

Most of us may not live in a mansion the size of La Selva, site of the recent Mansions & Millionaires Designers' Showcase 2009 (although for a cool \$14.5 million you could). We still view our homes as our personal castles, though.

We want a place that is comfortable and comforting, that reflects our style and taste, and welcomes family and friends. Achieving this vision, however, is another matter. That's where the talent and creativity of an experienced interior designer makes all the difference — as evidenced by the beautifully appointed rooms on these pages. While many reflect design on a grand scale, there are plenty of clever, practical ideas that can be translated to more modest spaces, perhaps your own living room or master suite.

In La Selva's elegant ballroom-sized dining room, Keith Baltimore (baltimoredesigncenter.com) avoided the obvious by opting for two large round tables rather than a conventional banquet table. "Round tables are better for conversation," he explains, and also maximize the flow of movement in the space. The coffered ceiling, dark woodwork and deep red marble floor were balanced by pale walls, carpeting and upholstery, and by the designer's

## inside designers' showcase 2009

By Mary Stipe

eclectic mix of accessories. Instead of traditional chandeliers, contemporary shades hang above the tables, while "driftwood" floor lamps cast their light on a Renaissance-era painting that is original to the house. The tabletop centerpieces are layered with moss and fanciful insects that seem poised to climb the tree branch sculptures, proving that a sense of humor is an asset, even when designing such an imposing room.

Designers tend to create a room layer by layer, beginning with the bare bones of floor, walls and ceiling, taking in architectural features, available light, proportion and scale. For the mother-daughters design team at Tarasoff Interiors (tarasoffinteriors.com), the bones of their space were exceptional, ideal for the informal dining room they envisioned. Because the ceiling had both square and domed sections, says Anne Tarasoff, the designers played with those shapes. A round glass table sits on a square area rug, a painted wooden screen is made up of square segments with center circles, square dishes sit on round placemats — unexpected touches that engage the viewer.

Building pattern on pattern is sure to make an impact, even in as small a space as the one designed by Jennifer Duneier (duneierdesign.com). "The

The key to great design is in the details. In the dining room, below left, Keith Baltimore added drama to the French doors by hanging stationary silk drapery panels outside the frames. Sheer moveable panels on the doors can be closed to temper the light.

Layers of bold pattern in a muted palette of teal and brown turned Jennifer Duneier's small space, right, into a show-stopper. To bring the high-ceilinged, narrow area into visual proportion, Duneier chose the houndstooth checked carpet, which made the room seem wider, and papered the walls and ceiling to add architectural interest where none existed.

The informal dining area created by Tarasoff Interiors, below right, has a lovely focal point in the bay windows. The fabric in the roman shades was replicated in the handpainted dado. Note the tiny ruffled edge atop the draperies.

trick to using a lot of pattern," she explains, "is to stay within the same tones and colorways." Although it doesn't show in the photograph at right, even the ceiling was papered with a different pattern. The key to the room's success? "I used calm colors in a muted palette of teal and brown," states Duneier. A variety of translucent and light reflective surfaces also make the space feel large, from the shiny rayon-blend fabric on chairs and cushions to the large plexiglas box that frames the puppy-centric artwork above the sofa.

Artwork is an important component of interior design. Many times, the way the art is hung is as crucial as the individual pieces. Patti Johnston (pattijohnstondesigns.com) suggests grouping paintings, prints and photographs in similar — or recycled — frames.

"As our tastes change, we tend to accumulate art that no longer appeals to us," says Johnston, who often removes the unwanted art, recycling frames with spray paint and fresh mats. She did that at La Selva with a series of family photographs above a console table (shown on page 12). Although at first glance the frames appear to be all the same, there are actually three different styles. Frames with removable backs, she notes, are great for swapping photos on a whim or as the seasons dictate.

