



Target Embraces Old South for Collection Launch

The retailer unveiled its new products from designer Thomas O'Brien with a whimsical event on Governors Island that mixed Southern and Victorian influences.

Like **Michael Graves**, **Isaac Mizrahi**, and **Cynthia Rowley** before him, interior designer **Thomas O'Brien** (of New York-based **Aero Studios**) is the most recent design pro to turn out a cheap, chic collection for **Target**. The retailer celebrated the launch of the Vintage Modern collection—its largest to date, with everything from furniture to flatware—with a stylish, Southern-style event at **Governors Island**.

Guests traveled to the island via **New York Water Taxis**, where they got a hint of the theme, sipping mint juleps from bars onboard. On the island, guests found the jazzy sounds of **Michael Arenella and His Dreamland Orchestra** and a path of paper bag lanterns leading to the event. The short walk ended at the **Admiral's House**, an imposing mansion with a long portico and tall white columns that served as a model house to show off how consumers can use the new products at home.

David Stark of **Avi Adler**—who worked with **Aimee Roesler**, Target's senior specialist in events marketing, on the event—commented that "coming here was like going to the Old South." And the setting's faintly Southern air made for a cute, subtle vibe for the whole event. Stark used blowups of 19th-century clip art of Victorian-style illustrations as fanciful props throughout the house in scenarios showcasing the new products. He recreated the house's library as a bathroom, with an illustration of an antique claw-foot bathtub, and O'Brien's collection of bath towels stacked in the bookshelves, towers of stacked bars of **Ivory** soap, and rolls of toilet paper. In other rooms, a decorative canopy drawing stood in for a bed headboard, and an image of a fancy daybed helped display the collection's pillows. In the kitchen Stark glued together flatware, dishes, glasses, and carafes to form **Dr. Seuss**-like towers topping the counters and cascading out of the sink.

Working at the historic location meant having to work around some stipulations, though. For instance, nothing could touch the walls or ceilings—no rigging is allowed. Stark worked around that by creating faux walls with screens covered with sheets from the Vintage Modern collection.

In a large clear tent behind the house, **Creative Edge Parties** served up Southern fixin's, including a selection of stews: gumbo, shrimp étouffée, and jambalaya, all spooned into cute enamel mugs from **Party Rental**. Passed hors d'oeuvres included oyster and shrimp po'boys, and fried catfish on collard greens. To enter the tent, guests passed through the house's rear porch, its double staircase leading to the party below, with the sound of Southern blues performed by **Hazmat Modine** and the smell of corn fritters wafting in the air. Built-in charm evocative of the South was the pretty scene from the veranda—a view of the water and Brooklyn framed by arching old trees. It wasn't Savannah, but it worked.

—Mark Mavrigian