

# In Dexter's Show House, Even the Chairs Are Bound

By JOYCE WADLER

“**T**HAT room actually has that kind of hospital smell,” a smart young thing in a cocktail dress said, exiting a bedroom designed for television’s “Nurse Jackie” at the opening of the Metropolitan Home Showtime House in TriBeCa last week.

In fact, the room, designed by **CHRISTOPHER COLEMAN** and **ANGEL SANCHEZ**, had no smell at all, but such is the power of design. There were, however, playful nods to the hospital theme: a vanity with a light table (excellent for reading X-rays); pill-patterned wallpaper; a daybed fashioned from an old massage table. The matching wheeled bedside tables had a medicinal-industrial look, though they were hard to place.

“Dialysis tables, used,” Mr. Coleman said. “I bought them from a medical supplier, but the originals didn’t come in fun colors, so I lacquered them in turquoise and white. I cut down the base and use automobile lacquer. I have this **GUY IN LONG ISLAND CITY.**”

The show house, created by some 14 designers and architects to publicize the six original series in Showtime’s fall lineup (several rooms are dedicated to each show) is set in two penthouses of the Tribeca Summit at 415 Greenwich Street. Witty and inventive, it’s proof that designers do indeed have a sense of humor, though it’s helpful to know the shows.

“Dexter,” for example, is about a serial killer with a moral code who binds his victims, then stabs them in a room meticulously protected from splatter with plastic wrap. The modern, open dining-kitchen-living area designed for him here has white-wrapped dining room chairs (bound with seat belts, it turns out); a subtle silver DNA pattern worked into the white tile around the fireplace; and, in a bassinet, a decapitated teddy bear wrapped in cellophane. (For those unfamiliar with the show, Dexter is be-

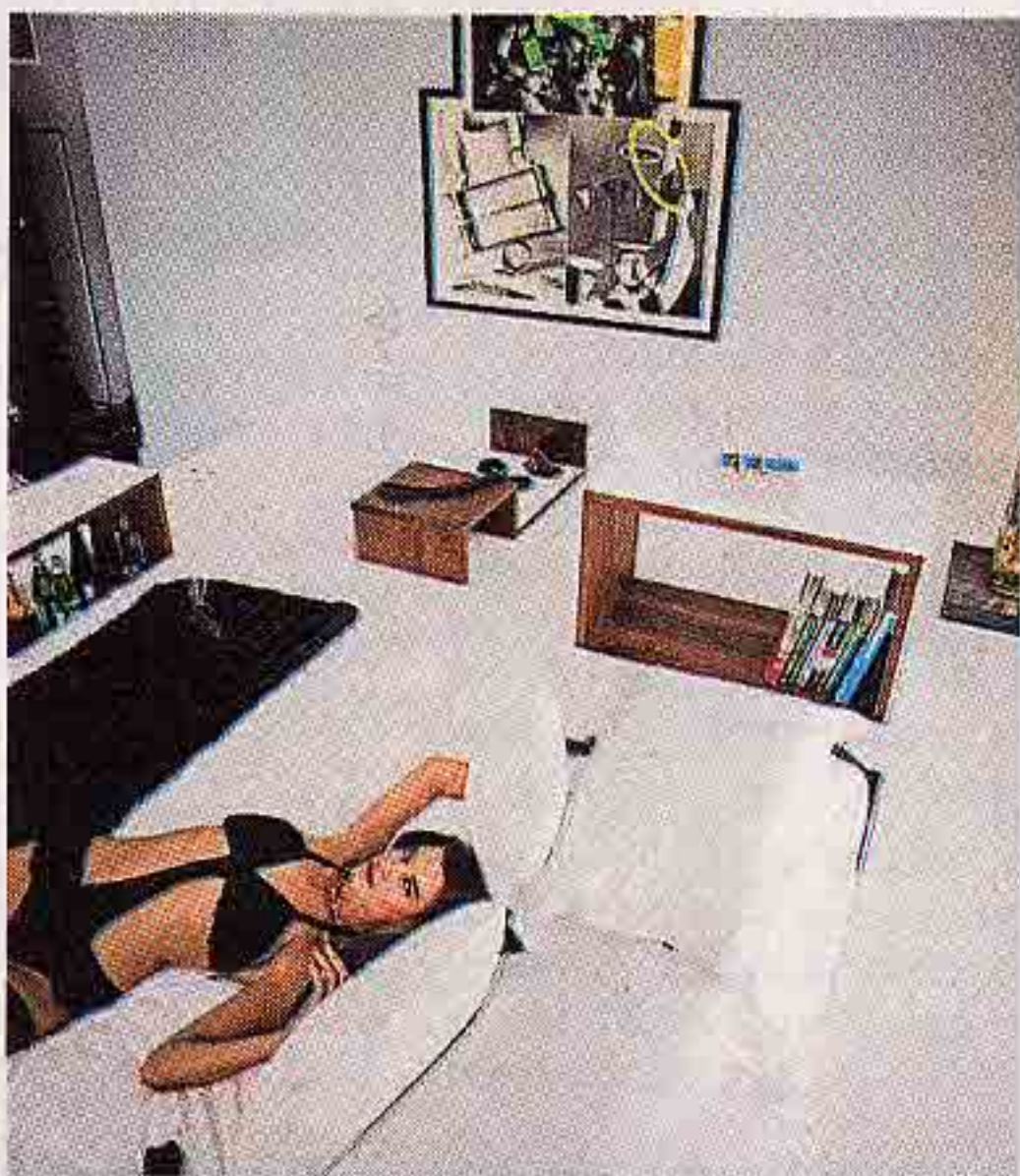
coming a dad this season.) The one touch of red is on the handles of the carving knives. The room’s designer, **MARIE AIELLO**, tall and good-looking enough to be a model, got into the act with a white wrap dress by Dolce & Gabbana.

