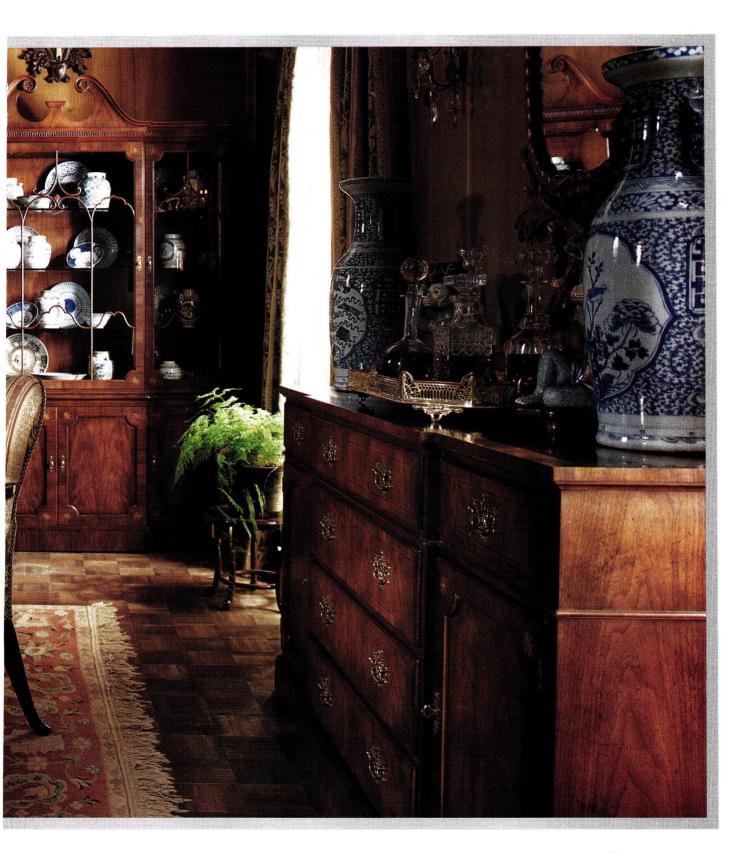


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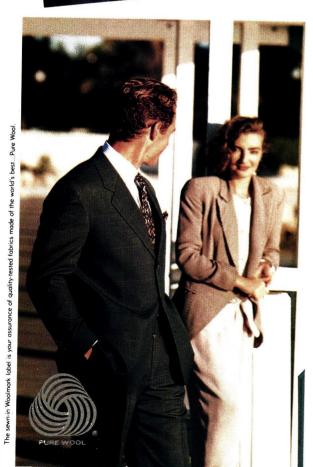
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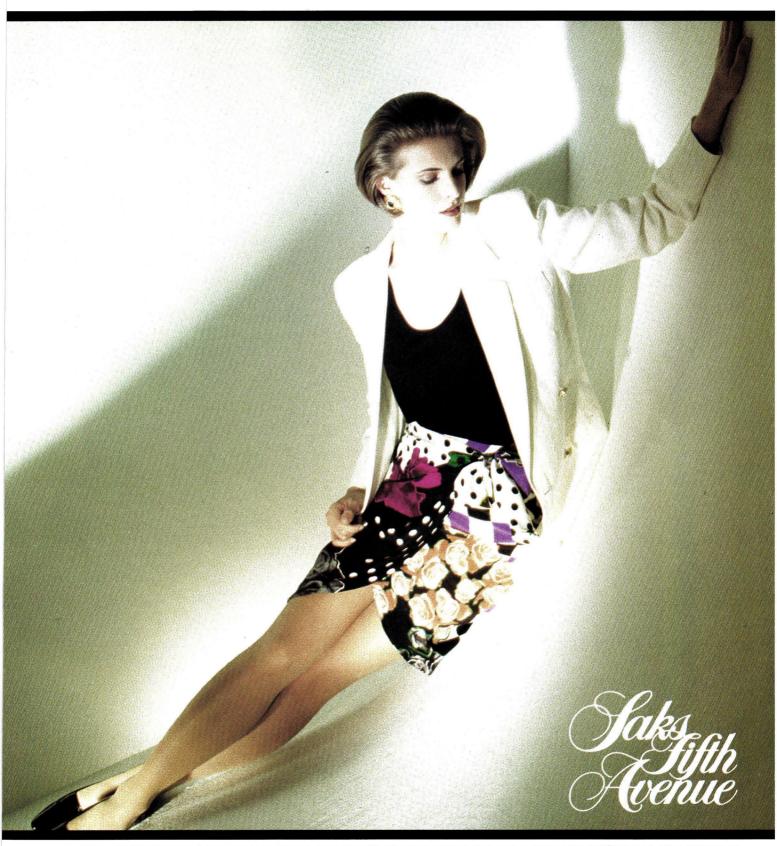
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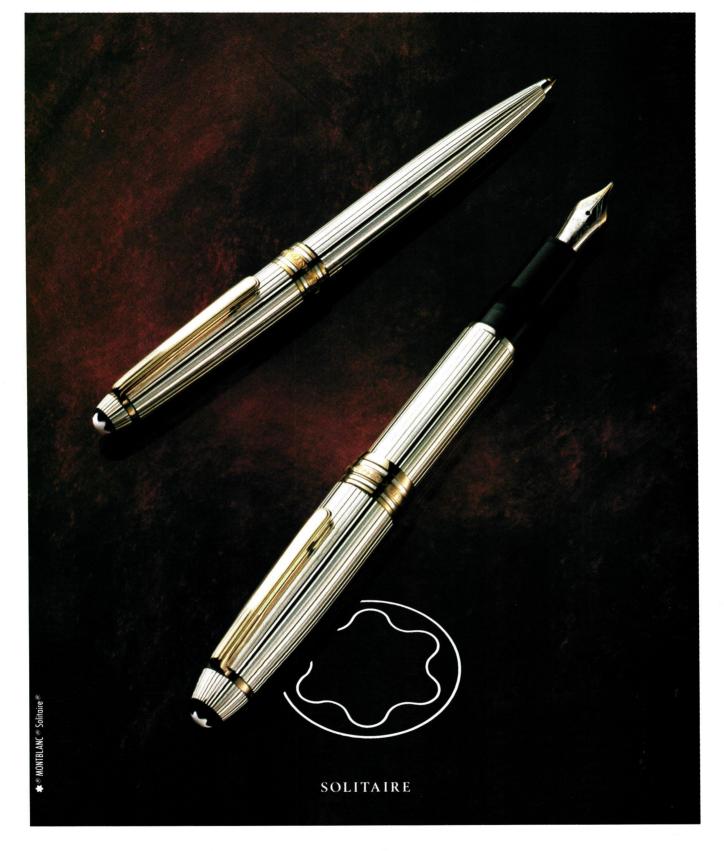
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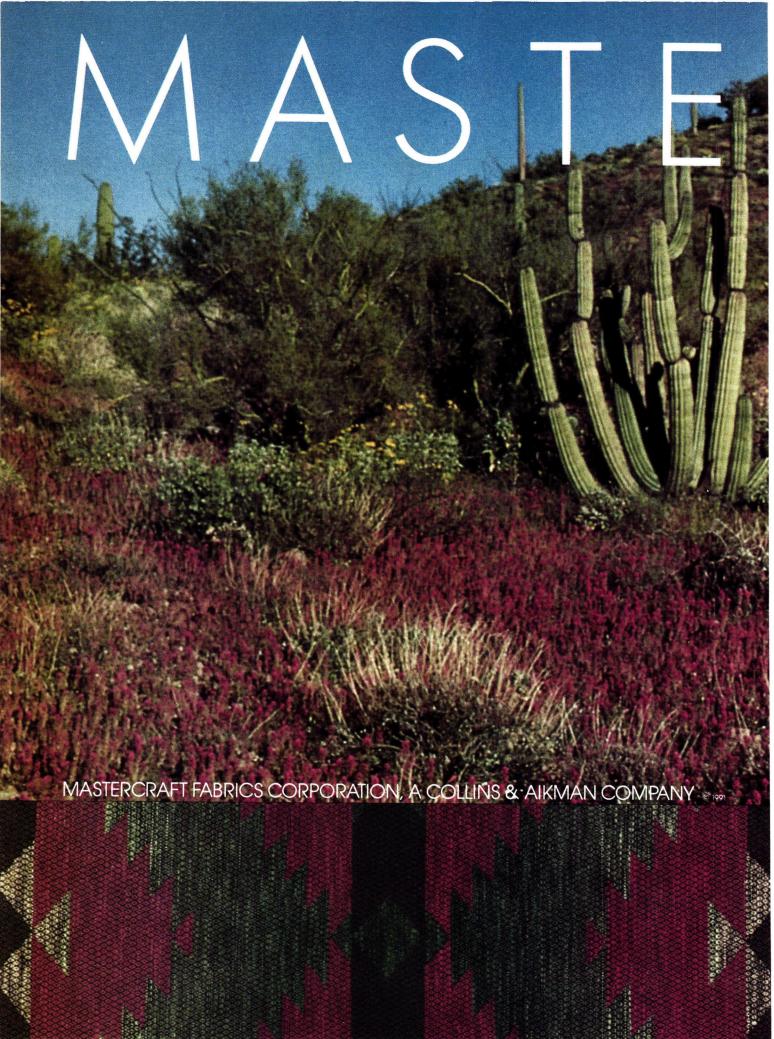


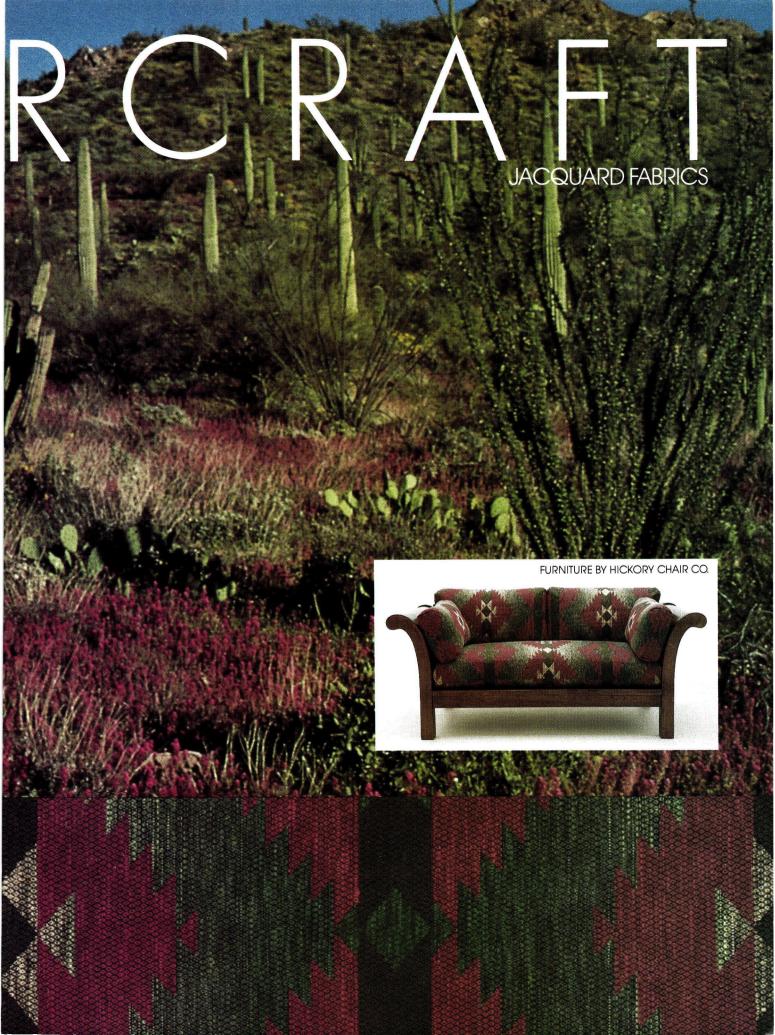
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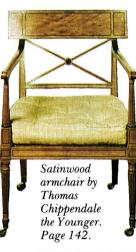






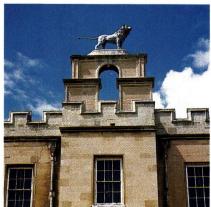
COVER Rosamund
Wallinger and
friends mow the
lawn of the Manor
House at Upton
Grey. Page 118.
Photograph by
Christopher
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Family portraits in Burton Constable Hall. Page 110.





# APRIL



Zaha Hadid—designed the restaurant interior, above. Page 162.
Left: A heraldic lion surveys the grounds at Syon House. Page 180.



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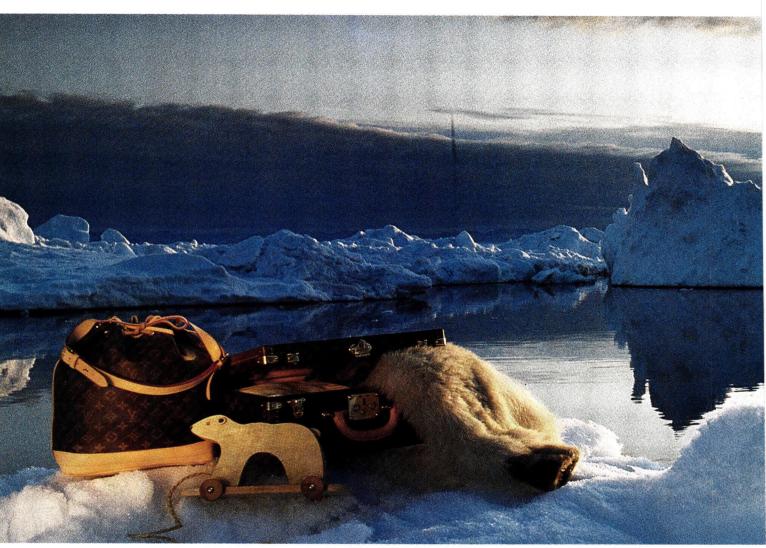
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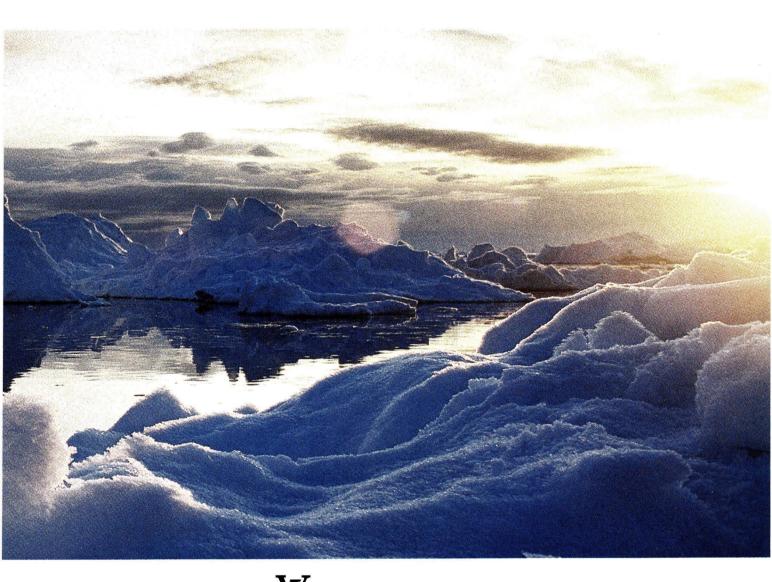
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On chair, hand-painted linen slipcover by Lesley Heale. Page 54.



Hauteville House, Victor Hugo's residencein-exile on the isle of Guernsey. Page 100.



Mosaic jewel box from Guinevere Antiques. Page 90.

