickly," predicted Dennis R. Burnside, senior vice president of Grubb & Ellis, a Southfield commercial real estate firm.

"There's not much space available in Bloomfield Hills, such a desirable address," Burnside said. "It's a small, tight market."

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