



SLEEP TIGHT IN THIS ATTIC HIDEAWAY

A HISTORIC STORYTELLING FABRIC IS SOMETHING TO DREAM ABOUT

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When it comes to selecting a bedroom color, most people wouldn't think of picking red. But that's exactly what Chicago interior designer Kent Kiesey chose for this charming bedroom suite, which occupies the third-floor garret of a circa-1880 stone house his clients meticulously restored in the city's north-side neighborhood of Lake View.

Kiesey has an impressive pedigree in residential design,

beginning with sixteen years at Marshall Field & Company, in Chicago. Nationally respected for his layered use of luxurious fabrics and trims that bring traditional beauty and comfort to interiors, he's particularly fond of soft coverings by Scalaman-dré, the famed American manufacturer and importer that's been called upon for the restoration of historic fabrics in important interiors like the White House, Monticello, and Hearst



Castle, among others. Scalamandré offers an unparalleled selection of fabrics, silk trimmings, hand-blocked wall coverings, and broadloom carpets.

“Red is really the best color for a bedroom,” Kiesey says, “because when you walk in, the room wraps its arms around you and puts you in a comfort zone that a less-intense color doesn’t offer.”

To enhance this effect, Kiesey chose to cover the walls and sloped ceiling of two guest bedrooms and a connecting hallway in Scalamandré’s red Pillement Toile, a classical Chinoiserie fabric that depicts landscapes and charming imagined scenes of Chinese life. The design is based on engravings by the 18th-century French artist Jean-Baptiste Pillement, which he did as early as 1755. “Toile exudes a certain feeling like no other fabric does,” says Kiesey, adding that since the house sits on a busy one-way street, soundproofing was particularly important in the guest quarters. By adding a layer of batting underneath the carefully matched copper-engraved linen and actually upholstering the walls, he was

successful. “Being in the room is like being under a big flannel blanket or having your hands over your ears,” he says. “There’s a complete lack of noise.”

Kiesey continued the Far East theme by constructing a flat window valance inspired by a Japanese pagoda, with tiny gilded wooden bells that echo the slope of the ceiling for an extra detail. Simple curtains for the windows, a slipcover for a leather sofa, pillow shams, and a duvet cover are all done in toile, bringing a sense of cohesiveness to the interior that makes it extra cozy.

Dark-stained bead board paneling was repainted in a creamy white to match the background of the fabric. The owners discovered a circa-1860 head and footboard adorned with a Della Robbia medallion and floral swags, in rusted condition. The distressed nickel plating has now been handsomely restored, and the bed anchors the room. An antique matelasse bed covering with hand-tatted lace complements a cream-colored wool bed skirt, elaborately embroidered with crewel technique by Chelsea Textiles in London. As a crowning touch, Victorian-era English tapestries were cut and re-sewn to make accent pillows for the bed.

Part of the charm of Kiesey’s designs comes from his eye for small details. The bedside lamp is custom made from an antique cinnabar vase, fitted with a pleated shade in Scalamandré’s red plaid; it was made by Blanche P. Field in Boston, a company that has been producing exquisite custom shades and lighting since 1905, when they began outfitting estates and resorts in posh Newport, Rhode Island. “The shade is lined in pink silk, so you get a lovely glow when the light is turned on,” says Kiesey, adding, “like you’re walking inside of a fireplace.”

Another unexpected and fun detail is the chocolate ocelot-patterned wall-to-wall carpeting, which Kiesey admits is “completely atypical, . . . especially when there is toile all over the place.” The carpet runs into a tiny nook that was curtained off with more Pillement Toile and furnished with a theater chair from the lobby of a Victorian theater in England, re-upholstered and tufted in the same red cotton plaid as the bedroom lamp. “It’s a great place to read or put your shoes on in the morning,” Kiesey notes.

The adjoining bath is a fresh, playful room, with its Colefax and Fowler red striped wallpaper, which Kiesey used to emphasize the sharp angles of the ceiling and make it seem as though one is entering a tent. A claw-foot tub, a 1910 shaving mirror inlaid with mother of pearl, along with a matching shower curtain, Austrian shade, and puff valance in Christopher Norman’s colorful Salwin fabric complete this intimate guest retreat, custom made for a long winter’s nap on a cold Chicago night. ■