APRIL



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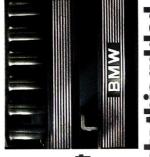
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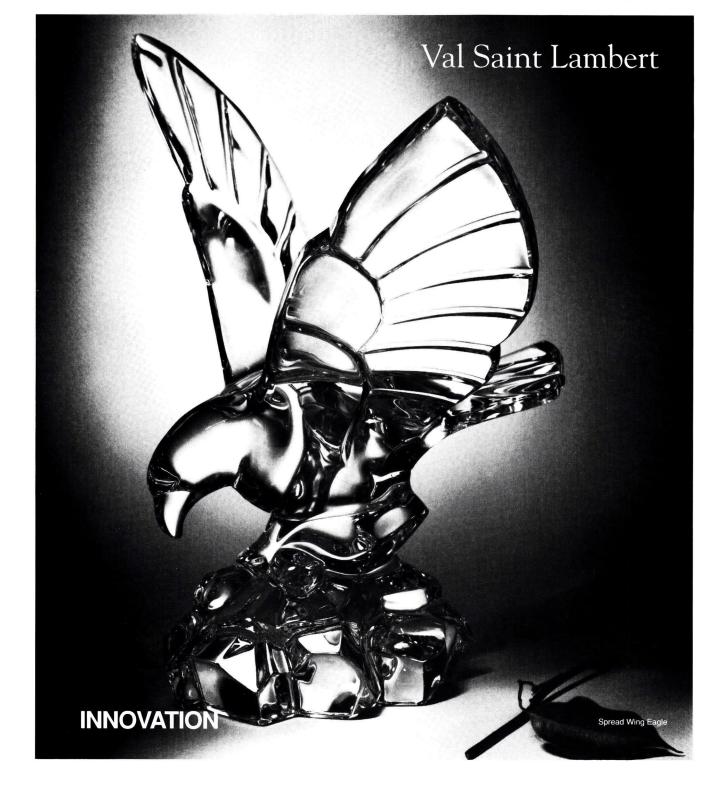


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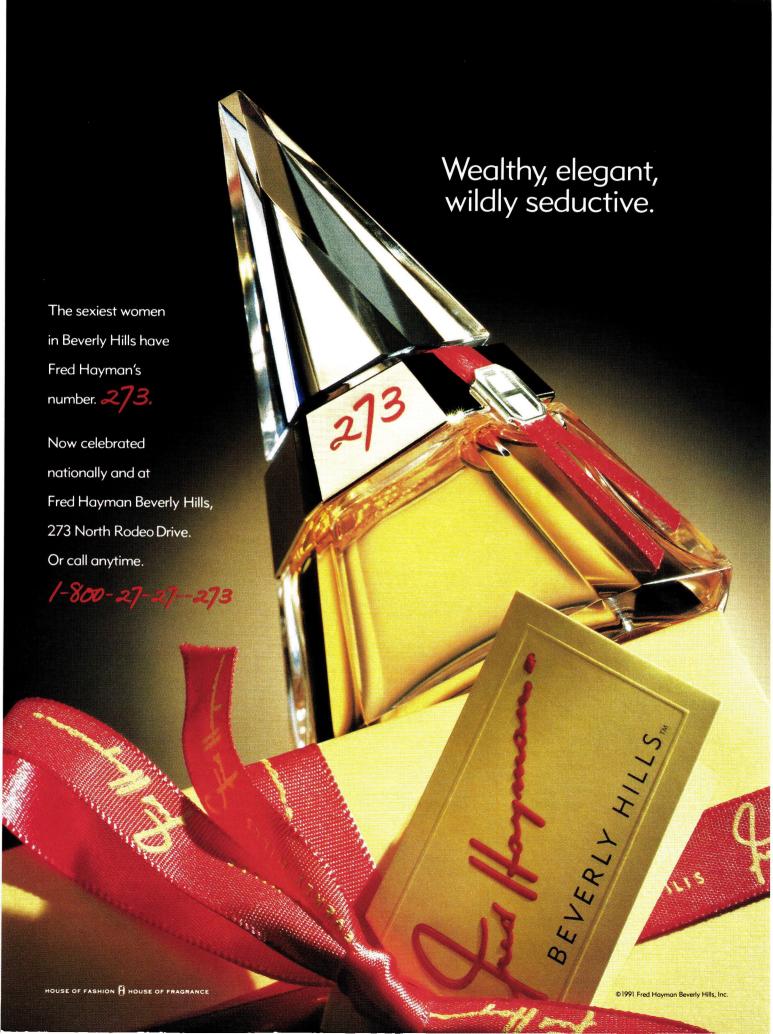


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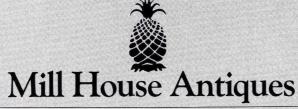


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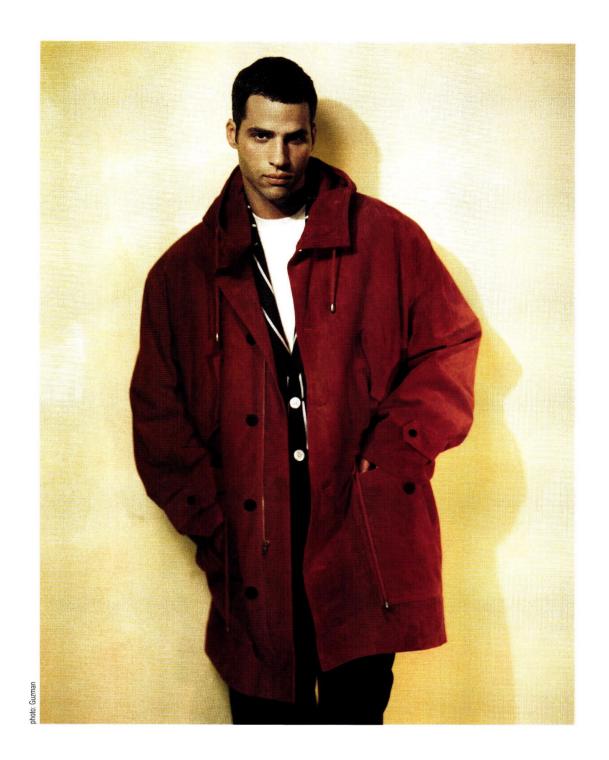
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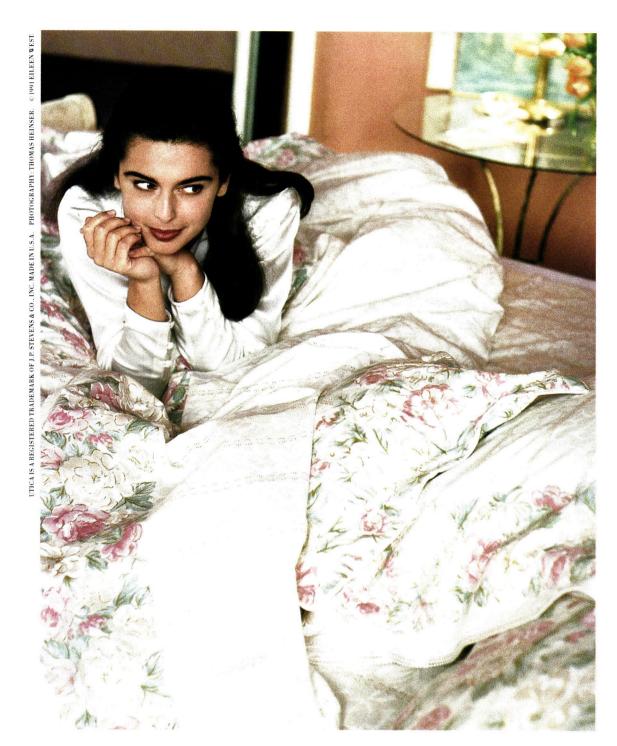
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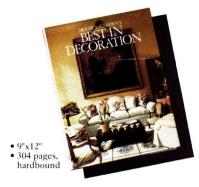
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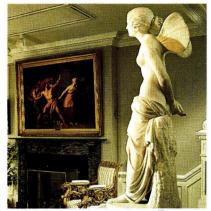


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Geoffrey Bennison's sumptuous New York "chateau" for the Rothchilds...Renzo Mongiardino's Roman "patchwork of antiquity" for Elsa Peretti...Antony Child's graceful melding of residence and baroqueart gallery...Jacques Grange's romantic Parisian townhouse.

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Judy Brittain oversaw six shoots for this issue. An HG contributing editor, she describes her finds as "intensely English" though many are worlds apart in terms of style. "Burton Constable Hall, a centuries-old estate, is a striking example of a grand house, the exact opposite of John Pawson's completely minimalist structures of clean perfection. Yet all these places reflect the personalities of their owners, a trait that separates the spectacular from the pretty good."

Janet Abrams is an architecture critic who recently served as guest editor of Blueprint. A contributor to The Independent, Abrams currently heads the Lonely Arts Club, a salon she wryly refers to as a gathering of "small-time art historians and petty critics." Adds Abrams: "Like the Round Table at the Algonquin, we toss about philosophical issues before putting them into print." For HG, she explores the work of two provocative architects.



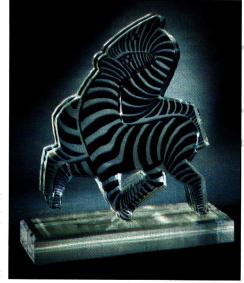


Gervase Jackson-**Stops** illuminates the enduring history of **Burton Constable** Hall, a sixteenthcentury estate in Yorkshire. "The size and splendor of the place is impressive, and every room possesses a faded grandeur that's remarkable even for an English country house." The architecture adviser to the National Trust for the past sixteen years, Jackson-Stops is the author of The English Country House in Perspective and writes for Country Life magazine.

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RIGHT: Victor Vasarely, Kupla, plexiglass, ©1990. Circle Fine Art, Booth No. 2849 & 2856





ABOVE: Bob Byerley, For the Young, oil on board, 1990. Juleaux Gallery, Booth No. 917

FAR LEFT: John Asaro, Sisters, limited-edition serigraph, Marco Fine Arts, Booth No. 2901

LEFT: K. Maloof, Window, painted photograph, Karen Maloof Painted Photographs, Booth No. 2353

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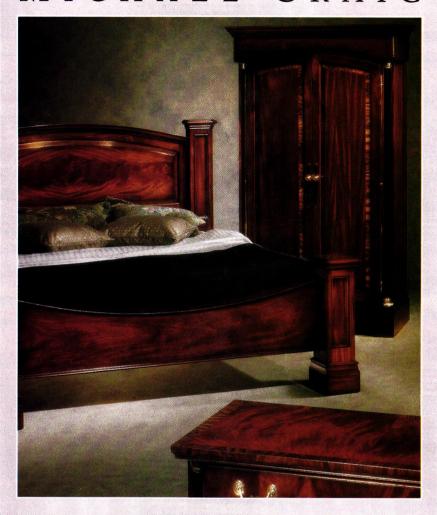
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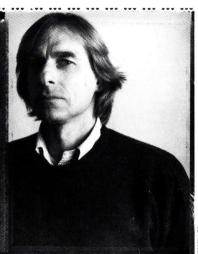
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#### Contributors Notes



Emma Marrian, an HG contributing editor, spent two years in search of remarkable English houses and gardens for this issue. She was especially impressed by Rosamund Wallinger's transformation of her Gertrude Jekyll garden in Hampshire. "Ros single-handedly took over a great landscape that had gone to seed and fully restored its splendor." Marrian recently moved to Kenya, where she will continue to uncover examples of inspired design for HG.

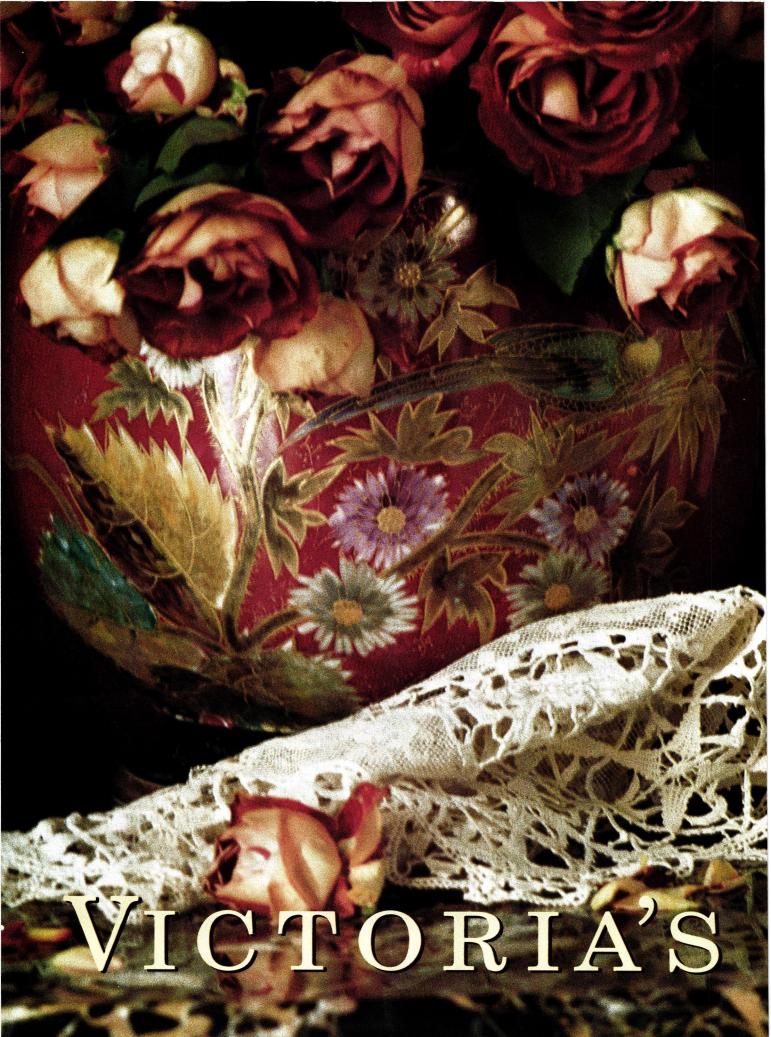


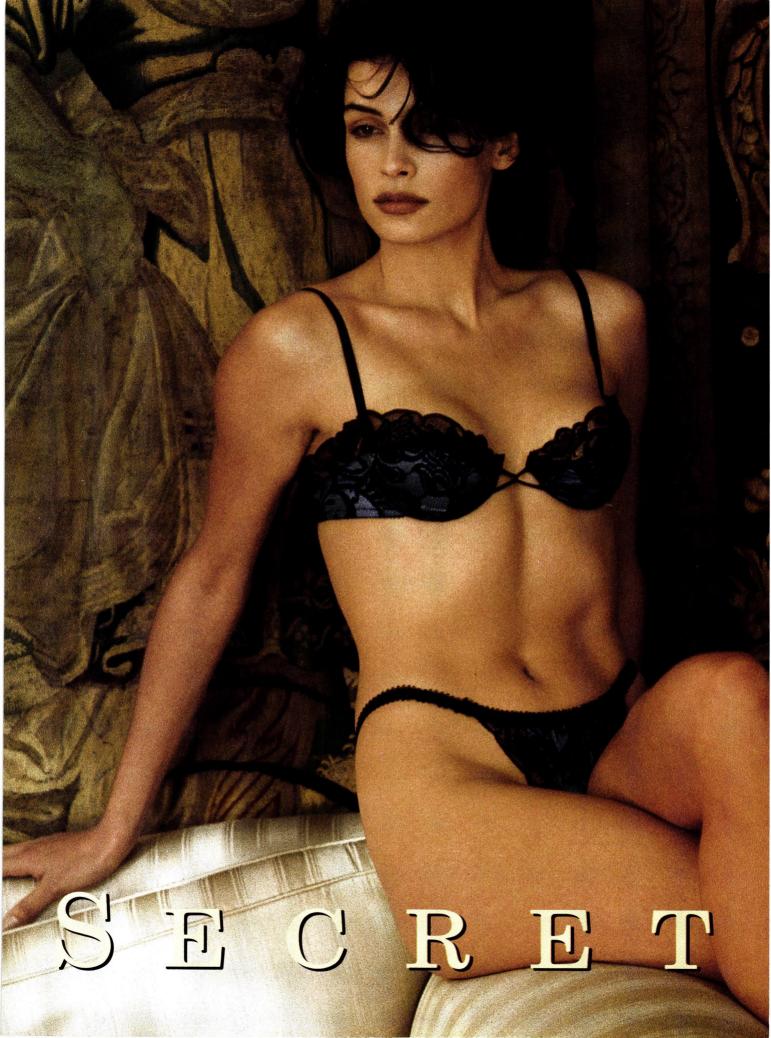
Richard Davies captures the oldworld elegance of Oare House and the contemporary austerity of John Pawson's architecture. Davies, who has been behind the lens for twenty years, developed his passion for the camera after a foray into the art world: "I have always loved to sketch but was never really any good at it. That's why I turned to photography. It allows me to create without having to rely upon my drawing skills."

