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# HOUSE

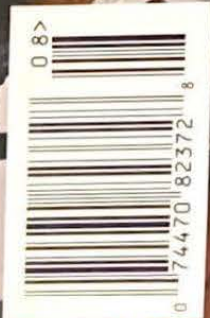
DESIGN • ARCHITECTURE • LIFESTYLE

**The 2008 Designer  
Show House**

**Terrace designed by  
Natalie Weinstein**

*Protection in  
the art world*

**Greg Norman's Doonbeg**



## LONG ISLAND FOCUS

# The 2008 Showhouse begins at the Lane Estate-Nissequoque, NY

BY NATALIE WEINSTEIN, ASID

For a month this June, the former Lane Estate relived its past glory housing a designer show house sponsored by its owners, Syd and Deborah Dufton. History buffs, they purchased the estate a decade ago and spent the entire time restoring and upgrading the residence built in 1860 as a Shingle Style Victorian for William Matheson. The mansion was later purchased by Albert A. Stewart, director and stockholder in the Barnum and Bailey Circus, whose friend, New York City Mayor William Gaynor, lived down the road at Deepwells (see House Magazine March/April 2007). Mr. Stewart, a first class passenger on the Titanic, died at sea. In 1914, James W. Lane, owner of JH Lane and Company, a prominent New York cotton merchandising firm, purchased the Lane Estate, christening it "Suffolk House." Retaining Boston architect Arthur Little, the exterior was re-designed in the Greek Revival style, including 20' high Corinthian columns. To avoid the Long Island Sound's high winds, Lane also moved the house off the water and back to a hilltop.

In the last ten years, thanks to the Dufton's, plumbing, heating, electric and septic tanks have been upgraded or replaced. Structurally sound and given the



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"go ahead" by many engineers (it even has a granite foundation), the couple moved in and started to raise a family. Deborah, a member of the DAR and a Mayflower descendent and Syd, an entrepreneur and Teddy Roosevelt aficionado, were the perfect couple to appreciate the past and preserve their new

home for the future. Syd had recently sold his software company and devoted 12 hour days to restoration work. It took three years alone to chemically remove over 35 layers of paint on the exterior and re-apply a new coat echoing the original look.

Recently the Duftons moved to the North Fork of Long Island and were encouraged to subdivide this property and sell the home in pieces. Instead, they decided to feature their home in a Designer Show House and start a company that would seek other suitable mansions for future Show Houses. I met the Duftons when I was invited to participate in this first endeavor and was immediately impressed with them and their home. Because the estate was originally decorated by famed interior designer Elsie de Wolfe, a woman whose work and style I greatly admire, I was particularly pleased that the house still boasts her Chinoiserie wallpaper mural, carved marble fireplace, gilded cornice, trellised walls, a working marble fountain and even a rooster mosaic. Elsie de Wolfe, also known as Lady Mendl (1865-1950) was considered by many the first lady of interior decoration, a trendsetter who railed against the clutter and drabness of Victorian décor. She was introduced to James Lane by his neighbor, the



noted architect, Stanford White who recommended her after her huge success designing the Colony Club in Manhattan. White was also the one who got her the job at The Colony Club which took her to the next level.

A little about Elsie de Wolfe:

The early 1900's had shown an increasing interest in interior decoration. Perhaps the world had enough of dark and depressing interiors and was ready for a change, or Elsie was. Her childhood was not a happy one, her mother often telling her she was ugly. From her autobiography she recounts that she didn't quite know what ugly was until she came home from school one day to her parents redecorated drawing room:

"She ran [in]... and looked at the walls, which had been papered in a [William] Morris design of gray palm-leaves and splotches of bright red and green on a background of dull tan. Something terrible that cut like a knife came up inside her. She



*Deborah and Syd Dufton, owners of the Lane Estate and show producers, in front of Elsie de Wolfe creations, circa 1913.*

threw herself on the floor, kicking with stiffened legs, as she beat her hands on the carpet.... she cried out, over and over: "It's so ugly! It's so ugly."

Elsie's sensibilities affected a whole generation, not only influencing the rich and famous in New York, but in Paris and London as well. Her book *"The House in Good Taste,"* published in 1913, attracted much media attention which she happily embraced. She was definitely unique as a personality - former actress, suspected lesbian until she married, career pioneer, socialite and legendary party giver. Remembered in Cole

Porter songs, for her motto "Never complain, never explain," dyeing her hair blue and performing handstands, she was a consummate designer, popularizing animal prints, faux finishes, comfortable chaise lounges, delicate writing decks, potted palms, Persian rugs and gilded mirrors. Her influences in the art of living are still with us today - over 50 years after she became a legend in her own time. What a great thrill to design in a home with Elsie de Wolfe's style and flair still present. The Lane estate is truly a treat for not only followers of Show Houses, but anyone interested in interior design. ■

2008 Designer Showhouse, Nissequogue





Natalie Weinstein  
Team Leader  
Rosalie Camarda

The serene and elegant bedroom, bath and veranda take us back to a by-gone time when life was slower paced and more formal. Traditionalists, today, will appreciate the antique furnishings and fixtures, hand made silk oriental rug, magnificent trompe l'oeil mural surrounding the marble fireplace and hand painted cement floor in the bathroom. From the vintage needlepoint pillows to the beautifully dressed antique cradle with its turn of the century reproduction doll, attention to detail abounds. The large space (19'7" X 33'7") is a treasure trove of collectibles highlighted in soft colors and elegant fabrics, making each area of the room a memorable vignette. ■

PHOTOS BY JACK ADER/IMAGES FOR PRESENTATION