

Atelier Van Houten

Where Artistic Inspiration Flourishes

Story by Abby Luby | Photography by Andrea B. Swenson

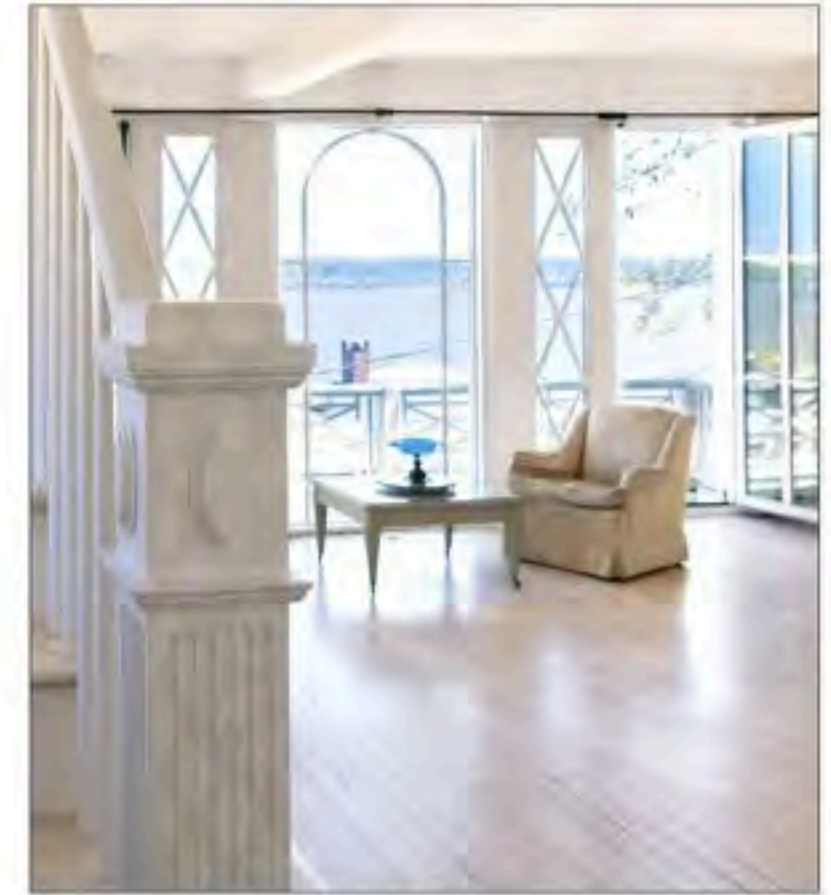
Light infused energy sweeps you off your feet when you walk into Atelier

Van Houten, former home of artist/designer Fritz Krieger. Using daylight as his muse, Krieger redesigned and dramatically reconstructed the 19th century house, drawing our gaze towards the invigorating panorama of the Hudson River.

The cool, effervescent aura throughout the four-story house exalts Krieger's affinity for elegance, nuanced with artful lines and shapes hailing from Victorian, neo classical and Grecian design elements. The 1873 structure was originally built as a bakery whose basement floor entry was on Van Houten Street. Today, the large industrial room with brick walls and built-in old-style bread ovens, was one of Krieger's studios and many of his works are still there.

Krieger first saw the river town house in the Van Houten Landing historic district in the late 1990s and instantly fell in love with it. He created masterful sketches of the house, weaving into his drawings an intention to eventually own the 2,200 square foot house. He envisioned a home and workplace conducive to artful expression where ideas could flow freely — hence "Atelier" — artist's studio. According to one of his oldest friends, Arlene Rodgers, Krieger's discerning eye could perfectly replicate a structure to scale on paper. When he finally purchased the house in 2000

Exterior of east side of home. Note the Georgian styling on the exterior with the fanciful trim work around the windows, Chinese Chippendale and antique iron work railings on top two porches.



Light filled interior features white washed floors and walls of glass facing the river and the historic shipyard in operation since 1792. (Left) Atelier, studio or sleeping space opens to secret triangle shape garden that follows the intersection of Van Houten and Ellen Streets.

and applied to the Nyack Planning board to make structural changes to the house, the board was delighted with Krieger's high art, accurate renderings.

Creating an open, airy atmosphere was a challenge for Krieger who was bent on transforming a house made up of several small cubbies and low ceilings. Krieger took down walls, and raised ceilings, allowing the house to breathe with a new purpose.

Tucked into the Van Houten Landing historic district near the boatyard, the Atelier is buoyant, uplifting, its light blue and white exterior graced with Georgian columns. The porches on the second and third floors are refined with Chinese Chippendale lattice railings and period metal railings. A small "secret" garden on the side of the house nestles under a canopy of large deciduous trees allowing the sun to filter through. The front double door entrance on Ellen Street has antique metal grill-work nestled in a carpet of vines covering the front of the house.

Ushering in the outside light are floor to ceiling windows delicately lined with arches, a shape repeated on windows throughout the house. Erika Szente, a long-time associate and friend of Krieger who specializes in window treatments and fabrics, said some of the windows were aptly adorned with soft white muslin. On the main floor, the white-washed, reclaimed pine wood floors seamlessly connect the open kitchenette, replete with antique carrara marble counters, to the living room space overlooking the Hudson River. Krieger embraced simple but stately lines seen in the delicate rope molding around built-in shelves, the mirrored French doors and the solid neoclassical banisters.

Knowing who Fritz Krieger was lends a greater appreciation to the home and workspace he created on Van Houten Street. Krieger was born in 1936 in Jer-



Top floor triple window with colonnades offers extraordinary views of the Hudson. Opposite page from top, right: Post corner sink with antique brass fixtures in powder room; One of two antique metal grates adorn main entrance door; Early 19th century painted iron railings; Upper porch is open with copper floors and double doors to the living room and kitchen.