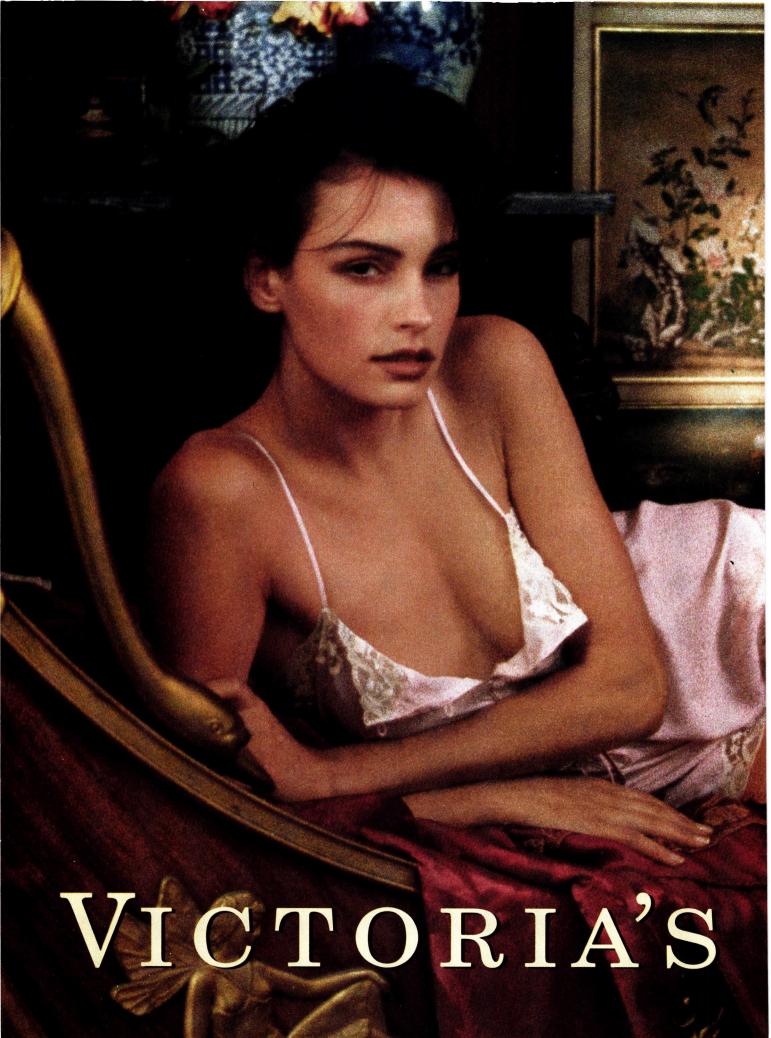


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#### CUPOLA STRADA

Yang, Indonesian artist, has applied bold graphics to Cupola's strong architectural shape, which com-



bines the circle, sphere, and cone, created by one of Italy's most prominent designers, Mario Bellini.

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# NOtes

HG REPORTS ON THE NEW AND THE NOTEWORTHY By Eric Berthold





**The ample charms** of English prize animals—the overfed, carefully coiffed livestock that stole the show at 19th-century agricultural fairs—were recorded, and at times accentuated, by rural artists catering to a clientele of proud farmers. Iona Antiques in London, (71) 602-1193, has one of the biggest inventories of these portly portraits, including the c. 1820 likeness of a Hereford ox (*top*) dwarfing its owner. A barnyard brigade (*above from left*): A favorite heifer, a corpulent Chinese pig, and a ram bred to oblong proportions, all from Iona Antiques; Dan Dunton's recently painted 19th-century-style spangled fowl from Stephanie Hoppen Gallery, London and NYC; and a statuesque cow, c. 1850, by animal aficionado W. H. Davis from Bellechasse Antiques, NYC (212) 826-6680.

HG APRIL 1991



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The S-Class Mercedes of today is not only built but has also been tested to higher durability stan-



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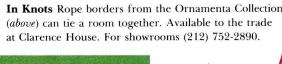
dards. Case in point: Its springcore seats are designed to remain firm and supportive after half a million seatings.

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**Conversation Piece** 

Charles Rutherfoord's steel-framed rushwork sofa with high side arms (*above*) creates an intimate atmosphere.

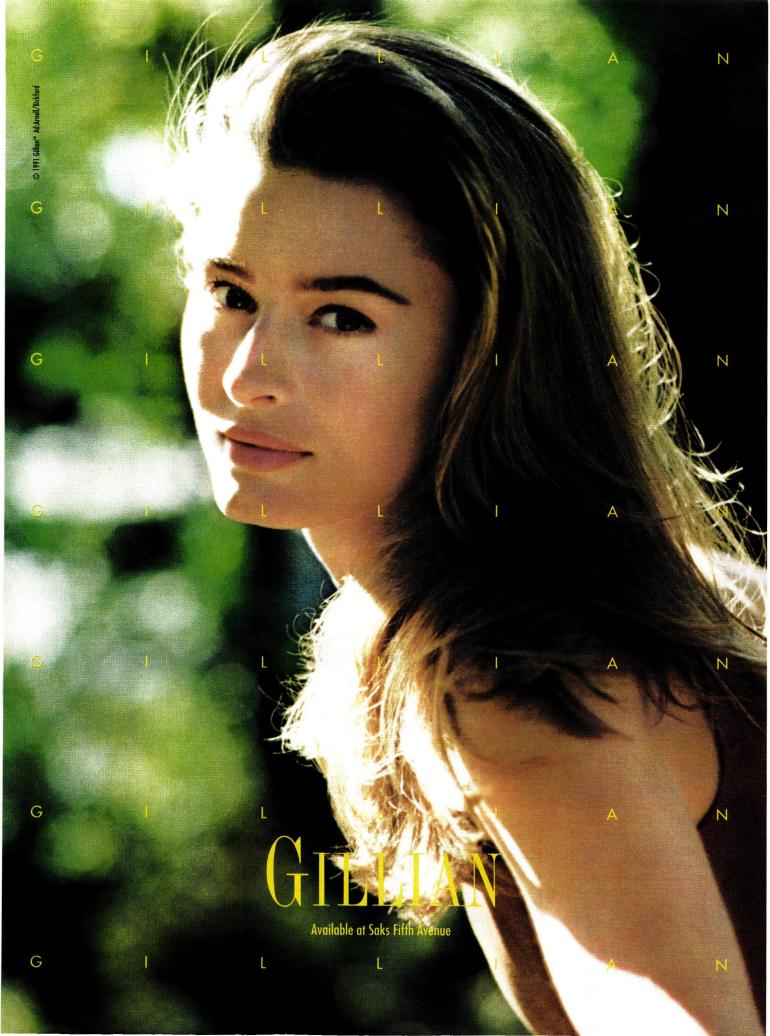
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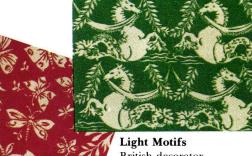
**Limited Edition** To salute the May Chelsea Flower Show, Stephanie Hoppen, London and NYC, offers serigraphs (*below*) by José Escofet.



Rose Bowl Canton Rose (*left*) and other hand-painted porcelain washbasins are from Quintessential, London; to order in the U.S. (800) 662-2284.







British decorator John Stefanidis's printed cotton fabrics (above) are available to the trade at China Seas. For showrooms (212) 752-5555.



Master Copy Art Company's oleographic technique reproduces old master oil paintings (above) in any size, from \$175 to \$750 framed. Call (800) 388-6601 for catalogue.



Tight Fit A steel-frame wardrobe dressed in Lycra (above) and similar freestanding shelves are made to order from Martin & Macpherson, London (71) 403-9554.



Bedding Down Collier Campbell's Tambourine linens (above left) are new from Utica; Liberty of London's Prince Edward bedding (above) is from Martex. Call (800) 533-8229.

#### **Border Lines**

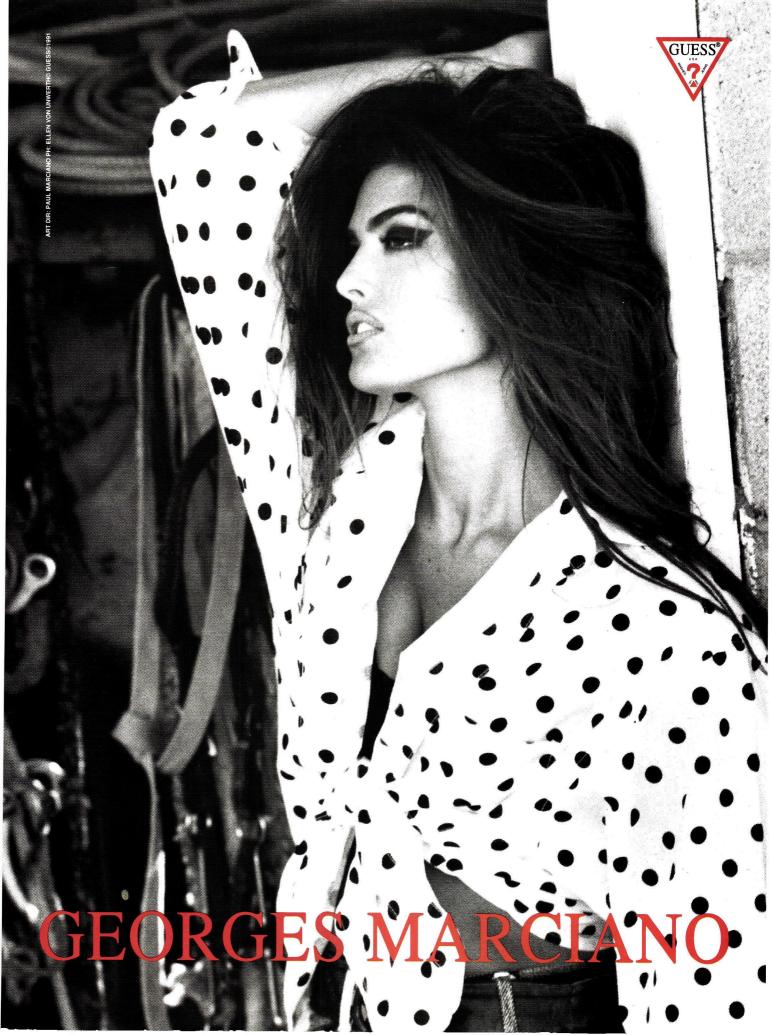
Neoclassical wallpapers and borders (below) are available to the trade at Christopher Hyland. For showrooms (212) 688-6121.





**Hot Designs** Bisque radiators (above) add new dimensions to conventional heating. For a catalogue write Bisque, 15 Kingsmead Rd., Bath BA1 2AE.

Empire-style chair (above), \$600, is among an extensive collection of fine imported furniture at Andrew Martin, London (71) 584-4290.





#### **Restoration Drama**

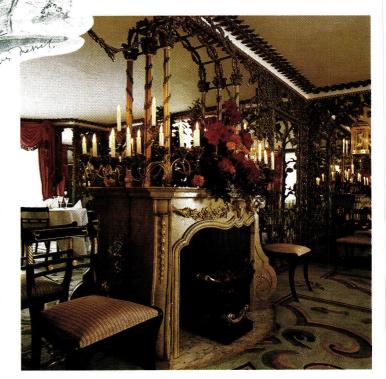
Suites at the Dorchester Hotel
decorated by Oliver Messel recover
their original glamour
BY JOHN CLARIDGE

The last word in modern grandeur when it opened in 1931, the Dorchester Hotel rapidly became one of Mayfair's most fashionable landmarks. After World War II, the hotel undertook new decorations, the most glamorous of which were created by the theater

and film designer Oliver Messel. His first Dorchester interior, now the Oliver Messel Suite, was completed in time for the coronation in 1953; the Penthouse Suite followed a year later, and the Pavilion Room in 1956. Displaying all the ethereal charm of Messel's legendary designs for the Sadler's Wells Ballet's 1946 production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, these rooms were an instant success. Sadly, their brilliant luster was later dulled by mediocre redecoration, but they have now been restored to their original enchantment as part of a two-year renovation of the hotel.









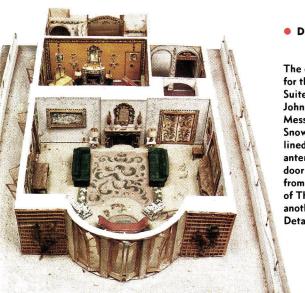
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#### Saks Fifth Avenue



DECORATION

The original model for the Oliver Messel Suite, <u>left. Below:</u> John Claridge and Messel's nephew Lord Snowdon in the silk-lined penthouse anteroom with shell door frames. Chair from the studio of Thomas Messel, another nephew. Details see Resources.

As a former Messel associate who had helped him work his magic at the Dorchester, I was invited to direct the complete reinstatement of his interiors. Messel had conceived them as though he were preparing stage settings, and my task was to interpret his fanciful schemes into a precise vocabulary craftsmen could understand. We might have to construct a sconce in the form of a bird-cage or concoct a baroque mantel over a weekend. Fortunately for the restoration, after Messel's death in 1978 his nephew Lord Snowdon had preserved vintage drawings and scale models, and I had retained working sketches and snippets of fabric. Eventually some three hundred artisans were required to conserve what could be saved and re-create what had been lost.

All of Messel's rooms have the gossamer lightness that concealed his firm grasp of decorative arts history—he seemed to carry scholarship on butterfly wings—and yet each interior has its own character. The main sitting room of the Oliver Messel Suite, with its pale gray walls and chintz curtains, possesses the understated elegance of an English country house. The bedroom, however, could be a Fabergé jewel box, its walls lined with imperial yellow silk bordered by gilded moldings, its bed hung with silk swags beneath golden acorn finials. In the fairy-land Penthouse Suite, mirrored walls are the backdrop for delicately modeled boughs and leaves. The Pavilion Room, for parties, evokes a salon of the ancien régime. On the canvas-covered door panels, Messel painted figures based on his costumes for *The Magic Flute*.

Now that missing bronze door handles have been recast and gilded, carpets hand-tufted in Bangkok using Messel's patterns, and chipped faux marbre repaired—along with countless other acts of devotion—the stage is set for a long-running revival.

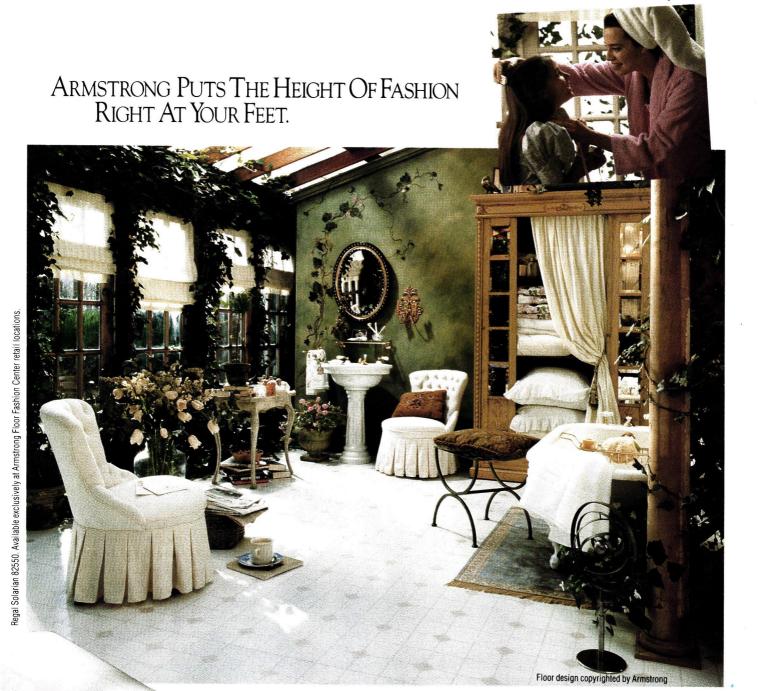


The lightness of Messel's rooms concealed his grasp of history—he seemed to carry scholarship on butterfly wings

Antique Portuguese sconce in the bedroom, above. Gilt finials await replacement above the bed curtains. Right: New carpets were matched to remnants of originals. Far right: Dolphins and cherubs were reassembled for a terrace fountain.







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#### **Arts and Crafts Revivers**

Traditional labor-intensive techniques gain new luster in the hands of contemporary artisans



A vibrant medieval pattern graces a sateen, above left.



Lesley Heale, above, layers dye onto a sateen in a wood-blocked rococo pattern, which is echoed on a tea set, left. Far left: A linen slipcover features painting by Jonathan and Lesley Heale.

