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EVENTS MEETINGS MARKETING STYLE STRATEGY IDEAS

BUSINESS ENTERTAINING
60 Ideas to Impress the Right
People Right Now



Think Big

AWARD SEASON WRAP-UP

**The Parties, the Gift Lounges,
and All the Best Ideas**

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**10 New Outdoor Venues
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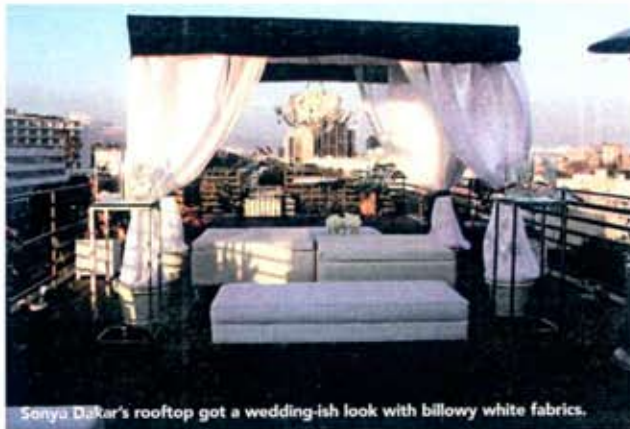
Cool Gifts for Honorees

**How Should Security
Guards Dress?**

Miami's Super Bowl Bonanza



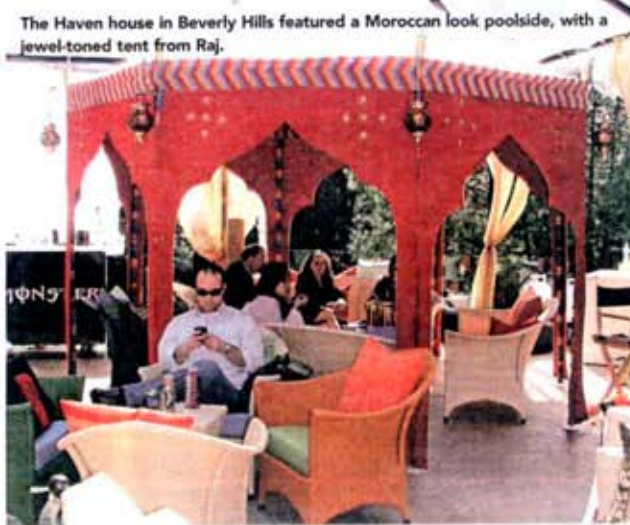
Soho House took over a home in the hills with a \$1 million high-design lounge—and Chesterfield sofas from George Smith worth close to \$50,000 each.



Sonya Dakar's rooftop got a wedding-ish look with billowy white fabrics.



The design at Soho House included abundant animal skins and horns.



The Haven house in Beverly Hills featured a Moroccan look poolside, with a jewel-toned tent from Raj.

At Gift Lounges, Emphasis Is on Design

As swag suites and heavily logoed retreats crowd Academy Award-goers' calendars, marketers are bringing in top designers to differentiate their events from the swarm of others.

ONCE UPON A TIME, IT WAS A FRESH MARKETING IDEA TO distribute products at swag-filled lounges and invite celebrities and the like to trot through. Not so much anymore. With so many of these swag suites and lounges crowding the Hollywood landscape, from the canyons to the Strip, during Oscar week, organizers are now forced to get creative to pull top-tier celebrities and press onto their properties. How are they differentiating their events from the herd? This year, it was all about top design.

For the third year, London and New York's Soho House set up a temporary retreat in the hills above Sunset Boulevard. The private home (most recently used for an *Entourage* shoot) was completely empty, and the Soho House team revolutionized the space in shades of green, blue, and chocolate brown, with animal skins and horns abounding. Designer Amanda Masters oversaw the decor again this year, bringing in unusual props and lighting. And George Smith—the permanent Soho Houses' furniture provider—brought in all the upholstered furniture, about 60 pieces in all. He shipped from the U.K. 12- and 14-foot versions of the 40-foot Chesterfield couch at the New York property. Michelle Thomas, a New York-based designer and the director of showrooms for George Smith, said, "The Soho House is dark and moody, but this time we wanted softer pieces. We kept it fresh with color."

