

# St. Louis-based interior designer reflects on her first Kips Bay Decorator Show House

Twenty-one designers from around the country were chosen to work on this year's Palm Beach show house. Local designer Amy Studebaker was one of them.

BY VERONICA THEODORO    FEBRUARY 28, 2023    6:00 AM



PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICKOLAS SARGENT

The guest bedroom Amy Studebaker designed for the Kips Bay Decorator Show House

Just before the Thanksgiving holiday last year, interior designer Amy Studebaker received an email message that she hoped would bring good news. After an extensive submission process that began earlier that summer, her design firm had been selected to participate in the 2023 Kips Bay Decorator Show House in Palm Beach. "It was truly just a really, really amazing moment," says the designer.



Studebaker's assignment? Decorate a guest bedroom and adjoining hallway in approximately three months. To make it all happen she collaborated with both national and local businesses. St. Louis firm [Berry Studio](#) sewed the canopy for the bed in just two days due to a delay in the delivery of the fabric. Slip covers of a Décors Barbares textile were also turned around on short notice. "Jean Mutrux waited for our textiles to arrive and she was like, 'Yep, I can flip this around for you.' We just greatly appreciated that," says Studebaker. Local contractor [PK Construction](#) put together a team within 24 hours and sent them to Florida to install the moldings on the ceiling treillage. "We had a situation where the original contractor, approved by Kips Bay, sort of flaked out on everybody," says the designer. "PK was instrumental in getting us to where we needed to be."



COURTESY OF AMY STUDEBAKER DESIGN

Amy Studebaker

Studebaker traveled multiple times to Florida to work on the room, to take measurements and photos, and to get a sense of the logistics of getting furniture moved into the house. "We had to make sure that we ordered things that fit through the doorways because there were some tight turns," she says. February 12 was install day at the Mediterranean-style estate overlooking Lake Worth Lagoon. On February 24, the show house opened to the public. It runs until March 19. Here, Studebaker takes us behind the scenes.

### **Did this opportunity present itself to you or did you reach out about it?**

It's something that I've always known about and wanted to be a part of, but we've been so busy for so long that we didn't have it on our immediate radar. Finally, this year, we're like, 'Let's submit for this. Let's just see what happens.'

### **What was your assignment?**

We were given a guest bedroom. I knew that there were multiple bedrooms already in the home and, since I had a little bit of flexibility, I decided to transform it into a place where you could relax, take a nap, or just sit and read a book. So it's a little bit of a bedroom and sitting room combined.

**You designed the room but did you also buy the furniture? How does that work?**

We are financially responsible for every aspect of the room. But what is so wonderful is that because Kips Bay has been around for so many years—and is one of the most prestigious show houses in the United States—there are many vendors who want to sponsor the designers. One of our absolutely favorite sponsors is Soane Britain.

**Tell us about the style of the room. What was your inspiration?**

My initial inspiration was working with Soane. It is a European line. I have such a [soft spot] for European pieces, antiques, mixing the new and old, and so I love that they have that approach to their furniture and fabrics. One of their fabrics—*Lisieux Rose*—is a beautiful linen textile with a soft white background and lovely florals in blues and reds and greens. It really spoke to me. I wanted to use that textile as the inspiration for the room and to create a garden-esque feel in the space. David Fuller [of Fuller Architectural Panels] has these amazing architectural panels. We selected a treillage, which we applied to our ceiling. It feels like it should have roses climbing all over it.

**Were there parameters to what you could or could not do?**

We're not given any parameters except that the homeowner would have to approve it if we decided to get into structural or construction details, like adding moldings or ripping out stone or flooring. You would need to put it back in the condition that the home, that the room was originally in, before that.

**Did you remove or change any of the architectural elements in the room?**

We were fortunate that our room was a simple white box. A lot of designers that had limestone walls and limestone trims and floors...they really couldn't do much about it if it wasn't a part of their aesthetic. One challenge that we did have with our room was that we have very dark wood parquet floors, which did not lean at all towards our light and airy aesthetic. I was going to paint the floors—you know how much I love a painted floor—but we



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The hallway and guest bedroom Amy Studebaker designed for the Kips Bay Decorator Show House



were advised not to paint because the sanding down process could chip the parquet. I didn't want to be responsible for re-laying parquet wood floors. We've covered the floors with wall-to-wall sisal, which we're just as excited about. The one other thing that we did, that we hesitated to change and I'm hoping that we don't regret, is that the window frames are black and it was not the aesthetic we needed for the room. So we painted them.

**What have you learned throughout this whole process?**

I've just enjoyed being a part of it and being able to meet so many designers from around the United States. I'm fortunate that my team is used to the logistics of working on a national level. We had that nailed down and I was so thankful for it. But, you know, it was still learning to work within the parameters of a very short lead time on an extremely custom room. We also learned how many vendors will come out and support us, which was just an honor beyond anything.