“I’m wearing Dexter’s kill room in a dress,” Ms. Aiello said. And of her décor: “I don’t think he’s black or white, hence the color palette for the space. I choose shades of gray.”

And, as the fake fire in the fireplace faltered, she told her assistant with a nod, “**MARIA**, the fireplace.”

This is the thing about designers at their show houses on opening night: they are like debutantes with their gowns, perpetually distracted, smoothing things out. **RICHARD MISHAAN**, who got the “Tudors” job, was down on the floor in the living room of Henry VIII’s TriBeCa bach-

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PIOTR REDLINSKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**PILLOW TALK** At a TriBeCa show house, Markus Dochantschi’s room is a nod to “Californication.” Catherine Long models the bed.

*This is the first in a regular series of columns on happenings in the design world.*

**SEEN**

# Dexter's Show House



PIOTR REDLINSKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**STERILE** A lacquered dialysis cart in the "Nurse Jackie" room.

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elior pad, smoothing the hem of laser-cut black drapes with the feel of grilled ironwork. The architect **MARKUS DOCHANTSCHI** was in the bedroom he designed for the ladies' man Hank Moody of "Californication," adjusting the Swarovski crystal-embedded velvet restraints.

What with Dexter, Henry and Hank, this is a show house that could put a woman off dating — although Mr. Mishaan, an experienced designer after all, said he tried diplomatically to overlook his client's flaws and create a room to his taste: with vintage black-strapped leather bondage chairs by Jacques Adnet; Damien Hirst prints; and a tabletop sculpture of a heart with a machine-like valve and spigot by Ryo Toyonaga, a Japanese artist.

"You can turn it on and off," Mr. Mishaan told some visitors. "I thought it was so sick, it's perfect."

And what about those three phallic-looking gray quartz pieces on a side table?

disinclined to disturb a design tableau, how could one know?

The crowd favorite, though, was the bedroom by the flirtatious, darkly tanned Mr. Dochantschi, the founder of studioMDA, who trained as an architect in Germany.

"Lie down on the bed," he sang out to every woman who passed, taking a special interest in the tall ones, an architectural preference perhaps.

The bed was on a platform that dominated the room. There was also a shelf of sex toys and restraints (bondage, a designer trend?); a ceiling of angled mirrors; an empty bottle of Veuve Clicquot Rosé; and, beside the bed, two Champagne glasses. But the real star, visible through a wall of glass, was the downtown skyline with the Woolworth Building lighted up in the rosy pink of the Champagne label.

"The room is really about the view — to allow the person in the bed to have this amazing view of Manhattan, while Manhattan has a view of you," Mr. Dochantschi said.

"Oh, it's all about the boy," Mr. Mishaan said. "People talk about Henry like he was 64, but he was a young man. His major time in power, he wasn't much older than a graduate student. If a 24-year-old came up to you now, you'd give him an internship, you wouldn't say, 'Rule a country.'"

On this evening before 9/11, tribute lights created a ghost World Trade Center visible from the penthouse patios, and here and there guests murmured at the image, so sad and beautiful. Eight years? It seemed so recent.

Inside, the designers anxiously haunted their rooms. **FRANCINE GARDNER** hovered near a round black-curtained lounge created for the multiple personality heroine of "United States of Tara."

**PAUL LATHAM** was presiding over the opium den he designed for Nancy, the drug-dealing heroine of "Weeds," with a Chinese root base table; a collection of 19th-century English clay pipes bought on eBay for \$200; and an expensive-looking three-panel screen, which was actually a framed blowup of an Arnold Böcklin painting.

In another room for "Weeds," the architect **JAMES BIBER** created a cross-shaped dining room table and provided ashtrays graciously laden with hand-rolled joints, which he insisted were not stuffed with marijuana. Being

He took a moment to be photographed on the bed with **KAREN FUCHS**, a leggy photographer. "Off the record, I'll tell you something," he said later. "That bottle of Champagne, when I did the room, was originally full."

Off the record don't fill the paper, pal. Let's hear about the night.

Mr. Dochantschi blushed under his tan, echoing the pink of the Woolworth building — one admires his devotion to the palette. "I am a gentleman, after all," he said.

Understood. We asked him purely as an architect: Did the space work?

"It exceeded my own expectations," he said.


*The Metropolitan Home Showtime House, to benefit Housing Works, is open weekends through Oct. 18. Tickets, \$20, at the door. Information: [methome.com/showtime2009](http://methome.com/showtime2009).*

## CORRECTIONS

A Currents article last Thursday about an ink stamp designed to protect against identity theft, using information from the company's Web site, misstated the price of the stamp. Each Kes'pon ID Guard Stamp costs \$19.99; that is not the price for three stamps.

An article last Thursday about Amy Sohn, who wrote a novel about Park Slope, Brooklyn, misstated the year that she and her husband bought a co-op there. It was 2004, not 2005.

### ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

 More images of the rooms inspired by Showtime's television series:

[nytimes.com/home](http://nytimes.com/home)