The Heales' wood-blocked fabrics have an almost three-dimensional effect

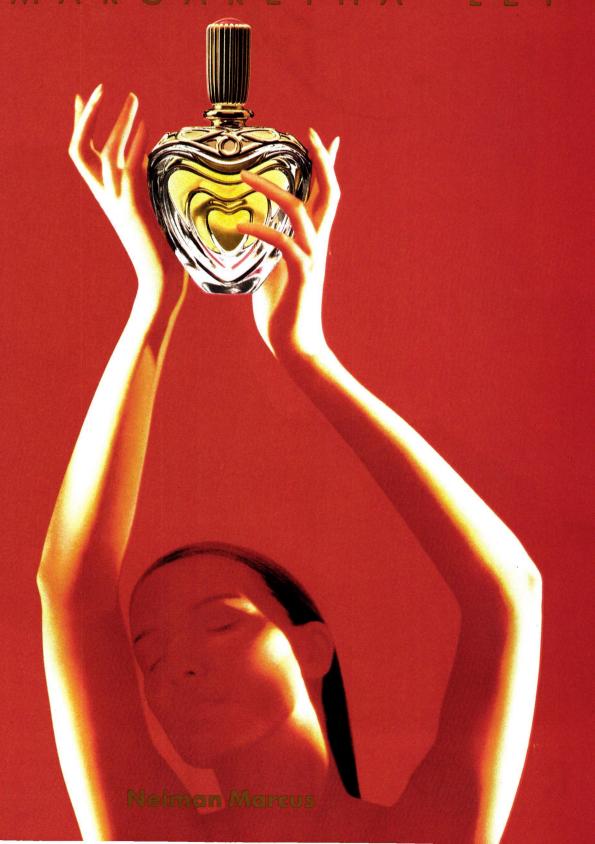
Lesley and Jonathan Heale have a studio in the heart of Heale Hall, their converted Victorian schoolhouse in Montgomery, Wales, but their work fills every room: woodcuts and watercolors crowd the soaring walls; Renaissance-patterned curtains frame tall leaded windows; hand-painted linen covers chairs, sofas, and cushions; and china plates embellished with primitive horses decorate the kitchen table.

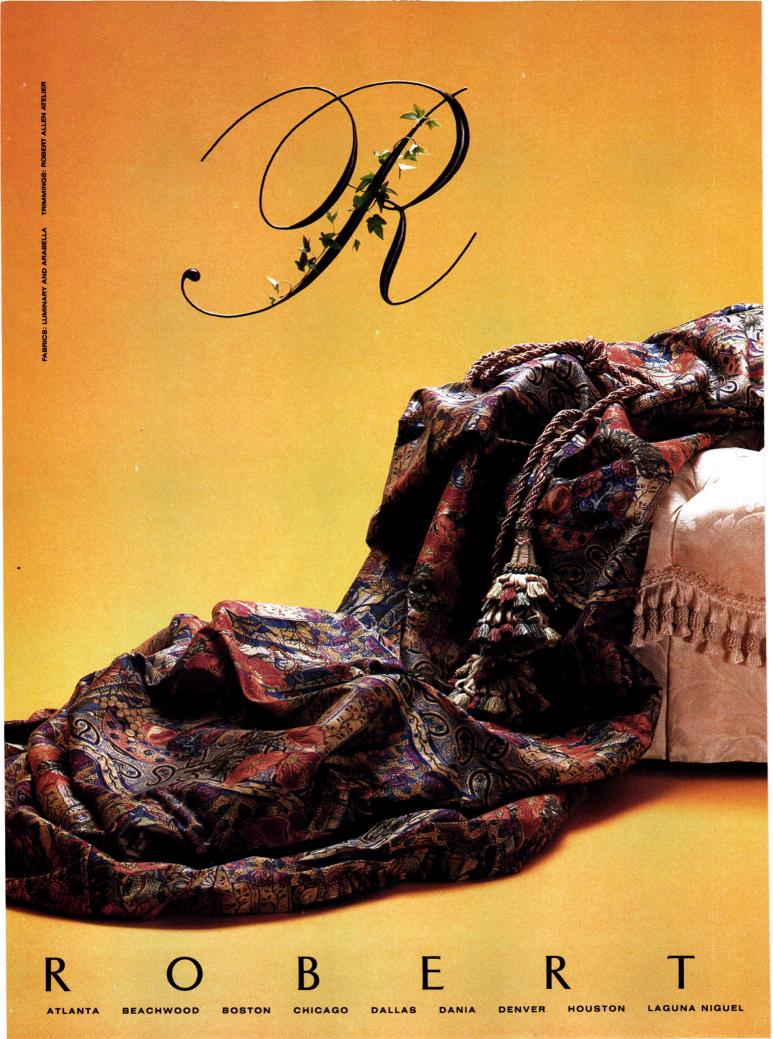
Having specialized in different areas as students at the Royal College of Art (Jonathan in print, paint, and typography; Lesley in textiles and paint), the Heales pool their expertise to extraordinarily versatile effect, working on canvas, parchment, cloth, and china. While Lesley's stylized designs come from her imagination and memories of favorite paintings, textiles, and objects, Jonathan scours the countryside for inspiration. Still, he maintains, "our diversity disguises a house style that runs through all the work."

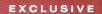
The Heales treat their surfaces, whether practical or purely decorative, with equal integrity. Their wood-blocked cotton sateens and linens in Renaissance, rococo, and medieval patterns have an almost threedimensional effect, achieved by a careful buildup of color, while their bone china plates are like delicate paintings, colored with complex mixes of oils and powdered pigments and fired at a high temperature to set the design right into the glaze. Although unquestionably an art form, the plates are intended for everyday use—at least at Heale Hall. Their cost, however, might justify saving them for very special dinners.

**Kate Corbett-Winder** 

# BY MARGARETHA LEY







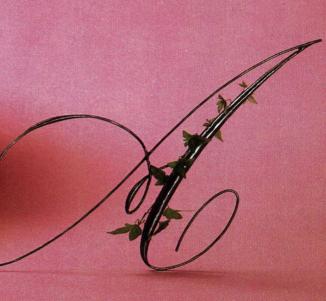
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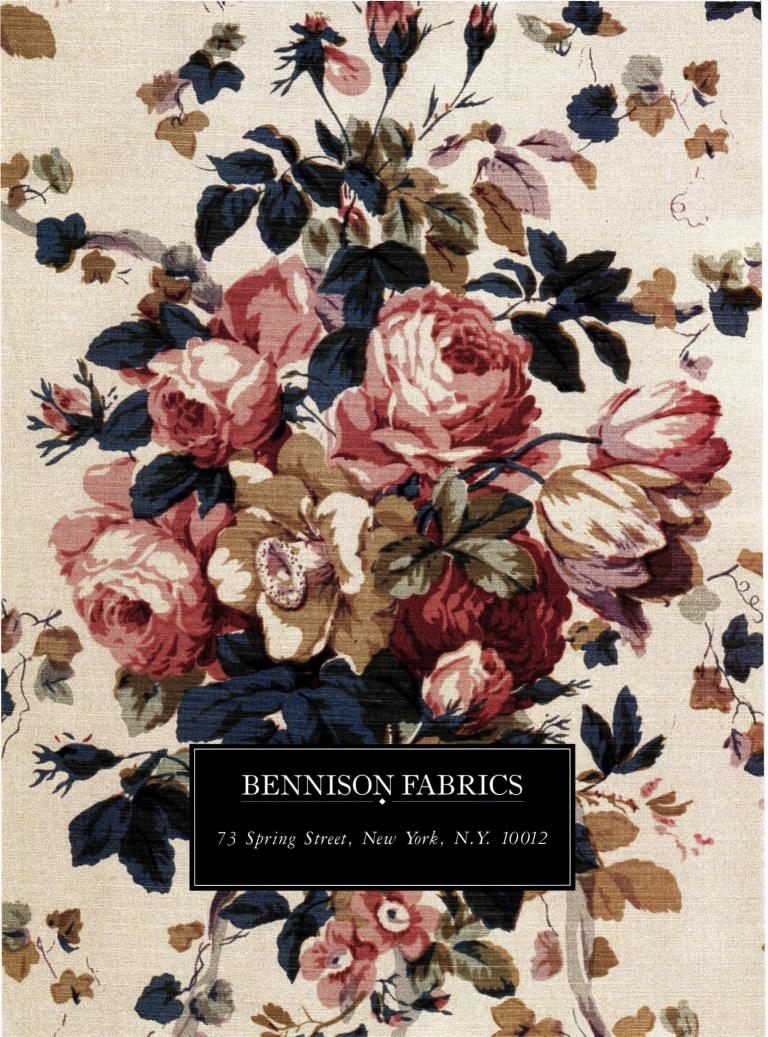
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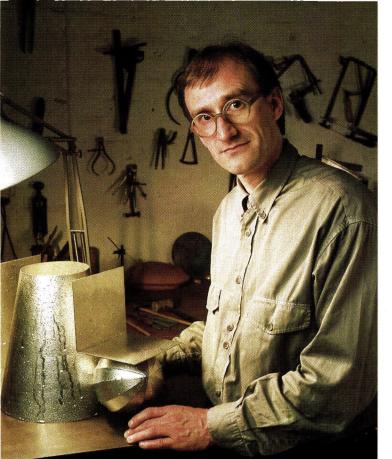
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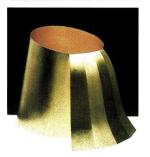
#### WORKROOM

Michael Rowe, a master metalsmith and "course leader" in the craft at the Royal College of Art, had thoroughly mined cubes, spheres, and cylinders as forms for his semifunctional, exquisitely finished vessels, so he tapped an even richer vein—shapes upon shapes, in a series entitled Conditions for Ornament, "Ornament has been rather a dirty word to modernists," says Rowe, referring to a club of which he is a member. "I'm looking at ways to renew it, to make ornament valid to a modernist, and to use it to refer to the world at large." The secondary forms Rowe joins to primary ones are drawn from nature as much as from geometry: "I would hope that a vessel could suggest that, given the right conditions, a form will simply evolve."



Michael Rowe, in his studio, <u>left</u>, next to a brass piece with a tinned finish. <u>Right from top</u>: Conditions for Ornament No. 6 in a tinned finish; No. 5 with a gold-leaf finish; and an earlier piece also in gold leaf.







#### "Ornament has been a dirty word for modernists"

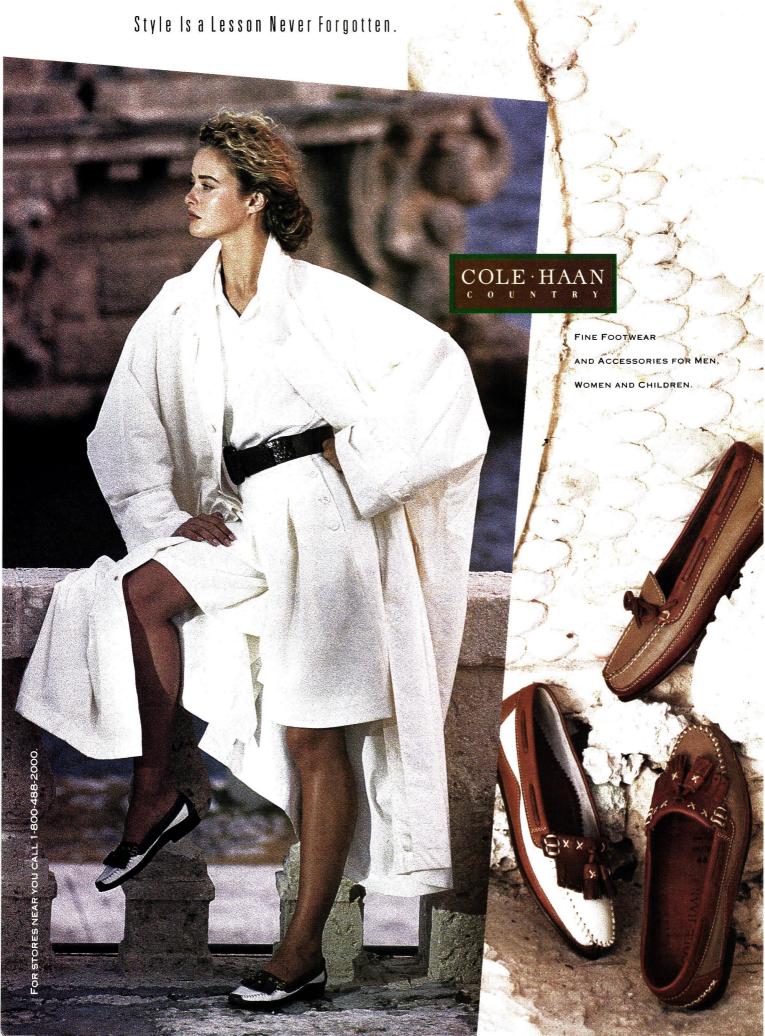
giant reinto chareef kno silvers a legged of seem to cious myear-old gilded fi against a of narw I'm an a different who has ors as we tirely clomakes in they may and exe

Furniture and frames by John Harwood, right, are never what they seem. Carved wood swags simulate fabric, and a nested pair of gilded cabinets, above, "look like giant squids."

John Harwood never builds furniture in predictable ways. He bends giant replicas of Polaroid snapshots into chairs, molds bronze into rope reef knots that serve as sconces, and silvers and gilds curvaceous longlegged cabinets so heavily that they seem to have been poured from precious metals. The desk in his oneyear-old London shop resembles a gilded fireplace mantel, and leaning against a nearby wall are bronze casts of narwhal tusks. "Fundamentally I'm an artist, expressing myself in different materials," says Harwood, who has created a few quirky interiors as well. But he doesn't steer entirely clear of traditional work. He makes regulation frames, though they may have gilded zebra stripes, and executes faux finishes, such as pietra dura and faux marbre, just as you might expect. Eve M. Kahn

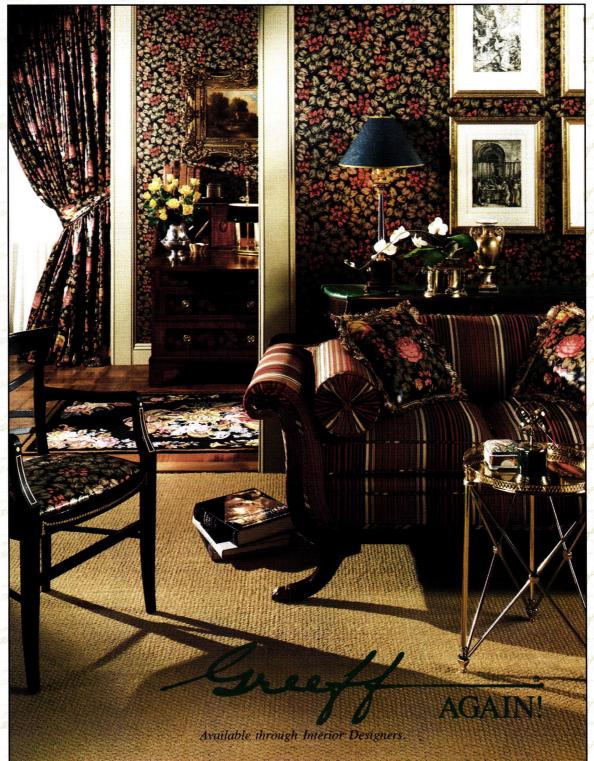
"Fundamentally I'm an artist"





