

Expounding on a Legacy

In Glen Cove, New York, a Fresh Look for a Third Generation of Scalamandré

Interior Design by Jeff Lincoln/Text by Wendy Moonan/Photography by John M. Hall



A LOT COULD HAVE GONE WRONG after Mark Bitter, co-president of Scalamandré, asked an old friend, the Manhattan designer Jeff Lincoln, to decorate his house on the north shore of Long Island.

The two men—both successful and in closely related professions—have a lot in common. In fact, they grew up together on Long Island's affluent Gold Coast. As adults, both became third-generation scions of family businesses.

In 1929 Mark's grandfather Franco Scalamandré, an immigrant from Italy, founded the Scalamandré firm in New York. Today it is renowned for its fine, historically inspired silks, wools, linens and cottons, wallcoverings and elaborate trims. For more than 75 years the company has supplied luxurious work to interior designers and important public institutions such as the White House, Mount Vernon and Colonial Williamsburg.

Jeff Lincoln's grandmother established her own interior design business in the 1940s, with offices on Long Island and Park Avenue. Her son Frank took over

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Designer Jeff Lincoln fashioned an inviting, classic interior for Mark Bitter, co-president of Scalamandré, and his wife, Wiggie. Scalamandré fabrics were used throughout. ABOVE LEFT: The front entrance of the Federal-style house, in Glen Cove, New York. ABOVE: A Gustavian clock and antique *faux-marbre* columns enhance the living room.



“The eclectic use of fabrics obviates the overly ‘done’ effect. I wanted it to be both formal and informal.”

“A house is soulless if it’s too perfect,” Lincoln says. LEFT: Elsewhere in the living room, he harmonized an array of fabric patterns and textures. A giltwood mirror adds luster. Sisal carpet, Stark.

BELOW: Lincoln used red damask on the dining room walls “like paper,” he says, “so you don’t get the overly lush, grandmotherly look.” The vibrant wallcovering and draperies play off the traditional mahogany furniture.

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the firm in the 1950s and did so well he opened a second office in Vero Beach, Florida. In the 1980s he moved the business, Frank J. Lincoln Interiors, to Vero Beach permanently. Fifteen years ago he decided to close his New York office, and Jeff Lincoln suddenly found himself interested. “I had never wanted to do interior design,” he says. “I had graduated from Columbia Journalism School and was working at *The Wall Street Journal*, but I felt a certain pride and wanted to keep the family business going.” In 1996 he founded Jeff Lincoln Interiors.

Three years ago Mark Bitter and his wife, Wiggie (a nickname for Willa), who is Scalamandrè’s director of marketing, called Jeff Lincoln after buying a Federal-style house in Meadowspring, an exclusive enclave of estates in Glen Cove. The house, built in the 1900s, was charming in an old-fashioned way. Today the 6,500-square-foot residence might be considered a bit cozy: It has a small entrance hall leading to the long, narrow living room, a narrow dining room, the kitchen and, behind it, a small family room. The Bitters appreciate it because they like being close to their three girls, all under the age of 16.

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"I wanted the interior to look classic, comfortable and youthful," the designer explains. Lincoln also intended to use a wide range of Scalamandré fabrics in an edited, detailed way. "After all, the client is the owner of one of the finest fabric houses," he says.

In the dining room, Lincoln employed a red-and-yellow palette and an abundance of patterns to enliven the long, dark room. "The decorating here is 70 percent fabrics," he says. He began by installing draperies in a cheerful yellow, red and white plaid. The walls, which he upholstered in a soft red damask, serve as a backdrop for the Bitters' collection of mahogany furniture and blue-and-white porcelain. ("Jeff has the ability to take what's there and make it better," Wiggie Bitter remarks.) To soften the look, Lincoln ordered a custom-braided rug "to bring the formality down a notch," Lincoln says.

The sunny living room takes its cue from the gilding on the elegant 18th-century Swedish wall clock: The four antique *faux-marbre* columns on the mantel, the



ABOVE: "Thoroughly country," is how Lincoln describes the décor in the family room, where he established the ambience using a pheasant-print linen-and-cotton fabric for the sofa and draperies and a pillow. The wing chair check, ottoman stripe, plaid rug and pine breakfront underscore the room's relaxed, rustic atmosphere.



ABOVE: The master bedroom. With its silk-covered walls and floral canopy, headboard and bed skirt, Lincoln crafted a "plush, upholstered environment with a shot of Neoclassical formality," he remarks. It's now Wiggie Bitter's favorite room.
ABOVE RIGHT: Using pattern on pattern, Lincoln created depth in the guest room.



large mirror and the wrought-iron all have gilt trim. "I like taking modern and traditional and mixing them," Lincoln says. "But you have to be careful; you can't mix just anything."

The furnishings include a leopard-print ottoman, a striped slipper chair, two leopard-print settees and two lush table lamps. The rug is sisal, "for texture and informality," Lincoln says. "After all, you are in the country." He chose simple window treatments.

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"You don't need pyrotechnics to impress people," explains Lincoln (top left, standing, with Wiggie and Mark Bitter). TOP RIGHT: The rear terrace is brightened by a golden palette. "Being southern, I love yellow and sunlight," says Wiggie Bitter, who grew up in South Carolina. ABOVE: The sunroom. On the tables flanking the toile de Jouy-covered sofa rest a pair of antique Staffordshire poodles. The windows offer a view of the backyard and playhouse, which is modeled after the main house.

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ments "to help elevate the low-ceilinged space," he says, adding: "The eclectic use of fabrics obviates the overly 'done' effect. I wanted it to be both formal and informal with light Neoclassical references."

The more casual sunroom is a riot of green-and-white pattern. The walls and sofa are covered in a toile de Jouy; the draperies and club chairs are in a check. "It's a fresh scheme to evoke the outdoors," he says. Somehow, nothing clashes.

The master bedroom is a tour de force. Before Lincoln was hired, the Bitters had had the walls upholstered in striped silk. "It was a disaster, like a padded cell," Wiggie Bitter recalls. "We were so unhappy. But Jeff seems to come up with a solution to every problem."

Lincoln decided to hang on the walls long rectangular panels of diamond-quilted celadon silk taffeta, each trimmed with a Greek-key tape. "They give architecture to the room," he says. He then used a classic chintz for the headboard, canopy and bed skirt and added glamour with two mirrored bedside tables. Now the room is Wiggie Bitter's favorite. "There's a certain godliness to the details," she says. "A lot of designers just don't have it."

Both Bitters are thrilled with Lincoln's work and speed; the project was all done in eight months. "The house has a youthful spirit," says Wiggie Bitter. "Jeff added elements that cut out the stuffiness."

In fact, Mark Bitter has asked Lincoln to style Scalamandré's showrooms and create a new line of upholstered furniture. Old friends have found a new synergy. □