

# home



## ALL THAT JAZZ

Bill Battaglia's favorite thing is the hand-painted musical mural in the foyer of his Selden home

B19



PHOTO BY PABLO CORRADI

Designer Keith Baltimore has been called upon to retrofit rooms to accommodate new technology. Above is a unit he designed for a plasma TV in Sands Point; below is one in Brookville.



NEWSDAY PHOTO / ROBERT MEECE

Marjorie and Michael Toback of Merrick, with son Andrew, got the idea of putting a small, wall-hung LCD in the bathroom from the Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas.



PHOTO BY PABLO CORRADI



PHOTO BY ROBERT MEECE

James Whittier of Oyster Bay Cove had his 55-inch plasma TV mounted on the den wall in a frame matching a custom wood console. The wires thread through the wall and back again into the console, so they don't show

# SCREEN DISPLAY

How do you decorate around that new flat-screen TV?

BY CAROL POLSKY  
STAFF WRITER

Fujitsu came out with a 55-inch plasma high-definition televi-

But buying the big flat panel screen was only the start: The

components, with a matching frame around the wall-mount







finished all the way to the wall," says Whittier, 57, a retired Wall Street banker. "A regular frame doesn't hide the sides" completely.

Most of his home's other five flat-panel screens are wall-mounted or in cabinetry, but the 22-inch LCD in the kitchen sits in a granite-topped frame atop a motorized platform that disappears down into the granite countertop when not in use.

"My wife got the kitchen and I got the TV that goes up and down," he says.

### Price within reach

These days, such toys are luring customers who may have only \$1,000 or \$2,000 to play with. Plasma and LCD televisions are now priced within reach of many more consumers than even a year or two ago, if they want one badly enough. And plenty do, to the point where sales of flat-panel sets outpaced tube television sales for the first time this past year, according to the NPD Group, which monitors market trends.

This, of course, opens up a whole new set of decor issues: those armoires and home entertainment centers and consoles built for regular 36-inch sets no longer suffice. How, then, to

accommodate the new look in television? Many people call in the decorator.

"Ask what I do for a living: I retrofit bedrooms and living rooms to accommodate plasmas and LCD screens," interior designer Keith Baltimore of Port Washington says, only half-jokingly.

"There seems to be an enormous call for accommodating them because everybody is buying them. The rooms I did seven or eight years ago, I have to go back and retrofit them now for the new technology."

Decorators say there are three schools of thought on how to deal with the behemoths: hide them, expose them or fit them into cabinetry.

More and more people are simply leaving them exposed. The idea, says Baltimore, is "it's slick, it's simple, it looks good, it's not a confusing visual and doesn't take away from anything."

He says he'll often flank a wall-mounted set with tall pieces to hide the sides, or mount it in a shallow cavity within a cabinet.

Designer Richard Piemonte of Brookville will use bifold or retractable doors or mirrors to hide screens for clients who

opt for that. "I've had cabinetry come down from the ceiling to hide the screen so it looks like a wall panel."

But often, and increasingly within the past year, his clients choose to leave it exposed both for aesthetics and convenience.

"They view it as a necessary evil and don't want to be bothered with closing doors," Piemonte says. "They use it every day and just want to put it on and watch it."

He says he is not happy that many choose to mount the screen over the fireplace mantel: "I hate it. Usually the mantel is decorated with candlesticks, a painting or a mirror, and now suddenly, especially in bedrooms, they want it over the fireplace so they can watch it. . . . I try to find another place for it, in an armoire that's in close proximity, but they have to live there."

Simply finding a wall for the sets can be a problem. Says Piemonte, "Very often you have homes where there really is no great place for a TV: You have three walls that are open, and one wall receiving too much light and very often you have to put up a false wall or extend a wall to accommodate these large TVs.

**In a Jericho home, designer Baltimore mounted a flat-screen TV above the mantel of a stone fireplace.**

"There's one place to put a sofa and you want the TV opposite it for viewing, and very often it doesn't work out that way," he adds. "You may have to put it on the side, which isn't the optimal place, but you have no choice."

While windows behind the set can create glare and washed-out colors, LCDs tend to perform better in bright light conditions than plasmas, experts say.

Baltimore often customizes the above-the-mantel look with a 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch-deep box or niche in the stonework above the mantel when building a stone fireplace for a client. Or he retrofits or custom-builds elaborate wall cabinetry with shelving, drawers and a niche of that depth to hold the screen, mounted on a fabric-covered surface.

"We shorten the depth of the big cavity in a cabinet, we move up a wall, upholster or wallpaper it, and the television sits in that space," he says. "If it doesn't fit in that old cavity in the old wall unit, and has to be redesigned, usually we put some sort of cabinet or buffet underneath for the components."