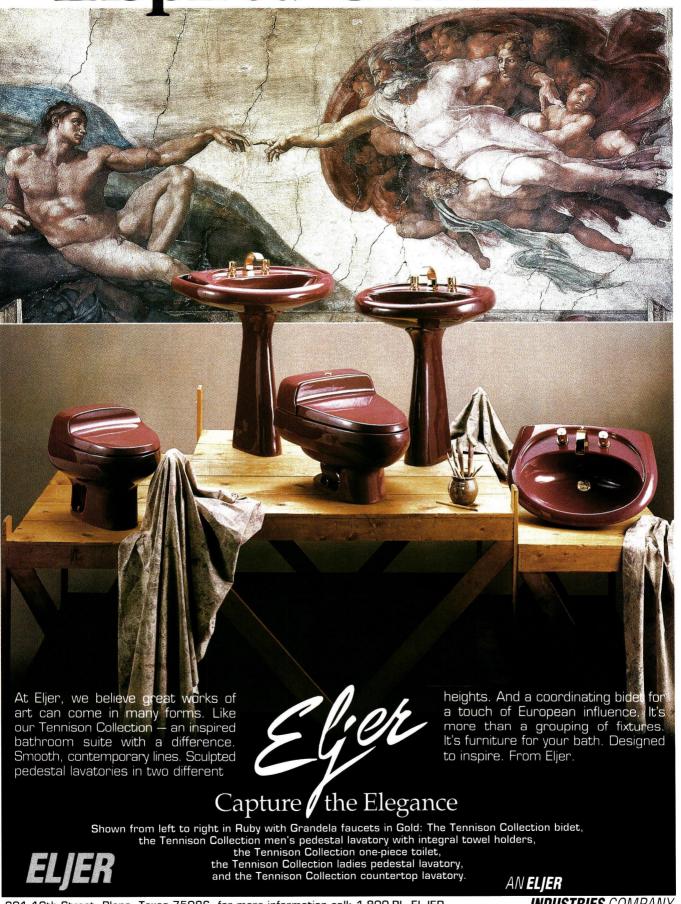
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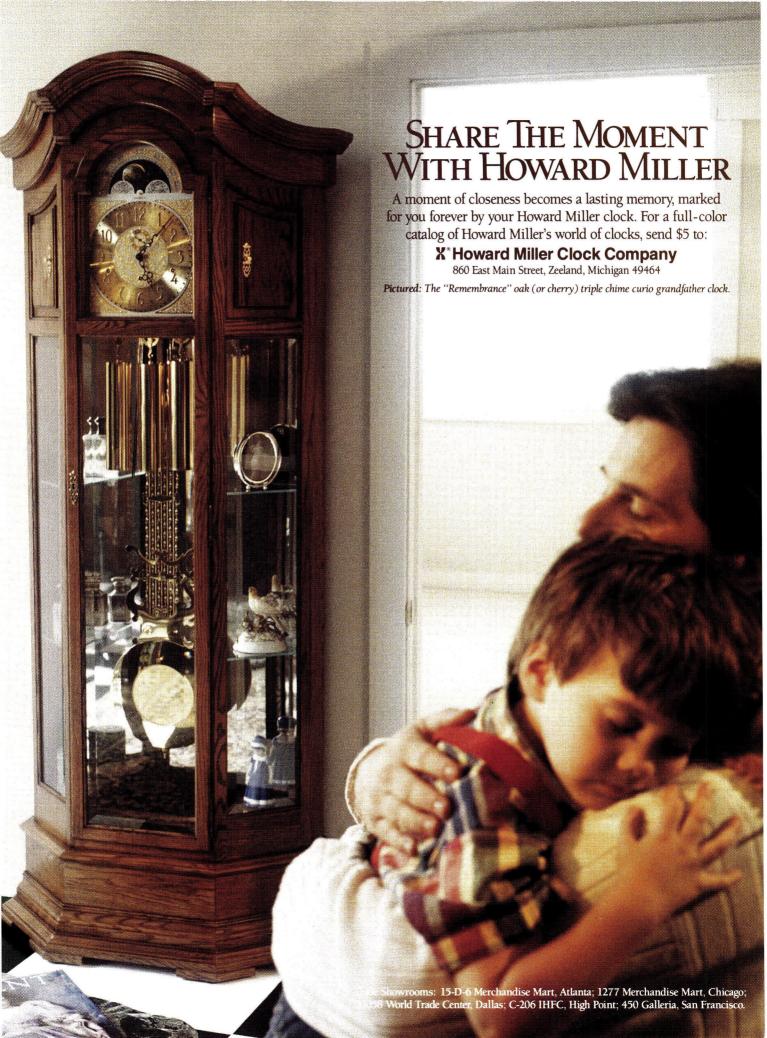


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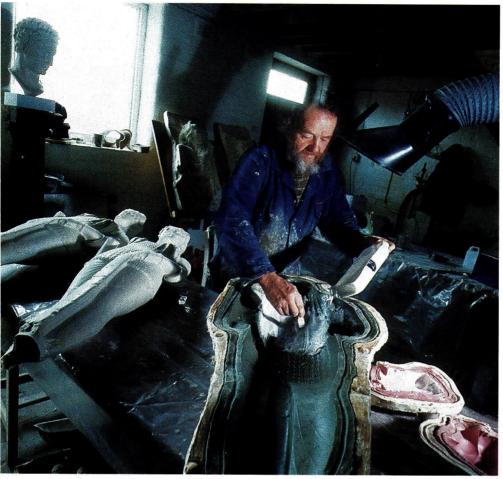
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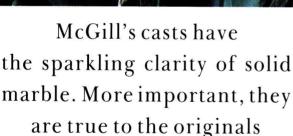
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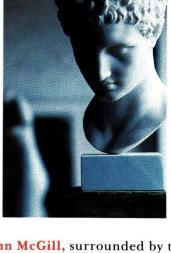
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HG APRIL 1991









John McGill, surrounded by the mummylike molds and dust-laced tools of his trade in his Leicestershire studio, carries a torch for classical art. A fifty-six-year-old sculptor and former college lecturer who once tried to impart the fine points of life drawing to a "very distracted" John Lennon, McGill now makes Acropolis-worthy casts of ancient Greek sculptures. For models he explores Cambridge University's vast collection of nineteenth-century plaster casts, several of which are the best or only known versions of works that have fallen victim to the elements and thievery. McGill uses a weather-

> proof compound of white marble granules and resin to form his hand-finished replications, which have the sparkling clarity of solid marble. More important, they remain true

to the originals. "There's nothing worse," says McGill, "than an antiquity that has been made to look sweet and pretty." Since 1988, when Cambridge first granted him access, McGill has re-created everything from a bust of Hermes-a commission from the Charleston Trust for Quentin Bell—to a 500 B.C. relief of a ball game. He'd also like to apply his technique to the Vatican's Apollo Belvedere—"a sculpture with so much twisting energy it even made Michelangelo weep." **Margot Guralnick** (For a list of addresses and contacts see Resources.)



With a mixture of marble and resin, John McGill, top left, casts a kore, a female figure from the Acropolis. Other pieces in his classical repertoire include a bust of Hermes, top right, anthemion-form funeral monuments, above, and a frieze of a ball game, a grave stele, and a sculpture of Aphrodite, left.

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#### **Down Cornish Lanes**

Two friends trek
through a rugged countryside
By Mary Hilliard

doing what you want to do, but after ten years of daydoing what you want to do, but after ten years of daydreaming about the majestic granite landscape along the Cornwall Coast Path, I finally found myself walking its grassy trail. The 260-mile marked route runs around the edge of Cornwall, England's most rugged and southernmost county. A friend and I, both fairweather walkers, had arrived by way of London for a week's holiday, planning to walk some of the path and to seek out charming inns and hearty meals along the way.

Before taking even one step, however, we bought a handy Bartholomew Map & Guide, John H. N. Mason's Walk the Cornish Coastal Path, which provided us with valuable information for our trek.

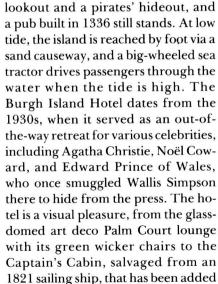
In a rented car, keeping in mind that left is right and right is wrong, we drove southwest for about four hours until we reached Fingals Hotel in south

Devon where we decided to spend the night before pushing on to Cornwall. Located through a maze of narrow lanes shouldered by high dense hedgerows, Fingals is just outside the tiny unspoiled village of Dittisham on the banks of the Dart River. The casually elegant ten-room

hotel was fashioned from a seventeenth-century manor house and adjoins a lovely cobbled courtyard. A jumble of tennis racquets and Wellington boots at the entrance to the bar hints at the robust atmosphere of the place and the vigor of its clientele, particularly the fast-track young Londoners who come to unwind on the hotel's croquet lawn and grass tennis courts. Fingals has a good kitchen overseen by the owner, Richard Johnston, who describes his food as "creative Continental."

The next day, on an impulse, we stopped at a magical place called Burgh Island near Bigbury-on-Sea also in Devon. Way back in the 1300s it was a fishermen's

The Cornwall
Coast Path, above
left, zigzags its
way around grassy
hillsides, top,
before descending
into rocky coves,
above. Below: The
garden at the
Abbey Hotel in
Penzance.



to the building's façade. The fourteen suites, some of which are named for famous visitors, all have balconies and ocean views. The chef, Robert Rayney, trained with the Roux brothers of Le Gavroche in London.

Our impulse was thwarted, however, as all the rooms



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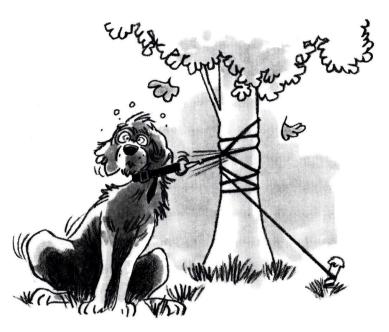
were booked, so we decided to head on to Cornwall. When we got to the tiny fishing village of Mousehole, we began a two-day walk, planning to skirt Mount's Bay until we reached Lizard Point, England's southernmost tip. The bay encloses Saint Michael's Mount, a glorious granite and slate crag that looks like a miniature version of Mont-Saint-Michel. After passing through several small towns where we saw men mending fishing nets and pale plump English families walking on the rocky beach, we made our way into the countryside.

The route followed high cliff tops before twisting down into narrow coves where a few houses and shops were usually clustered around a bay, providing a chance for a cold drink before climbing back up to the high meadows. Although never really far from civilization, the path gives a feeling of solitude, for rarely does one see other walkers, especially on the south coast. Every once in a while, as the trail unfolded through farm and pastureland, we spied a farmer on his tractor or a flock of funny-faced sheep. We saw wildflowers everywhere—hills covered in Queen Anne's lace, cinquefoil, butter-and-eggs, and honeysuckle and banks thick with pink and white blackberry blossoms and dense clumps of clover. All the while, at the bottom of the stony cliffs was the sea, either hidden in fog or shining bright blue in the sun. At one point, a light breeze stirred the soft air, and as we walked through low brush of bracken and gorse, I thought, What a benign and pleasant country this is! Just then, near the boundary of a private house situated on a jutting promontory high above the water, I saw a neat green sign that read BE-WARE OF ADDERS. Was this the whimsical English complement to BEWARE OF DOG? After a long day, our muscles aching from the twelve-mile hike, we knocked on the door of the Tye Rock Hotel in Porthleven. Sandra and Michael Barker, the owners,

On the second day of walking we passed Loe Bar, a beautiful golden mile-long beach bordering Loe Pool, which some claim is where the arm rose to catch Excalibur, King Arthur's sword, when it was thrown into the water by his faithful servant, Sir Bedivere. At Poldhu Cove, we encountered the monument to Marconi, marking the spot from which the first wireless signal was sent across the Atlantic in 1901. After several more miles we finally reached Lizard Point and its two lighthouses, located at the edge of a peninsula composed mostly of the greenish rock called serpentine. To reward ourselves, we took a taxi back to Mousehole and spent the night at the Abbey Hotel in

welcomed us with the promise of dinner, a pretty corner room overlooking the sea, and, best of all, a

great big bathtub.



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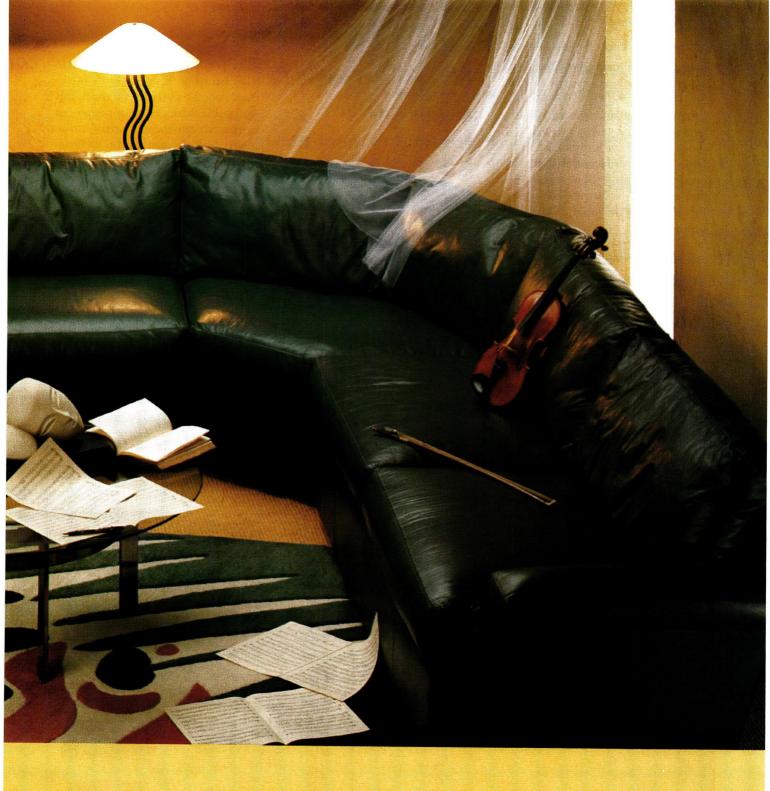
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Penzance, a charming old house with a beautiful garden owned by Michael and Jean Cox. We were warmly greeted by a man named Glyn Green, who showed us to a graceful spacious blue bedroom filled with fresh flowers, a lace and quilt covered bed, comfortable armchairs, and a window seat overlooking the Penzance yacht basin. Then, explaining that he was actually the chef, he rushed off to the kitchen to attend to the evening's meal. Later, after drinks by the fire in the drawing room, we enjoyed a delicious dinner of carrot and coriander soup, chicken with red peppers and mushrooms, and pear sorbet.

Next morning, with thanks to Glyn and Mrs. Cox, who were consulting over the day's menu in the kitchen, and to Mr. Cox, who brought our car around, we headed for the north coast, bypassing Land's End, England's westernmost point and a busy tourist attraction. Instead we found our way to Port Isaac, a fifteenth-century fishing village where

## It's easy to imagine Thomas Hardy's characters meeting in the churchyard of Saint Juliot

at low tide the sand of the little harbor serves as a car park. (At high tide it's a car wash!)

The trail on the north coast is more strenuous than on the south side; the climb up to headland and down to cove is steeper and occurs with greater frequency. In some places, hillside meadows slope down sharply to rocky cliffs overlooking the sea. The path cuts directly across the hill, and it's difficult not to think of the grim consequences if you tripped and fell. Although there are some wild undeveloped areas along the way, the north coast seems much more populated and touristy. It may be a thrill to

tour the remains of the Castle (claimed to be King Arthur's birthplace) on the cliffs of Tintagel, but the spot is thronged with people, so we moved on to the more rural atmosphere of Boscastle. At the Wellington, one of the several hotels there, we had an after-dinner drink in the bar, full of locals and their dogs, and heard an enthusiastic jazz band. Boscastle and its environs are the setting for one of Thomas Hardy's early novels, A Pair of Blue Eyes, and it's easy to imagine his characters walking from village to village or meeting in the quiet shady churchyard of Saint Juliot where Hardy actually did some work as an architect.

The next day, our week almost up, we headed back to London and the madding crowd. In the car on the way, my friend calculated the distance we'd walked—about fifty miles. "Fifty down, 210 to go," he observed. I can't wait. I only hope it doesn't take ten more years of idle daydreaming before I put on my Cornwall walking shoes again. ▲

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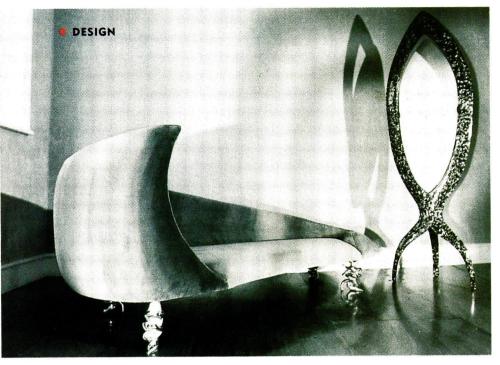
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#### **Deeply Inspired**

Furniture designer
Cebuan de la Rochette
dives for ideas
in the South Seas

#### BY HEATHER SMITH MACISAAC

OF THE MANY PLACES THAT CEBUAN de la Rochette de Beaucastel has lived—France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, India, and the South Seas—she feels most at home in, quite literally, the last. "By chance I took up scuba diving about a year ago, and it was a revelation in every

sense," says the London-based designer. "The world of water has been an extraordinary inspiration; it's soothing and personal, protective and liberating all at once. I have always felt that nature was in my veins, but under water it envelops me completely."

Nature has guided Rochette since 1986, when she began designing furniture using exotic and arresting organic materials—coconut husk, bamboo and palmwood veneers, fish skin, slate, salmon stone, and a dazzling range of seashells—from a tropical island so rich in resources she is reluctant to identify it. "Coconut husk can be used like a fabric, dyed and sewn," says Ro-

Cebuan de la Rochette, above, explores seaworthy forms with her velvet Trisidos chaise longue and agate shell Blue Marlin mirror, top, agate shell Agateo table, left, and shagreen Onda and Cresta stools, below. Details see Resources.

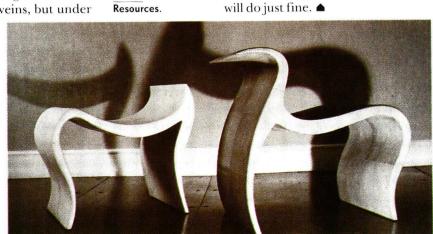
chette. "Pen shell applied to a surface looks like fine black lacquer. And sharkskin is so lavish and loaded with history, it's the icing on the cake. I recently did a whole bedroom in London in it."

