

MARIANNE MAES

Marianne Maes Interiors, Inc.
House & Garden Color Showhouse
at the Havemeyer Mansion
Mahwah, NJ

Although pressure packed, the first show-house experience can be exhilarating, interesting, and humorous but for New Jersey-based interior designer Marianne Maes it also prompted an ersatz marriage proposal. Elegantly dressed for Press Day, Maes rescued a fellow designer in need of a drill. However, he was so tense he had difficulty operating it, so in heels and silk dress she installed his shower curtain rod. Impressed and grateful, he "proposed" and she "accepted."

That really made him nervous!

"It is like theater. The show rushes to production and must go on. It was exciting," says Maes who designed a bedroom. "I intuitively felt the history of the mansion as I walked through it." Drawing on the experiences of her grandmother, who was a handmaiden to a wealthy woman, she decided to create that woman's private bedroom as she envisioned it.

Entitled "Segno di Primavera" meaning "Signs of Spring," the room is infused with elegant, rich textiles imported from France, Belgium, and Italy. Hand embroidered, cotton linens and a cashmere blanket are amenities to which the woman, in Mae's memory, would have been accustomed.

The main obstacle was the room's scale and lack of uninterrupted walls. A seating area was established by using a hand-painted screen to hide a closet door in a corner of the room. It "provided height and softness to a very harsh corner." Maes then "corrected" the scale by cleverly joining the two windows with one treatment. The walls were finished in Venetian plaster, authentic in that it was, literally, marble and limestone powder, hand polished as it was applied. "It finishes looking like a slab of marble," notes Maes.

The "creamy butter" color combined nicely with the soft textures, hand cut velvet headboard, velvet chair, and silk draperies. An Aubusson rug was laid on top of a butter colored, wool loop "sisal" wall-to-wall carpet. "It sounds like a 'mish mosh' but was really like a variety of wine; colors and fibers all joined together with a marvelously subtle and effective result," remarks Maes.



INSPIRED BY STORIES of her grandmother's days as a handmaiden, Maes strove to recreate the woman's bedroom, which she had been envisioning since she was a child.