



ROOM TO CELEBRATE

Designed by Douglas Riddle, the new Champagne Room at Bittners grew out of a desire to toast their staff's memorable milestones and incremental achievements.

Written by Bridget Williams / Photography by Robert Burge

"Champagne makes you feel like it's Sunday, and there are better days around the corner." —Marlene Dietrich

The newest addition to Bittners' Main Street showroom in Louisville is discretely tucked into a quiet corner of the main floor, a hidden gem in a glistening crown of coverable vignettes. Finished just before the declaration of the pandemic, the Champagne Room at Bittners now idles like a dolled-up debutante awaiting an invitation to dance. "Once the Governor gives us the green light, we'll be ready," said Douglas Riddle, President of Bittners, who designed the space with the assistance of team members Lisa Parker, Sara Asbury, and Chad Cobb.

A directive from Riddle's former boss in the fashion industry served as the impetus for the project. "She told me that it was imperative to celebrate success," he explained. Following one

particularly fruitful day some two decades ago, this boss took Riddle to a small champagne bar in New York City. With great enthusiasm, he still recalls the impression the bar's blush-colored glasses and napkins made on him as they toasted their accomplishment.

Riddle said his co-workers are a bit like the proverbial children of the shoemaker. "They create the most beautiful spaces for others, but when it comes time for them to celebrate, outside of our annual picnic in the garden or our holiday dinner, they largely gather in our breakroom," he explained. Riddle spent a year-and-a-half sourcing art and antiques for the Francophile-focused Champagne Room. The eclectic and subtly feminine flair of the space is a purposeful attempt to express the uniqueness and composition of his team. "We have a 165-year history of remarkable people here," he said.





Displayed gallery wall-style, the room's artwork is a mixture of black-and-white photography and original art. Of the photographs, Riddle is apt to let his mind wander about the life of subjects captured in a frozen moment in time. "I like the humor inferred in each," he explained. Seeming ever so timely now in the era of *Tiger King*, the elevated alternative in the Champagne Room depicts a beret-wearing gentleman enjoying an alfresco drink at a bistro with an exotic cat in his lap. A family picnicking on a pyramid, an artist and his horse in a living room, and a beautiful woman gazing at her reflection beneath a crystal chandelier are all perfect fodder for creating fanciful backstories.

A gilded palm tree torchiere placed in front of a 19th-century French mirrored panel screen occupies the corner between the gallery walls. The green fronds of the torchiere's living counterpart on the opposite side of the room direct the eye upwards to a golden ceiling, artfully executed by Dave Potter, and a vintage-inspired tiered semi-flush mount light fixture from Visual Comfort.

The opulence continues onto the upholstery, which includes sumptuous silk and velvet. A vintage slipper chair is covered in fabric from Jim Thompson. A pair of tight-back Lee Industries settees with sinewy gamas are dressed with tufted pillows from Zimmer Rohde. The striped pillows call to mind slices of Neapolitan ice cream. Cork flooring is both a fitting choice for the room's function and a foil for loads of lustrousness.

Behind a service bar from Baker Furniture is a wall of built-in cabinetry and display space made by the woodworking shop at Bittners. The room's most special artwork—a figural drawing by American artist Harold Mesibov (1926-2012)—is flanked by shelves holding delicate pink flutes that bring Riddle's fond reminiscences to life. An Italian hand-rubbed gilt frame gives the artwork extra emphasis against a backdrop of Nina Campbell wallpaper.

Riddle is looking forward to the day when the room's effervescence isn't just contained to the bottles of bubbly kept there. "It will be so wonderful to gather everyone together in celebration again," he said. ⁵⁴