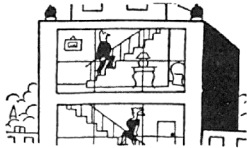


THE NEW YORKER

JANUARY 22, 2007

OUR CHANGING WORLD CABLE GUY



Passersby negotiating Columbus Circle during the next few weeks will be unable to help noticing an enormous square box floating in the lofty lobby of the Time Warner Center, lit from within like a Japanese lantern and looming disconcertingly over the escalators that descend to Whole Foods. This is Time Warner's Home to the Future, an installation contrived to showcase the cable company's up-to-the-moment-and-beyond offerings for digitally enhanced living. In the future that is promised by Time Warner's perplexingly prepositioned Home to the Future, kitchens will be equipped with laptops for looking up recipes; family rooms will have streaming media that everyone, not just the adolescents in the family, will know how to turn on; and the TV in the bedroom will be tuned, a substantial amount of the time, to the karaoke channel.

The Home to the Future is the creation of Edwin Schlossberg, who the other day was at the Time Warner Center checking on his brainchild's progress in advance of its official opening. He explained that the installation, which is made from an aluminum truss and scrim of open-weave fabric upon which light can be projected, was "a very New York kind of thing. It's layered, and has eye-catching jewels in it, just as when you look down here"—he gestured toward Fifty-ninth Street—"you see the layers of things, until a traffic light stops your eye." Whether anything inside the Time Warner Center can rightly be referred to as a very New York kind of thing—it seems a mere accident of ge-

ography that the building itself is not being heralded as a very Houston or a very Atlanta kind of thing—Schlossberg himself falls into that category. As well as being a creator of high-end signage, he is an artist (he does things with Plexiglas) and an author of books (including one entitled "Interactive Excellence: Defining and Developing New Standards for the Twenty-first Century," and one



Edwin Schlossberg

called "Einstein and Beckett," which consists of an imaginary conversation between the two men). He is also the husband of the mysterious and clever Caroline Kennedy, a role that certainly calls for interactive excellence.

The Schlossberg-Kennedy residence—on Park Avenue—does not exactly fit the paradigm presented by the Time Warner Home to the Future. "We have one television," Schlossberg explained. "No—two," he added after a moment. "There's another TV in the bedroom." (No karaoke there, though Schlossberg says that he has been known to take up the mic at birthday parties for his three children: his signature tune is "New York, New York.") Schlossberg is unintimidated by technology—he wrote

"The Pocket Calculator Game Book," back in 1975—but he admitted that the flat-screen television embedded in a refrigerator in the Home to the Future Bennett—not exactly a man of the future, or even to it, although, as Schlossberg points out, "he's in the present, and the event is happening in five days, so that's the future," which is the kind of logic that's to be expected from someone whose college mentor was Buckminster Fuller. Many New Yorkers, of course, might think that, rather than working on the home of the future, Time Warner would do better to focus on improving service to the homes of the present: who would not gladly forgo a plasma TV in the fridge in exchange for some alternative to waiting around between eight and one for a shambling cable guy to show up? To this proposition, Schlossberg acknowledged that there are limits to the powers of his creativity. "I can't make the cable people arrive on schedule," he said.

—Rebecca Mead