"We just wanted something different," said Soho House's Mark Somen. "We fly out 70 managers from New York and London. The cost is just over \$1 million, which our sponsors help underwrite." (He figures it's worth it: While in L.A., Somen and his team toured possible locations for a planned permanent space—and the pop-up is a way to court members in advance.)

Perhaps a less exclusive milieu, the Haven house took over the grounds of a sprawling Beverly Hills home, with vendors gifting during the day and studios and others throwing parties at night. The centerpiece of the extensive property was a tented lounge area—poolside, visible through a grand, windowed foyer—that featured bright Moroccan decor, including jewel-toned tents from Raj Tents, crystal chandeliers hanging from a trans-

parent roof, and plush lounge furniture from Classic Party Rentals.

Even Sonya Dakar, a spa with limited interior space for additional decor, brought in innovative design for its four-day-long gift-giving event. Carrie Zack, who usually does weddings, designed a rooftop area with Square Root Designs that resembled a beachy Caribbean wedding, with white fabrics that billowed in the L.A. breeze and white flowers dotting the area. Just inside, white flowers in clear glass vases of all shapes and sizes evoked a chic apothecary. In the narrow downstairs hallway—off which vendors hawked their free wares—Zack used the stained-wood ledges along the walls as, simultaneously, clever decor pieces and catering trays. She got pretty desserts (including chocolate-dipped strawberries and crispy treats from Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory in Santa Monica) and placed them on the ledges along with bright pink roses from Elizabeth Bailey.

Not in the category of swag but nonetheless an Oscar lounge was *Architectural Digest's* greenroom at the Oscars, where presenters could relax and nibble before and after the awards (and rehearsals). This is the first year that the Condé Nast pub brought in an interior design firm to create an arty, high-design look. "We've created a room that's based on the beauty of contrast, so you get a lot of dark and light, hot and cold, smooth surfaces and shiny," said Frank Webb of design firm White Webb. "We've got a lot of antiques and art, and there's more of a classical feeling."

The color palette from Soho House could be found in *AD's* greenroom, too. "The upholstery is very sleek—square sofas covered in silk seafoam velvet, and the whole room is chocolate brown," said designer Matthew White. "There are chairs that are very French-deco in feel. It feels polished, clean, sleek, glamorous. All the previous greenrooms were neutral. ... We wanted something with more punch to it. We wanted a richer, clubbier feel."

Also new this year: The greenroom was indeed green, emphasizing environmental sustainability. "Green doesn't mean granola anymore. What we're trying to do is green chic," Webb said. —*Alexandra Dubin*

Swag Hosts Aware of I.R.S. Rules, But So What?

We surveyed some of the organizers of gift-giving events around town, and their responses were unanimous to the question of whether the Internal Revenue Service's new interest in enforcing tax on swag was changing the nature of their events: It's not. Not significantly, anyway. People are aware of the I.R.S.'s increased interest but overwhelmingly continue to leave the onus on their guests to report the gifts they pick up.

The Haven gift house prominently displayed a sign at the check-in table. It read, in part: "Please be advised that the Internal Revenue Service has taken the position that the value of the merchandise that you receive from companies participating in this gifting suite should be reported as taxable income on your U.S. federal income tax return." Once inside, guests were on their own to take—and later to report or not report—what they please.

Christina Martin, who works with Equity Strategic Relations, which produced a three-day series of gift-giving events, took the same tack. "No, [the I.R.S.] hasn't changed things at all," she says. "We report everything, and it's up to the [visitors to the house] to do what they do." Marisa de Saracho, PR and marketing rep for Sonya Dakar—a Beverly Hills spa that hosted a multiday swag event—adds, "The people who are going to be making the most money off this new initiative are the tax accountants [not the I.R.S.]."

Dana Wilkey, president of promotion of product placement and interactive of Adwil, asked, "How is the I.R.S. going to tax all this? What is being given away in many cases is not available to the general public. Like a trip, for example: They might say the room is worth \$1,600, but these rooms aren't really \$1,600 rooms—they're free rooms in this case being used by marketers for the purpose of promotion. They don't have a market value. When the government comes up with a way to administer it, we are happy to follow the rules. Anyway, there's going to be a way to write it all off."