Awash in sea life, Rochette's third and latest collection draws materials and forms from the deep. A cheval glass of blue gray agate shell takes its name and shape from the blue marlin, and the Onda and Cresta stools in shagreen and the Dyathis chest of drawers in pearl slate and pen shell capture the motion of ocean waves. The Trisidos chaise longue in velvet with cast-aluminum feet and the shagreen Cancroid and Cancrino dressing table and stool are named for other sea creatures. "I was after col-

ors and shapes that give off a certain vibration," says Rochette.

If there is a crafted feel to her pieces, it is for good reason. The raw materials are anything but uni-

form and often unpredictable. And the construction of the oddly shaped furniture is the antithesis of high tech: each piece is made in a factory on Rochette's mystery island with tools no more elaborate than a saw, screwdriver, and hammer. "Having furniture fabricated on the other side of the world causes a few hiccups," she acknowledges; her fantasy is to have a permanent home, with "lots of water babies," on the island. But for now, visits every two or three months to direct the work at the factory and to dive into the sea for ideas will do just fine. A



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#### At the Ivy you might spot Joan Collins or Richard Harris tucking in

You enter by way of a corridor filled with rather large gravel that leads you one flight up to a large corner room decorated, if that's the word, in bronze, velvet, and linoleum. The Portobello Road is still teeming on Saturdays with fine antiques and tourist tat, but all week long it's a blend of rough market traders and proprietors and patrons of specialist bookstores and galleries that show the work of young artists. The latter make up much of the staff here. While people of indeterminate and aggressive sexual orientation go about their dalliances, you can have a friendly young waiter with a hairdo like a hedgehog's bring you an exotic Caribbean cocktail and such tasty hearty fare as wild boar sausages or herb-crusted cod. On your way out stop for a drink in the roaring bar underneath where the old Portobello Road still stands and staggers. (First Floor, 186 Portobello Rd., London W11 1LA; 71-243-0072)

L'AMICO If a gong sounds at L'Amico and several pin-striped gentlemen dash for the exit, there is no need to panic. What you hear is not a fire alarm but a division bell, the signal for members of Parliament that debate on a bill has ended and that they have eight minutes to get back to the House for a vote. (Cabinet minis-

ters have cars waiting; lower-level MPs can just make it at a trot.) You may also hear the sort of gossip that results when politicians meet: "He's got a PR girl tucked away in Battersea? No wonder his wife is staying in the constituency." L'Amico's Westminster clientele is about half Labour, half Tory, and has included the leader of the other half of the world. The dish created for his visit remains on the menu as spaghetti Gorbachev-the sauce is smoked salmon, cream, caviar, and vodka. Otherwise, L'Amico's cuisine is conventional Italian, somewhat on the stodgy side. My companion thought the polenta with porcini reminiscent of the uniquely English taste of Marmite, but we agreed that veal with avocado and hollandaise was better than it sounds. (L'Amico, Dean Bradley House, 44 Horseferry Rd., London SW1P 2AF; 71-222-4680)

**WILTONS** Oysters are the specialty here, slipping down the throats of a clientele from whose mouths issue a stream of "actuallys" and "dear old boys." Wiltons has been going since 1742—though not at the same address-providing the landed gentry with a reassuring place to nosh when they come up to London. Among the paneled banquettes, etched glass, and stuffed fish they sit, getting down as much as they can manage of the multicourse traditional feast on offer, from turtle soup to Welsh rabbit, the post-dessert savory. In the shooting season, Wiltons has a menu thick with unlucky denizens of field and pond: the richly flavored widgeon or the little woodcock, the latter with its long-billed head bent right around, like Linda Blair's in The Exorcist, and served with bread sauce and game chips. Wiltons is no more a place for the tenderhearted than for the exacting gourmet. Food and wine are presented by waiters who look as if they are dressed for a wedding and waitresses who seem dressed for taking your temperature. Both can be rather chilly if they suspect you are not utterly upper. (Wiltons, 55 Jermyn St., London SW1Y 6LX; 71-629-9955)

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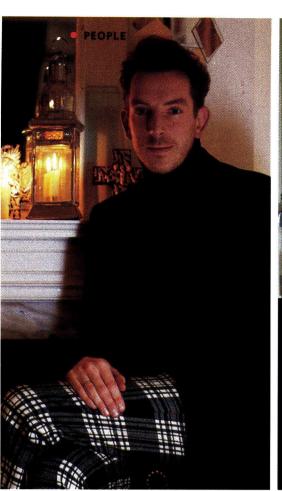
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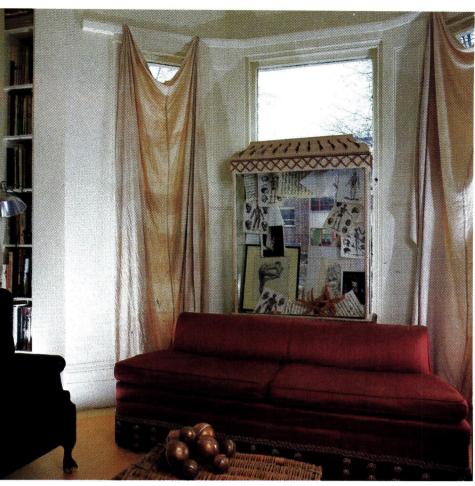
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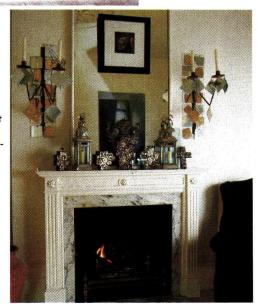


#### Center Stage From parties to films, designer Michael Howells



is suddenly in the spotlight By Charles Gandee

Michael Howells, top, outfitted his London living room with an armless sofa and wood-framed vitrine, top right, both designed by Oliver Messel. Right: On the mantel an arrangement of Mexican silver and tin flanked by Howellsdesigned sconces. Above: In the 1990 film The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover, the designer focused his attention on table settings and still lifes.



ore often than not these days, when Britain's lords, ladies, and landed gentry commence preparations to get together and get down, so to speak, Michael Howells is the name that heads the invitation list. It's not that the 34-year-old designer is especially rich or famous. He isn't. Nor is he titled. Rather it's that Howells has a talent for tickling the fancy of Britain's elite—a considerable and well-acknowledged talent as party planner extraordinaire.

"He's brilliant," proclaims Hannah Rothschild, daughter of Jacob Rothschild. And she should know. Three years ago Hannah was the beneficiary of Howells's reported brilliance, as well as her father's largesse, when the young designer installed an elaborate O.K. Corral, of sorts, at the Rothschild's country estate for a Wild West—theme party—the duke of Marlborough meets the Marlboro man. Arguably even more memorable was the party celebrating Nick Ashley's decision to tie the knot. Howells arrived early to tie a Brobdingnagian bow around the family barn, using Laura Ashley fabric, of course. Next on Howells's agenda is a sixties-theme charity ball given by the princess of Wales. Then comes a July fête—Howells won't say for whom—that will feature a

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GARDENING



#### The Avant-Gardener

Alan Titchmarsh is England's expert on horticultural one-upmanship

By Barbara Walder

Alan Titchmarsh, in his own garden, above, and on TV, below from left, demonstrating lawn care, camellia cultivation, and pruning technique.

I f mad dogs and Englishmen do go out in the midday sun, you can bet they're in the garden. When the English are at their dottiest and daftest—when they seriously seem to have a screw loose—it's probably rust on their roses that has set them off. Gardening, after all, is where they pour their most personal passions, where they get down and dirty with the dahlias and muck about with the marigolds. It's fertile and filthy among those flowers, and

it fires them up. Banked passions certainly, British-style. But passions nonetheless.

"It all boils down to sex, doesn't it?" says Alan Titchmarsh, Britain's gardening man of the moment. Sublimated sex but snobbery, too. For grafted onto this national passion now is a great garden chic which has even ladies of the manor grubbing about on their hands and knees while the gardeners stand high and dry with a new kind of power. And so potent is 41-year-old Alan Titchmarsh, with his boyish charm and tight jeans, impeccable credentials and media mastery, that he's made it into the big time and brought gardening with him.

Titchmarsh's talent is too large for any single profession. But gardening grabbed him young, so that's where he first made his mark. Starting as a fifteen-year-old apprentice in a local Yorkshire park, Titchmarsh grew up to be one of the new gardeners, educated instead of brought up through the ranks on the big estates. He got his diploma from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew where he also taught before choosing the media to deliver his gardening message.

Radio and TV gardening spots led to guest appearances on chat and quiz shows and, for the past four years, to cohosting his own live general-interest daily network TV program. With gardening columns in magazines and newspapers, some thirty books, two hundred fan letters a week, a Chelsea Gold Medal, and the unofficial title of Prince Charles's favorite gardener, Titchmarsh hasn't stopped climbing yet.

And as he boosted himself, he boosted gardening. Steeped in stately homes and technicalities, gardening in the British media had become tame and tired. Titchmarsh came along and woke everyone up. With his open and generous personality and his up-to-date style, he brought a new image and irreverence to the airwaves. "He's young and interesting and exciting and he brings a kind of friendliness," says Diana Stenson, producer of *Gardeners' Question Time*, Sunday's fixture for over forty years on BBC's Radio 4. "Gardeners tend to be a bit traditionalist, and he's willing to break down the boundaries and have a go at something different. I think it's good because it gives gardening a shot in the arm."

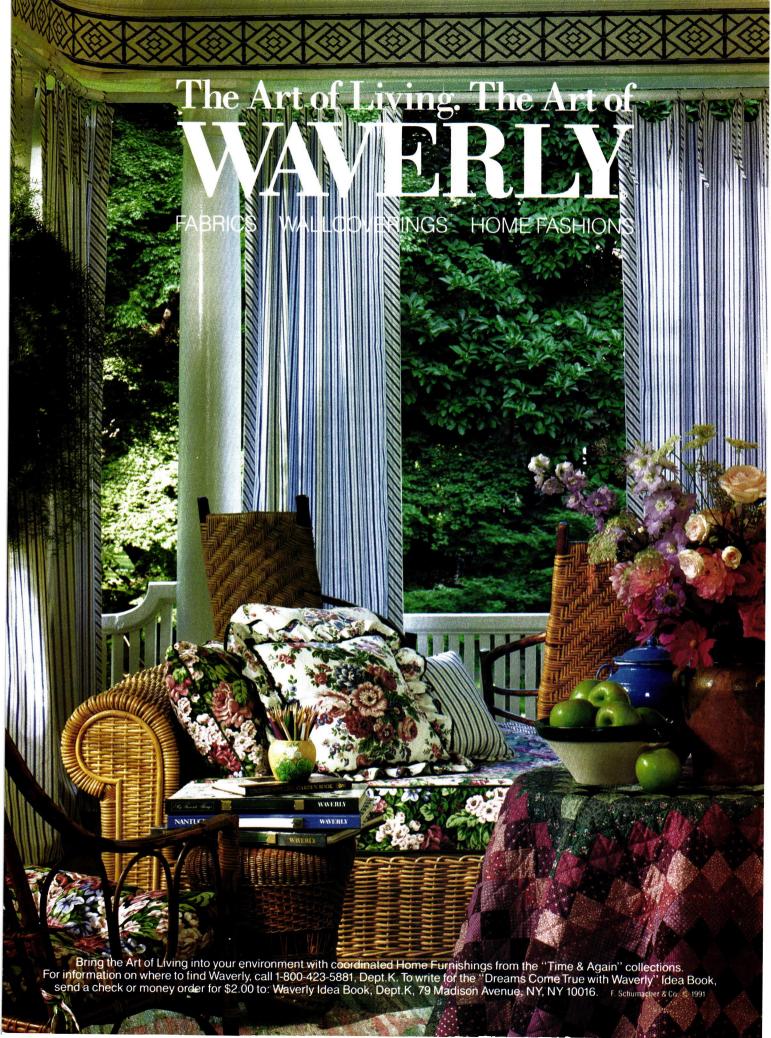
What Titchmarsh, an aspiring actor, does best is communicate and entertain, and he does it with a regional accent and urbane manner that have both a common touch and cachet. He's expert enough to let his enthusiasm show—he seems actually to *enjoy* gardening—and he tells you about it in words you can understand.

"An advanced state of necrosis?" he asks while suddenly uprooting an ailing begonia in the outdoor green-









house specially built for the weekly garden spot on his show. "It's dead! Chuck it out!" On the set, equally dramatic, he produces a huge branch of camellia, enshrouds it in netting, and says, "In windy weather it's simple. Protect those blooms."

"Gardening has never struck me as being mysterious, but rather common sense with a bit of knowledge," says Titchmarsh, off duty. "It still

Titchmarsh has a sharp satiric eye for upmarket gardeners who need to know what color Wellies to wear and Latin names to drop

can be a frustrating business, but I thought, right, if I just approach it like I find it bloody good fun, if I can persuade other people it's good fun as well and look as though I'm not some sort of intimidating boffintoo scientific-maybe they'll catch on. The big thing is to get them to stop panicking. 'Don't worry! Do this, this, and this, and enjoy it!"

Titchmarsh also has a sharp satirical eye for the snobbery, old and new, that has attached itself to gardening. Skewering it smartly in one of his most popular books, Avant-Gardening: A Guide to One-Upmanship in the Garden, Titchmarsh makes fun of all upmarket gardeners, including himself. "I thought, I'll have a go at this, a little gentle dig," he says, "so I sat down at the typewriter and blasted away at all those little snobberies I've seen over the years. I thought it was time the curtain was pulled back and it was all exposed. It's tongue in cheek, but on the other hand it's all absolutely true."

His book is snapped up by gardeners and gardeners manqué who want to keep up with the Lloyd-Joneses and need to know what color Wellies to wear (Barbour blue for the ladies) and Latin names to drop, that old hoes are in and hostas are hot. Just the ticket, too, for one-upping American gardeners with power plants and Anglophilia who want chintz outside as well as in. But Avant-Gardening is also meant to bring everybody, gently, back down to earth. Says Titchmarsh, "Sometimes I think people, particularly in the higher echelons of gardening, believe it should be kept exclusive, but I have no time for elitism. Gardening is for everyone to get a kick out of. It's between you and your patch of soil, you and nature."

Titchmarsh can get away with these sallies away from the soil because he's a grounded gardener, up to his elbows in the flinty chalk of his hillside garden in Hampshire whenever he has the chance. "When I go home at weekends," he says, "I dig and plant and rake and hoe and all of that. It's part of my being." Rock and alpine plants are Titchmarsh favorites, and he feels a naturalistic setting and personal expressiveness are the key to success here as in the rest of the garden. "This 'tidying up' mentality about now? I like plants to look natural, untrussed. Plants by nature are not tidy. I don't object to gardens that are neat, but with everything so sterile, with no sort of bounty of billowing blooms, it's horrible."

It's easy to see why Titchmarsh has shaken up the British gardening world. Fighting to free an entire nation from garden guilt, he allows the buttoned-up Brits to be earthy and exciting. In a country where gardening is bred in the bone and fed by the climate, and everyone from the prince on down has his patch, Titchmarsh doesn't make you feel inadequate. Always accessible, he appeals across the board.

So hosting Mediterranean garden cruises, hit up for free advice by everyone from Julie Christie to Yehudi Menuhin, Alan Titchmarsh is hot, almost avant-garde. At a time when celeb chefs dine upstairs, this guru gardener comes in the front doorfashionable and full of romance.