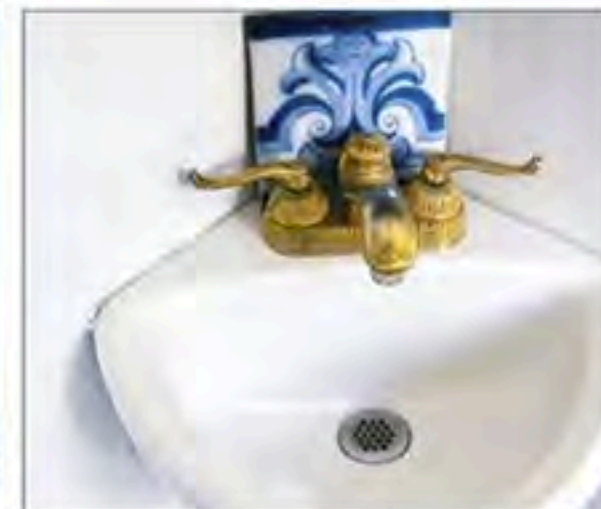
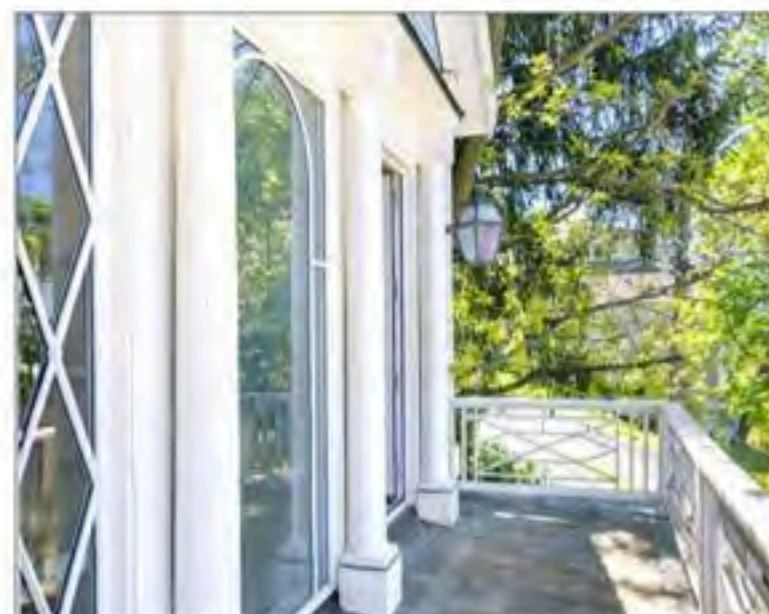
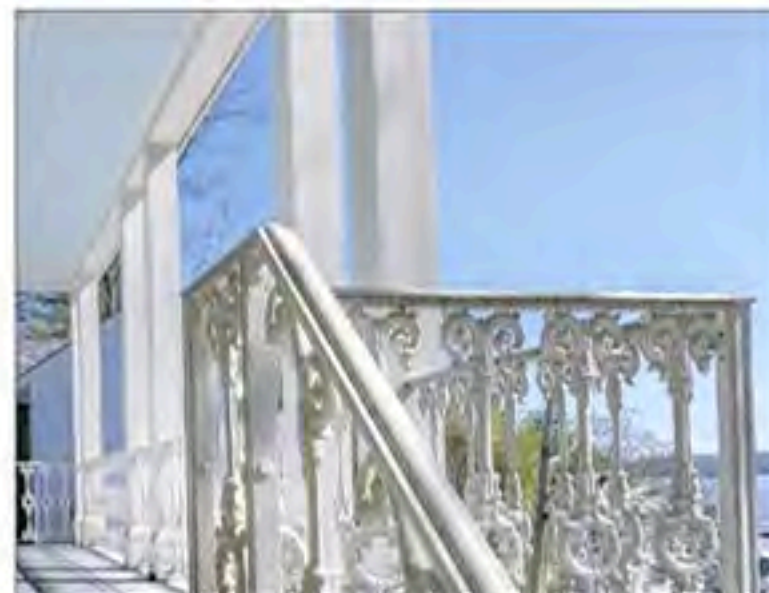
sey City but grew up in Tuxedo Park, a town an hour from Manhattan where he imbibed the history of the gilded age resort and was known to dine with elite descendants of the Astors, Juilliards and Pells (JP) Morgans. In its heyday, formal dinners and proper attire in Tuxedo Park gave men's formal wear its name. Krieger marveled at the stone mansions, Gothic halls, colonial manors, English country houses and French chateaus. Later on, in the early 1970s, he moved back to Tuxedo Park and in 1986 joined a group of Tuxedo preservationists campaigning for a building moratorium; he was often referred to as an informal historian of Tuxedo Park. His later paintings (some still at Atelier Van Houten) recall these stately structures, some are deconstructed almost to abstraction.

The essence of Krieger's exceptional talent and artistic expertise for architecture and design is very much part of this house. The lifestyle

Using daylight as his muse, Krieger redesigned and dramatically reconstructed the 19th century house, drawing our gaze towards the invigorating panorama of the Hudson River.

Krieger embraced was all encompassing, from painting exquisite visual landscapes and abstracts using watercolors, pastels and oils, to his expertise in theatre and design. His was a dashing, familiar figure walking down Broadway in Nyack brandishing a hat and scarf. He easily spoke his mind, expressing his opinions on the aesthetics of any structure or piece of art. Krieger's penchant for tasteful visual enticement saw no limits and his passion for creative expression found its way to numerous homes in the Hudson Valley, on Cape Cod and indeed, to his own very special home, Atelier Van Houten.

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By Abby Luby

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