

Dynamic Design Partnership  
Brings New Life to  
Butterfly Studio

BY KELLY HUSHIN  
**Cross**



**A**fter joining forces with owner Kattia Solano to create a new design for her Butterfly Studio hair salon in Manhattan, Robert D. Henry discovered that typically contrasting ideas can coexist in an environment that is both "comfy-chic" and modern.

For Henry, principal of Robert D. Henry Architects, whose credentials include prestigious projects like the spa at the Mar-a-Lago Club for Donald Trump, Butterfly Studio used elements even he said are new to his style. The reason the new salon works? Henry attributes it to seamless teamwork between both he and Solano.

"Kattia reflects the new direction of people. She's multicultural. She's hopeful. The place isn't edgy. It's not boring. It's balanced and it's got a careful interplay," he said.

And it seems that the personal respect was mutual.

"To be honest, when I came to work in New York and I went to meet with Bob, I thought he was way out of my league," said Solano. "But the reality was that, through talking with him, we began seeing this vision of something completely different than what he'd done, and something completely different from what's going on in the industry."

The architect/hair-stylist collaboration spawned a "lounge-y" creation that integrates Henry's contemporary aesthetic with Solano's energetic distinction and Latin American roots.

A hint of Solano's Costa Rican flair pervades the modern architecture through rich orange accents, deep earthy wood and lively green plants. Solano brought some of her heritage into the waiting area by displaying the wares of some Latin American jewelry designers (many are her employees).

Left: Kérastase Center: The L'Oréal Kérastase Treatment Institute with glass walls that change from transparent to opaque with the flip of a switch; Right: Robert D. Henry

# Pollination



Further integrating nature into the 4,000-square-foot loft space, Henry designed a two-foot-wide Koi pond into the waiting area's wenge-wood platform. Solano had a vision of an infinity pool and the in-ground Koi pond was Henry's practical and inventive compromise.

"I told Henry I didn't want him just to build me a 'nice' salon, it had to be functional," said Solano. Borrowing light from the wrap-around windows and openness from the high ceilings, Henry designed a space which is comforting to old clients and intriguing to new. "The difference couldn't be more than night and day," said Henry. "She's now in a very desirable, prime, 5th Avenue location. We knew that building type so well, she said if we don't do something totally new,

why bother?"

Though it would be easy to lose sight of a "comfy" feeling in such a massive loft in the heart of Manhattan, neither Henry nor Solano allowed the other to do so. A refrigerator and custom-designed, orange, sofa-like seating area in the waiting room create a "VIP" feeling for waiting clients, said Henry.

"We want people to know somebody thought about them," he said. "Kattia wants people to feel that it's been beautifully crafted. The design allows people to be more comfortable, to feel more sexy. A lot of our other work gets so big; it's hard to maintain that."

"We created a super-long, 40 or 50-foot stylist bar which

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—BOB HENRY

creates for a really convivial experience borrowing from the natural light," said Henry. "The stylist bar is sort of a social condenser, it's very chatty." While the stylist bar is fundamentally striking, Henry said he inserted lots of "vignettes," or "poetic moments," as the team called them.

Three 14-foot-tall, orange, Naugahyde changing cabanas that suspend from the ceiling and float inches above the floor create one of these "moments." The L'Oréal Color Bar makes another. Everything from the first thing clients touch (custom wenge-wood door poles) to the etched-pewter of the cabinetry tops has been, as Henry said, "carefully concerned."

Henry adorned the L'Oréal Kérastase Treatment Institute — a distinguishing aspect of the salon — with glass walls that change from transparent to opaque with the flip of a switch. Because no other hair-salon in Manhattan offers the 45-minute hair therapy and massage treatment, Henry wanted to give Solano's clients the opportunity to have a spa experience within a lounge setting. "The Kérastase liquid crystal lounge creates a very cocooning, special experience just for you, all about you," said Henry. "You're in a large buzzing salon but then all of a sudden you're in these extremely unique Philippe Starck chairs and it's a very reductive environment."

"It's a modern design, but it's not so modern that you're not going to be comfortable," said Solano. **BD**

Below: 3 14-foot-tall, orange, Naugahyde changing cabanas



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### Butterfly Studio

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#### WHY IT MADE THE LIST

When Kattia Solano decided to open her own salon three years ago, she knew exactly what she wanted: to provide clients with fashion-forward, sophisticated services all within a fun, friendly atmosphere. When Solano relocated to the Flatiron District about a year ago, she made sure to reflect this idea of friendly openness in the décor, enlisting the help of New York architect Robert D. Henry to create a loft-like space with few walls. Steel workstations and white Philippe Starck basins evoke sexy elegance, while a rich patina of woods, ultra-suede sofas, soft hues of orange and a tropical koi pond create a relaxing environment. Private changing cabanas and personal handbag drawers further personalize the experience.

Solano also brings years of experience to the table—she's been an editorial stylist and worked at Frederic Fekkai Salon and the John Barrett Salon.

The salon is also home to a L'Oréal Professionnel Color Bar where clients can consult with their colorist as well as a Kérastase Treatment Institute, a glass room in which clients can enjoy personalized hair and scalp treatments. "The room is so open, you can see the whole salon," says Solano, "but with the touch of a switch we can fog

Changing cabanas



up the glass." After a comprehensive hair and scalp evaluation, the hairdresser might prescribe the Age Recharge Treatment, which strengthens chemically treated and dehydrated hair, or the Aqua-Oleum Treatment, which softens coarse hair and helps color last longer and stay more vibrant.

Solano is also big on education and is always sending her staff out to further their training with companies such as Vidal Sassoon and L'Oréal Professionnel. She also has her friends come in to teach special techniques, like razor cutting or new techniques for creating updos.

#### PRODUCT LINES CARRIED

Kérastase Paris, Textureline by L'Oréal Professionnel, Paula Dorf, Slatkin Body Care and candles, Magic Move



Clients can consult with a colorist at the L'Oréal Professionnel Color Bar.