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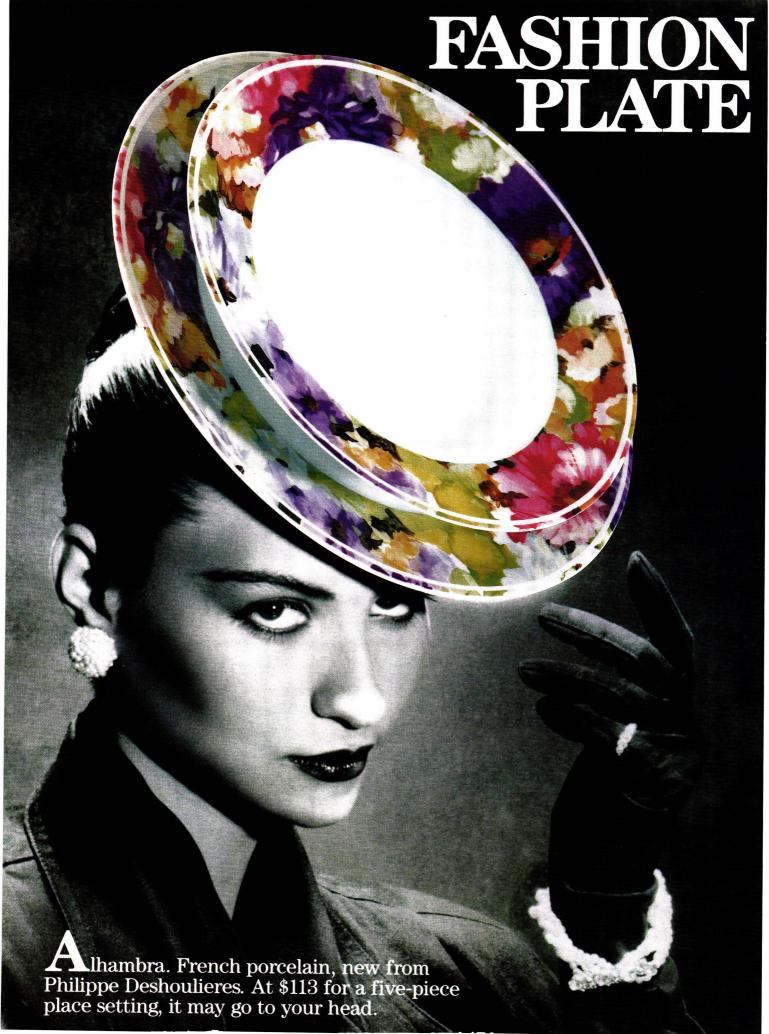
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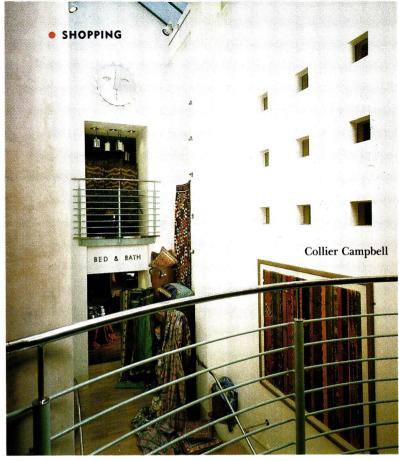
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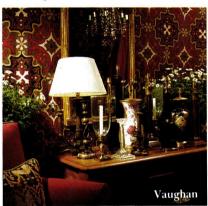




Collier Campbell sells its vibrant fabrics in a luxury liner—style store, left. Right: A sampling of the English and French lamps and needlework that Lucy and Michael Vaughan reproduce. Below: A forest of curtain tassels and trimmings at McKinney Kidston

describes all of the above as "part of our visual nutrition," and she is especially proud of the genderlessness of the results. "Too many rooms are too feminine," she says. "Our fabrics can stand on their own, without any froufrouing." (45 Conduit St., London W1R 9FB; 71-287-2277)

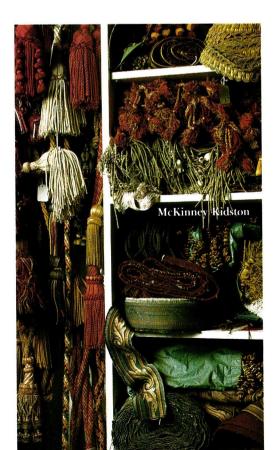
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of course, curtains and valances. Much of the merchandise dangles from the shop's walls in neat rows, giving the place the air of a hardware store, which is exactly the point. "This is not just a frilly boutique," says McKinney. "We want people to know they can get something here that works." Poles range from slim strips of wrought iron to Victorian flower-encrusted mahogany spears, curtains from chinoiserie toiles to medieval-style red velvets, and on the shelves of finials, oak spheres abut pressed-brass plumes. The owners, who also supply wallpaper and make house calls, prefer to treat windows simply. "All you need to be chic," says Kidston, "is a beautiful pole and curtain with interesting details like tassels and a colored lining. It's time to get away from overly grand curtains that spill onto the floor and drown you." (1 Wandon Rd., London SW6 2JF; 71-384-1377) VAUGHAN Lucy and Michael Vaughan, a married couple who finish each other's sentences, ventured into antique lighting and needlework reproduction in the early eighties, and since then their phone has

#### **London Luxuries**

From porcelains to paisleys, the city's shops stock the finer things in life By Eve M. Kahn



The English have a peerless eye for quality, whether it comes in the form of a silk curtain tassel, a boldly patterned bed sheet, or a perfect bunch of scented violets. Here meet seven of London's most discriminating purveyors of design with a British accent.

COLLIER CAMPBELL "We think in patterns," says Sarah Campbell of textile specialists Collier Campbell. "We succeed when we express ourselves succinctly." Cloth designers since the 1960s, she and her sister Susan Collier opened their first retail outlet two years ago, selling fabrics, towels, and bedding as well as clothing and accessories. The shop's streamlined architecture evokes a luxury liner, and the colorful wares reveal a variety of influences: Picasso, Matisse, American quilts, and African and Indonesian motifs. Collier

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#### never stopped ringing. The secrets of their success, according to Lucy: "We have a gut feeling for what people want, and we stay away from materials that weren't on the original pieces—we want to make the antiques of the future." So far they've copied nearly two hundred light fixtures, including Regency twisted-glass

lamp bases topped by brass Corinthian capitals, seventeenth-century Dutch pressed-brass sconces, and Gothic tole chandeliers highlighted by gilded quatrefoils. Their needlework selections, such as flowerstrewn rugs or geometric-patterned

> ottoman covers, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English and

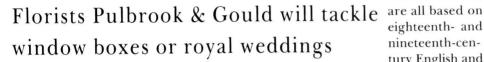
French originals. And the best part is that the needlepoint colors are muted, the brass isn't lacquered, the tole paint is crackled—everything the Vaughans sell looks old, without trying too hard. (156-60 Wandsworth Bridge Rd., London SW6 2UH; 71-731-3133 to the trade only)

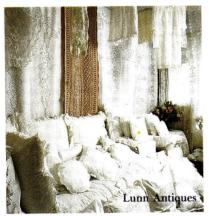
PULBROOK & GOULD The mix of shapes and colors at floral designers Pulbrook & Gould is heady: purple clouds of little scabious seem to float beside thick-stalked white amaryllis

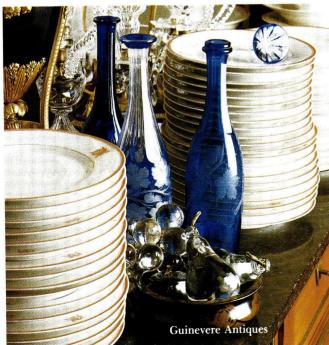
> blossoms, while orange sprays of euphorbia

niture in the shop is for sale, too: rustic tables, cast- and wrought-iron chairs, celadon pots, "anything for conservatories," says partner Sonja Waites. The house specialty, she adds, "is the Englishness of it all: the lushness, the delicacy of our flowers. I'm never bored with this business because every day I see something I can't quite believe is real." (Liscartan House, 127 Sloane St., London SW1 X9AS; 71-730-0030)

LUNN ANTIQUES When Stephen Lunn scrutinizes a prized piece of vintage lace under a magnifying glass, he finds not only fine workmanship but also social history. "Women stayed home and made lace while men worked in the field," he says, admiring a circa 1720 headdress of Brussels lace. "Such tiny knots, such backbreaking labor went into the production of some aristocrat's status symbol; lace is really a portrait of past lives." His shop is a study in white: snowy oft-bleached sheets contrast with tea-dipped ecru shawls. Lace-trimmed pillowcases and jacquard tablecloths are assembled in inviting piles, and christening robes sway softly from hangers near the ceiling. None of the things Lunn offers have been heavily restored, and all of his sheets are machine washable. Recently Lunn has started reproducing ruffly nineteenth-century nightgowns and bed linens, but lace remains his passion. "To me," he says, "it can be mind-blowing." (86 New Kings Rd., Parsons Green,







stretch elegantly nearby. The company philosophy, according to cofounder Lady Susan Pulbrook, is that "arrangements should look natural with every flower visible and every blossom perfect." An inhouse army of greenaproned arrangers will tackle everything from a window box to a royal wedding, and some of the fur-

Pulbrook & Gould sell floral extravaganzas as well as rustic conservatory furniture, top left. Above left: Linens and lace swathe every surface at Lunn Antiques. Left: Vintage tableware is one of the many specialties at Guinevere Antiques. Above right: Peter Fiell holds court in his gallery devoted to post-1945 furniture. The chair, above far right, is a replica of a 1963 Gerrit Thomas Rietveld design; the contemporary table is by Derrick Pearce.

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London SW6 4LU; 71-736-4638) **GUINEVERE ANTIQUES** Genevieve Weaver organizes her ten antiquescrammed rooms so deftly that they are never overwhelming. Aided by sons Marc and Kevin, partner John Arnett, and twenty-eight years' experience, she finds and groups birds of a feather: dozens of tortoiseshell clocks, candlesticks, and frames glisten in a corner cabinet; paisley shawls spill from a bookcase; and hanging above a staircase are glass lanterns that evoke an icicle patch. An entire room is devoted to crystal and glass, including a circa 1990 silver-topped inkwell the size of a blender. The neighboring furniture ranges from a pair of 1920s mirrorstudded tables to an Egyptian revival bed whose head and foot sport gilded swans. "I don't follow the trends; I buy what I like," says the Frenchborn Weaver, one of the first antiques dealers to settle on the west end of Kings Road. Then she takes a thoughtful drag on her cigarette. "And when I like something," she says, "I like a lot of it." (578 Kings Rd., London SW6 2DY; 71-736-2917) FIELL Few Americans blink anymore at the sight of antiques stores full of furniture born as late as the 1960s, but in London Peter Fiell's gallery of post-1945 pieces is startling. "People are afraid of modern furniture here; they're afraid if they own it, they'll look self-made," says the Canadian-born dealer who, with his wife, Charlotte, has written Modern Furniture Classics Since 1945 (due this fall from Thames & Hudson). His solution to Britain's worries: eclecticism. "A seventeenth-century table can work alongside an Eames chair if they're aesthetic equals," he says. He sells pieces by all the postwar greats, including Charles Eames, Raymond Loewy, and Isamu Noguchi; he also produces limited editions of contemporary furniture and will accept decorating assignments. "An interior should reflect the Zeitgeist," he says. "If it doesn't, it looks awkward if not downright dishonest." (181-83 Kings Rd., London SW3 5EB; 71-351-7172) ▲

**HG** APRIL 1991



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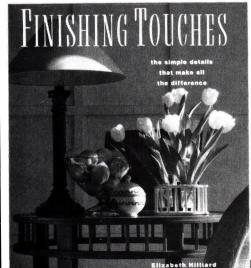


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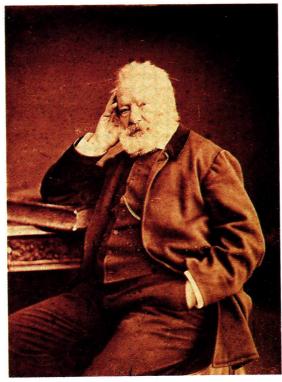
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## CHRISTOPHER SIMON SYKES

#### **Hugo in Exile**

On the isle of Guernsey, the writer composed an ode to Victorian excess

BY CHARLES MACLEAN





Hugo, in an 1878 photo by Nadar, above, wrote standing at a table in his "Crystal Palace," above right. Left: In exile Hugo was sent quantities of books but rarely found time to read. Below: Platters and plates, including a Sèvres service given to him by Charles X, fill the china corridor.





riters who readily indulge our curiosity about where and how they live get a kick out of describing bleak prisonlike existences. Seldom are we treated to a tour of the joint—well appointed, domesticated, or charmingly disordered, as it may be—without being asked to admire the imaginary bars that sequester the dreaded den or attic room, so often trimmed with a few pathetic reminders of the outside world, of a life waiting to be lived. In the literary slammer, books do not furnish a room—guilt does. Only when sentence has been passed by circumstances beyond their control can writers righteously feel, well, liberated.

Victor Hugo considered naming his residence-in-exile on the English Channel island of Guernsey Liberty House for political reasons. In December 1851, his outspokenness against the French government under Louis Napoleon had led to a warrant being issued for his arrest, obliging him to flee Paris. A bitter victim of tyranny, Hugo raised the tricolor over 38 Hauteville, Saint Peter Port, proclaiming his island fastness (with characteristic immodesty) the last bastion of truth, freedom, and justice. But exile suited him; the enforced isolation got him writing again and gave his faded literary career a new lease on life. In Guernsey he settled down at the age of fifty-three to produce the major works (including Les Misérables, La Légende des siècles, and L'Homme qui rit) that secured his reputation as France's greatest writer.

Hugo never published a sentence about Hauteville House, as he came less portentously to call it, but his journals and letters fully document his life there, and the house itself, almost unchanged since the day he left some fifteen years later, reveals as much about the man as anything he might have written. Open to the public, though not strictly a museum, the plain white façade of the town house hardly prepares the visitor for an interior that is a temple to high Victorian excess and entirely the creation of Victor Hugo. First impressions are of entering a murky cavern, the faked-out lair of some preposterous old actor or illusionist. Everything is dark oak, tapestry, and tile—solid, richly worked, yet about as convincing as a Boris Karloff movie set. Climb up through the gloom toward Hugo's quarters at the top of the house—his



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Hugo's roaring egotism is everywhere on display



Delft tiles cover the walls of the dining room, top, and form a huge H over the hearth. Above: Hugo's invented coat of arms embroidered on a chairback. Above right: The Hugo family staged theatrical performances in the opulent Blue Drawing Room, while the audience sat in the adjoining **Red Drawing** Room, right.





glass-walled "Crystal Palace"—and the atmosphere changes dramatically. Doors open on panoramic views of the sparkling English Channel flooding the rooms on the garden side with epiphanies of light. Hugo charged his poetry with similar effects, rarely passing up the chance of a grand antithetical flourish. Charles Hugo, who shared six years of his father's exile, was not far wrong in suggesting that "some day Hauteville House will be for biographers a true autograph in three floors, a poem in several rooms."

In his quest to furnish the house, Hugo combed Guernsey for antique chests and other loot that pirates and privateers had hoarded on the island a century before. Borne back to Hauteville in a horse-drawn cart, these treasures would be ruthlessly dismantled, then following Hugo's sketched instructions, reassembled by local artisans. There is not a square inch of wall or ceiling unadorned by dismembered wood carvings, delft tiles, oriental carpets, Aubusson and Gobelins tapestries, or rare silks. The work of cobbling them together to realize a phantasmagoria of symbolic decorating notions—from carved Latin tags to a mysterious winged head repeated all over the house—seemed never ending. It would be ages before Madame Hugo could safely confide in a

letter: "At last, the sound of hammering is silenced."

The poet, who did his share of daubing and whittling, was not just out to amuse when he told a friend: "I missed my vocation. I was born to be an interior designer." One gets a whiff of futility from the hyper inventiveness, the roaring egotism everywhere on display. Hugo didn't stop at the woodwork—he made up faux ancestors, a faux ghost (appropriating the story of a young girl's suicide from next door), and entertained the paranoid delusion that he

was being pursued by Louis Napoleon's spies. The house, honeycombed with false panels, hiding places, and secret doors, boasts an ingenious system of mirrors over the staircase (a sort of primitive video intercom) that allowed him to check the identity of visitors from his workroom through a glass floor. But the security arrangements, his journals reveal, were as often used by Hugo to view the hidden charms of chambermaids.

The silvering behind those mirrors, dimmed and blistered, also witnessed real tragedy, as well as inexorcisable ghosts. Hugo never got over the loss of his daughter Léopoldine, drowned in a boating accident on the Seine. His attempts to reach her through séances and table turning had ended so frighteningly he'd foresworn trying to con-

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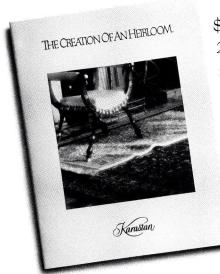
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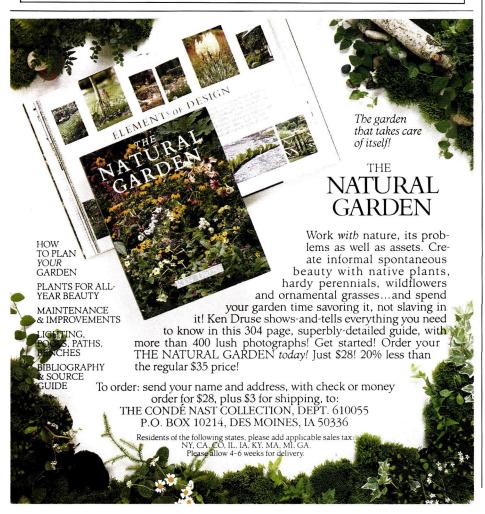
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#### CLASSICS

tact the dead. Yet he continued to be tormented on Guernsey by "night visitors," spirit rappings in the walls, and more than once "a horrifying force violently separating my joined hands." Finding comfort in charity, he invited twenty of the island's poorest children to lunch every Wednesday but not before carving the bleakly sanctimonious inscription "Exilium vita est" (Life is an exile) over the dining room door.

