



DERELICTION DECOR

The organisers of Casa Decor are set to transform a disused London building into a design exhibition. *Tally Wade* investigates

'Casa Decor is a contemporary design exhibition unlike anything you'll have ever seen,' says Nick Downie, marketing manager for Casa Decor UK. I am visiting the event's London office to discover the thinking behind the apparent madness of temporarily transforming a derelict building in the City of London into a fully interactive exemplar of architecture, interior and landscape design.

Downie says of the exhibition, which will take place this autumn at Bucklersbury House, Walbrook Square: 'We invite the finest architects and interior designers to create a space with no brief, no rules and no limitations. We then

add the world's most prestigious brands and innovative products.' The event is run in the UK by franchisee Kersti Urvois and participants are free to develop their allocated plot into any inspirational living space, from a loft or apartment to a workplace, hotel environment or child's room. The event's bar and restaurant areas will host a variety of public and private events each night of the exhibition. A successful London pilot event was held in Covent Garden last year.

The organisers are based in Urvois' home, and following a three-week set-up period, the spaces will be photographed for

the exhibition catalogue, which is on sale at the event. The exhibition will run for one month and the organisers hope to attract 50-60,000 visitors. The dismounting period will last for 10 days, during which Casa Decor participants must return their space to its original condition.

The Casa Decor concept was founded in Argentina over 20 years ago by Javier Campos and has spread worldwide with annual events held in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Porto, Lisbon, Miami and Turin.

Casa Decor also raises funds for AIDS and cancer charities. Co-owner of Loewe, a fashion company in Milan, and partner of

the AIDS Foundation, franchisee Urvois helped source manufacturers and designers for the Spanish exhibition. She continued to help produce the event following her move to London in 1996, and in 2005 Urvois was ready to bring the concept to the UK. 'I knew London was a hub of creativity, especially of architecture and design and that there was nothing like Casa Decor here in the UK,' she says.

Casa Decor seeks to find a market for good design and places great importance on partnering with prestigious manufacturers from all over the world. 'Every single participant enjoys a great return on Casa Decor,' says Urvois. She adds: 'We also collaborate closely with property developers, to whom we introduce manufacturers. This is a complementary service that we do, to illustrate the great returns participants of Casa Decor receive, even before the show has started!'

And what of the derelict building? Casa Decor has an



excellent track record with investors and building owners including Standard Life, Jones Lang Wootton, Weatherall Green and Smith and Banco Central Hispano.

Urvois says: 'All of our venues have been successfully let or sold, and have subsequently been converted into hotels, residences or redesigned for use in commercial property.'

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CASA DECOR SEEKS DESIGNERS FOR 2008

Casa Décor London is inviting expressions of interest from architects, interior designers and manufacturers for this year's exhibition.

For the 2007 launch – Casa Decor Loft – the Casa Decor organisers teamed up with architects SLAM, Wells Mackereth and Multiply Studio. The SLAM installation

was conceived as a series of spaces that would directly engage with the viewer as they walked around.

SLAM co-founders Amy Lam and Yasser Al-Saheal said: 'We believe that the strength of the Casa Decor design exhibition is the combined experience of the journey through a variety of spaces.'

Far left Number One the Piazza, Covent Garden, location of 2007's Casa Decor Loft
Mid-left EL Lobby, Studio 77 Diseno y Interiorismo, Casa Decor Madrid 2008
Left Metropolitan Suite, Amy Thomas/Equipo

MCC, Casa Decor Madrid 2008
Below left Glenfiddich Bar, Garcia Ruiz Architects, Casa Decor Madrid 2007
Below A Casa Decor concept from SLAM, curator of the London 2008 show