

**Clockwise from top:** Among Miriam Ellner's works are a gilded sky for a Kips Bay Decorator Show House room by Celerie Kemble; a mirrored wall with flowering vines and Moghul-style arches for designer Sean Johnson; and Louis XVI-style panels for a Manhattan entrance hall created by Michael Simon. Ellner in her studio. For details see Sources.



## GOLDEN AGE

Verre églomisé by Miriam Ellner casts a new light on an ancient craft

In a sunny studio in the West Chelsea area of Manhattan, all that glitters isn't necessarily gold. Miriam Ellner is an expert in verre églomisé—the ancient technique of coating the reverse of a piece of glass with delicate metal leaf, etching patterns into it, and often adding color—and she is certainly experienced in gilding.

But she also employs mica powder and crushed abalone to create her special effects. "Whatever works to get the look," she says. "The better you know your materials, the more you understand the possibilities." In Ellner's hands, tables appear inlaid with micromosaic landscapes and backsplashes bear flocks of birds.

A modern dancer turned decorative painter, Ellner came across verre églomisé while studying at the Institut Supérieur de Peinture Van der Kelen-Logelain in Brussels. She was captivated by the process, named for Jean-Baptiste Glomy, an 18th-century French dealer who sold drawings framed by glass borders glinting with gold. "Verre églomisé is like a moving painting," Ellner says, "because it changes depending on the angle at which you look at it." It's quite laborious too: A dining-table top can take as long as five months

to complete, using tools ranging from gilder's mops to wood styli.

For Celerie Kemble's library in this year's Kips Bay Decorator Show House in New York City, Ellner installed a glass-paneled ceiling depicting a luminous sky. At London's Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, she graced the restaurant Bar Boulud with a heroically overscale damask pattern. She made the walls of a dining room by Michael Simon blossom into a Monet-inspired garden glimmering with 22K-gold trelliswork. "One of Miriam's outstanding talents is that she works in almost any taste imaginable," says Simon. For Ellner, however, Monsieur Glomy's namesake artistry is more than a venerable practice with myriad applications. "It's part of who I am, what I do, and how I see things," she observes. "I'd be a mess if I didn't work with my hands." —TIM MCKEOUGH