

DESIGN IS SOMETIMES DISMISSED,

by those who take themselves quite seriously, as unimportant or trivial. And certainly the industry does have its frivolities and fripperies. You could even argue—if you don't care about living with beauty, joy, or ingenuity and are willing to dispense with a major form of self-expression—that design is superfluous. But one argument nobody can make is that the design industry is not generous.

That generosity is manifest throughout the year, but it becomes especially evident in the spring and summer. For me, the most vivid example is Design on a Dime, a major fund-raising event held each spring for Housing Works, which provides housing, health care, and advocacy for homeless people living with HIV and AIDS in New York City. Over the past decade, I have witnessed Design on a Dime grow from six designers creating vignettes at a thrift store into a full-fledged design-world extravaganza.

Every year, I am astounded at the generosity and hard work so many people devote to this endeavor. Designers, many of them young, put their hearts into clever designs, then hit up—and hit hard—their vendors, soliciting everything from fabrics to wallpaper from fabric companies and showrooms. They draw upon an almost innumerable array of artisans, antiques dealers, and art galleries to complete their imaginative displays. Craftsmen and volunteers contribute hours of labor. Showrooms and corporate sponsors supply furniture, gallons of paint, and cases of rosé. This year's edition featured more than 60 vignettes full of style, humor, and finesse, all stocked with beautiful items that were sold, at a great discount, to raise more than a million dollars for Housing Works.

And Design on a Dime is only one of an array of events across the country that raise funds for worthy causes. Since it



was founded in 1973, the Kips Bay Decorator Show House has grown to become the most prestigious show house in the country, with proceeds benefiting the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club in the Bronx, helping to improve the lives of thousands of children. Trade Secrets, held each May in Sharon, Connecticut, is a garden tour and rare-plant and garden-antiques sale headed up by Bunny Williams that provides funds for Women's Support Services. And hundreds more show houses, lectures, benefits, auctions, luncheons, and tours are held across the country to help hospitals, veterans, local food banks, historic preservation, breast cancer, and many other causes.

Especially at this moment, when the social safety net is being stretched ever thinner, there is nothing less frivolous than the creativity, hard work, and passion that the design industry invests in improving the lives of so many Americans.

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Good works.
FROM TOP: Trade Secrets in Sharon, Connecticut. Matthew Patrick Smyth's vignette for Design on a Dime 2017. Richard Mishaan's living room at this year's Kips Bay Decorator Show House.