No less unhappily, it was at Hauteville that his younger daughter, Adèle—the only member of his family to share his love of the island—began to lose her reason. Adèle (the subject of François Truffaut's disturbing film L'Histoire d'Adèle H.) and her illness were used by Madame Hugo, who made no secret of loathing the place, as an excuse to return with her to Paris. Hugo's two sons followed, abandoning him to the solitude, "the happiness of being alone," that he'd come to value more than their company.

He would rise early and work until lunch, standing at a table in the Crystal Palace with its navigator's view of the ocean. From the street he could be heard talking to himself, reading passages aloud, his voice booming through the empty house. If he stepped out onto the balcony, it was to signal to La Fallue, the house two doors away where he had installed Juliette Drouet, his mistress for fifty years. A wise woman, she refused to live at Hauteville House after Madame Hugo's death, knowing Hugo would have driven her away too. He'd built a tomb, as his wife called Hauteville, to immure his genius; there was no room in it for anyone else. Only Juliette saw out the term of an imprisonment which suited Hugo so well that he voluntarily extended his exile—a paradigm of the writer's condition—long after he was amnestied, delaying by several years his triumphant return to Paris.

For visitors information: Hauteville House, 38 Hauteville, Saint Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands; (481) 21-911. Open Apr. 1—Sept. 30.

#### <u>GOOD NEWS</u>

## History Repeats Itself!

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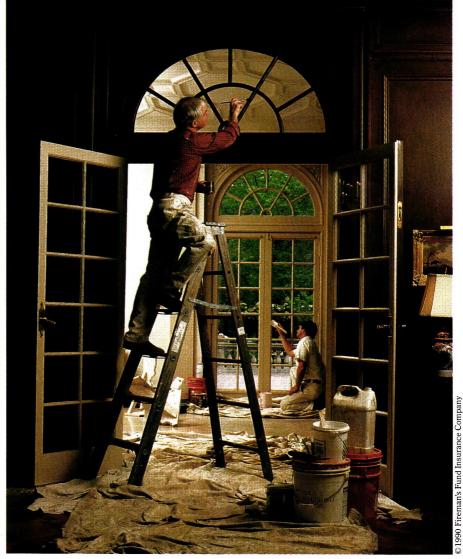
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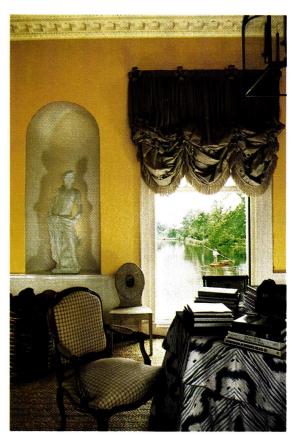
PERFUME

## ENGLAND

One evening last summer when I was visiting England—the only American at a dinner table deep in the Cornish countryside—I was privy to a conversation that now seems relevant to our English issue. Forgive me if my account of the dialogue reads like a parody of some West End drawing room comedy, complete with made-up names. "How are the Lavishes?"

my hostess asked the man beside me. "Oh, haven't you heard? They just moved into Beamly [a fine Tudor house]." She: "Rather a bad ghost problem there." He: "Yes, the Palladio-Joneses were awfully put out, though they say it is a well-meaning spirit." Off to bed a few hours later, I wondered what visitors from beyond I might receive that night, but there was just fresh air wafting into my room. There's more fresh air (and only the most benevolent of spirits) in our April issue, where we have a full complement of English places with a past, from the grand ancestral halls of Syon House and Burton Constable to the charming perennial borders at Upton Grey in a garden inhabited by the spirit of Gertrude Jekyll. Of course, the English take particular pride in introducing the best of the past to the liveliest spirits of the present—we do, too, with stories about antiques dealer Christopher Gibbs's highly personal way with heirlooms at his Oxfordshire manor, decorator John Ste-

fanidis's urbane approach to country house style in Wiltshire, and American architect Robert Venturi's triumphantly modern classicism in his new wing for the National Gallery in London. That we had so much to choose from, old and new, is to the credit of two of HG's editors abroad, Judy Brittain and Emma Marrian; I am also indebted to the photographers Christopher Simon Sykes and James Mortimer, who are virtually editors-at-large. Haunted though we all are by the pressing concerns of a troubling world, I hope you find comfort and encouragement in the vibrant spirit of English living.

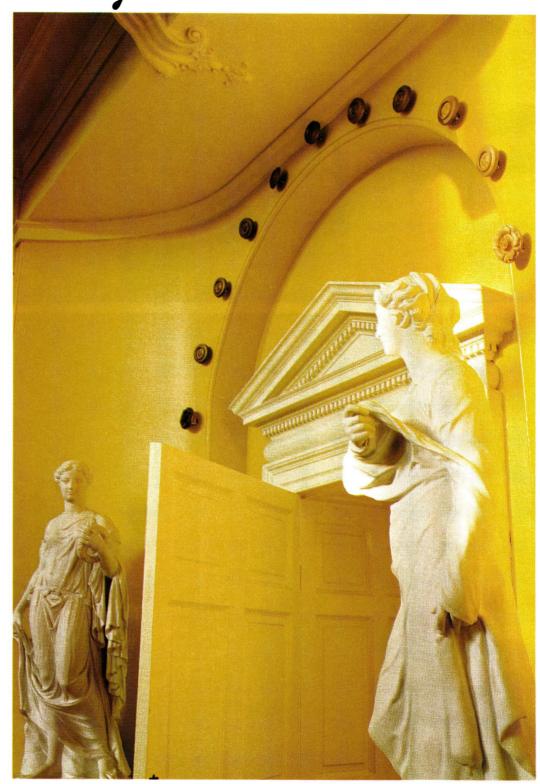


Outside the drawing room of an 18th-century folly in Suffolk, a gentleman punts on a formal canal.

Many Vorograd



## Family Treasure



In the staircase hall, opposite, 18th-century paintings by Andrea Casali flank the mantel, and family portraits are clustered above. Right: Plaster figures by John Cheere, c. 1760, stand by the dining room door.

THE HOUSE OF AN OLD YORKSHIRE LINE IS GLORIOUSLY RESTORED

BY GERVASE JACKSON-STOPS Photographs by Jacques Dirand







Y ENGLISH STANDARDS, BURton Constable Hall seems near the ends of the earth. To the east lies the vast expanse of the North Sea, to the south the Humber estuary with its mud flats and colonies of wild birds, to the west the sprawling seaport of Hull. In this flat, fertile, empty countryside, the long low house could almost be the hulk of a ship washed up among the meadows, a flag still fluttering at its stern. And what pirate could resist the prize within? Paintings and sculpture, Italian marble and oriental porcelain, rare books and minerals, shells and scientific instruments, gilt-bronze and silver—a cargo fit for a prince. Burton Constable is no ordinary squire's house, no perfectly proportioned Palladian box with the usual mixture of sporting pictures, family portraits, and polite brown furniture. There is a swagger to its gilded rooms, a bravura and an eccentricity that speak of champagne rather than sweet sherry, of palaces more than parlors.

How and why did the Constables of Burton Constable come to differ so markedly from their Yorkshire neighbors? To begin with, they were always intensely proud of their lineage, deriving their name from a "Conestable" who probably came over with Wilqueror and

whose descendant acquired the manor of Burton in the twelfth century. Since that time the house and estate have never been sold and have always passed by descent. On a number of occasions this has been through the female line, but the new owners have always taken the name Constable or added it to their own. Perhaps because of this pride in the past, the family refused to abandon the old faith at the Reformation and remains Roman Catholic to this day. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this debarred them from political careers and from the titles they might reasonably have expected, but it also gave them leisure to indulge in grand tours, academic and scientific pursuits, connoisseurship, and art collecting.

For John Chichester-Constable, the present owner of the house, inheriting this vast pile with all the problems of upkeep and restora-

There is a swagger to these rooms that speaks of champagne rather liam the Con- than sweet sherry

tion might have seemed a mixed blessing. But he and his late wife, Gay, cheerfully took up the challenge.

"The real act of faith was my father's," he says, explaining how the house had been shut up since 1930, used by troops during the war, and badly damaged by bombs. "In 1948, when most people were moving out of big houses into more manageable rectories and farms, he took a deep breath and decided to move back in."

The redbrick Elizabethan house was built by Sir John Constable in the 1570s onto a much earlier tower house, parts of which still survive. His grandson Henry, a Royalist general created Viscount Dunbar by James I, added the wings enclosing

The west front, above. Above left: A late 17th century armchair gilded in the 19th century. Opposite above left: An unknown artist's view of the house, c. 1860, behind antique hatboxes. Opposite below: William Collins's statue of Bacchus presides over the 1765 dining room. The bas-relief vase at right, by the Italian plasterer Giuseppe Cortese, helps disguise a kitchen door.







This is no plain squire's polite brown furniture



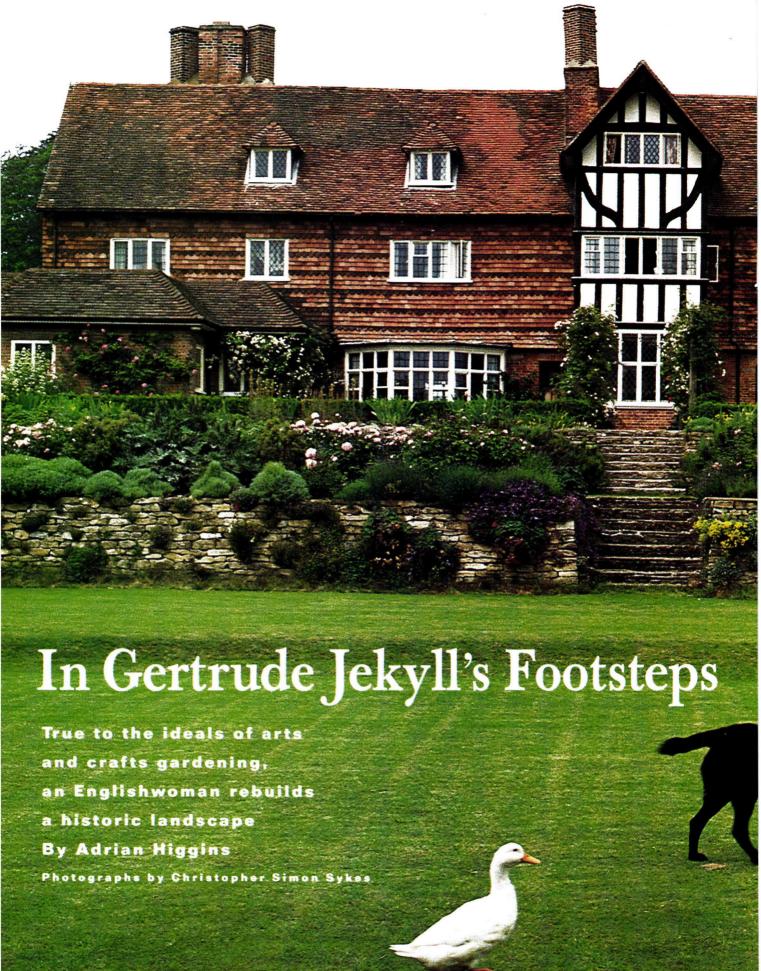
the forecourt. The last Viscount Dunbar died in 1718. But the man who transformed the house in the eighteenth century and whose character can be felt in virtually every room was his grand-nephew, William Constable, who inherited it in 1747. Though a Catholic, he was a scholar of the Enlightenment, a correspondent of Voltaire's and a close friend of Rousseau's. And while pursuing interests in botany and geology, art and architecture, he was also an antiquarian, keen to stress the venerable origins of his family. Constable's alterations to the outside of the house preserved its Elizabethan character, adding a giant coat of arms with the Dunbar coronet to affirm that he was no nouveau riche.

Inside, he kept the two-story Elizabethan great hall, employing the architect Timothy Lightoler to give it a classical veneer but filling it with ancestral portraits and placing another huge heraldic device over the fireplace in brightly colored scagliola. Having developed a passion for this rare imitation marble during his trips to Italy, Constable brought the scagliola worker Domenico Bartoli to Yorkshire specially to produce a series of spectacular tabletops and chimneypieces. In the Elizabethan long gallery Constable installed his 7,300 books, his cabinets of minerals, shells, and botanical specimens, his scientific instruments, maps, globes, microscopes, and telescopes. Here too can be seen two of the wheelchairs he used late in life, when he is said to have weighed nearly three hundred pounds, and his exercise chair with its sprung seat for shaking up the liver.

William Constable's fondness for food and wine can be sensed in the dining room, (Continued on page 200)

John Chichester-Constable's sofa, *left*, is part of a suite Thomas Chippendale made for the drawing room in 1778. *Above left:* Gilt chairs from various periods line the long gallery, beneath a Georgian version of Jacobean plasterwork. *Opposite:* William Constable's 1773 four-poster was made by Edward Elwick of Wakefield. The chandelier, like many in the house, has not been electrified.





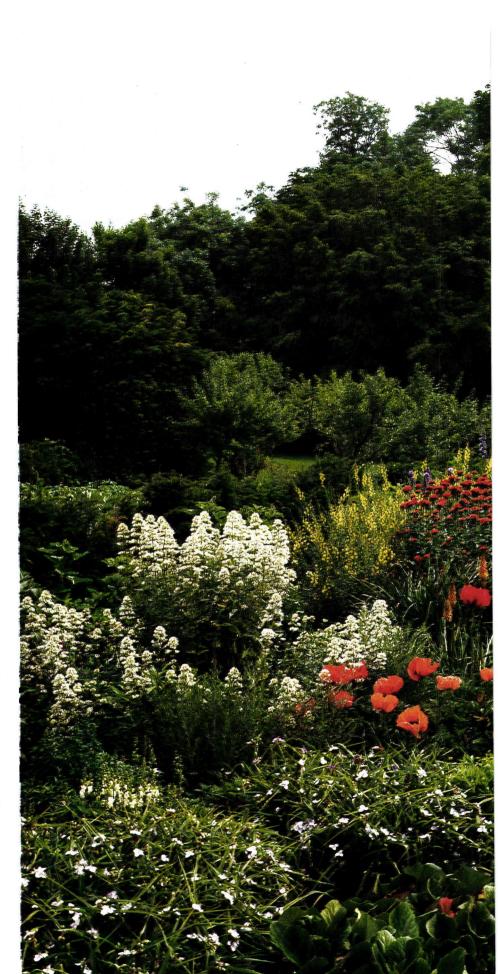


LMOST SIXTY YEARS AFTER she died, Gertrude Jekyll continues to haunt the minds and gardens-of designers, scholars, and gardeners on both sides of the Atlantic. Her ideas of color sequence and associations, exuberance without fussiness, and the integrity of the individual plant in a sympathetic setting have survived decades of neglect and, lately, the turn to overused perennial species. Nowhere is she more alive today than at the Manor House at Upton Grey in Hampshire. She stalks the borders and terraces daily, reincarnated as Rosamund Wallinger.

The two are unlikely soul mates. Jekyll was the frumpy doyenne of the arts and crafts movement in gardening. Stout and serious-minded, she went about changing the late Victorian and Edwardian landscape with the same self-assurance as her young cohort, the architect Edwin Lutyens. By contrast, Wallinger is a slim, attractive stockbroker's wife who cannot bring herself to gloat over the results of the seven years she has spent creating what Jekyll chronicler Jane Brown calls the finest example of a restored Jekyll garden anywhere. "Jekyll's friends used to call her Aunt Bumps, and Ros, to me, is getting to be like Aunt Bumps," says Gilly Drummond, a longtime friend who, as head of the Hampshire Gardens Trust, helped Wallinger obtain the advice she needed to restore the garden at Upton Grey.

The bones of the garden are simple enough. A pergola draped in sweetly scented roses and foliage leads from the house to a lower garden called the Rose Lawn. This is redolent of a knot garden or parterre because of its symmetry and the strategic placement of planted stone platforms and geometric flowerbeds. Though the Rose Lawn appears to be a sunken garden, because

Borders flanking a stone wall near the sunken terrace re-create a classic Jekyll color scheme: the warm reds of oriental poppies and kniphofia set off the cooler pinks and blues of peonies, campanulas, and delphiniums.



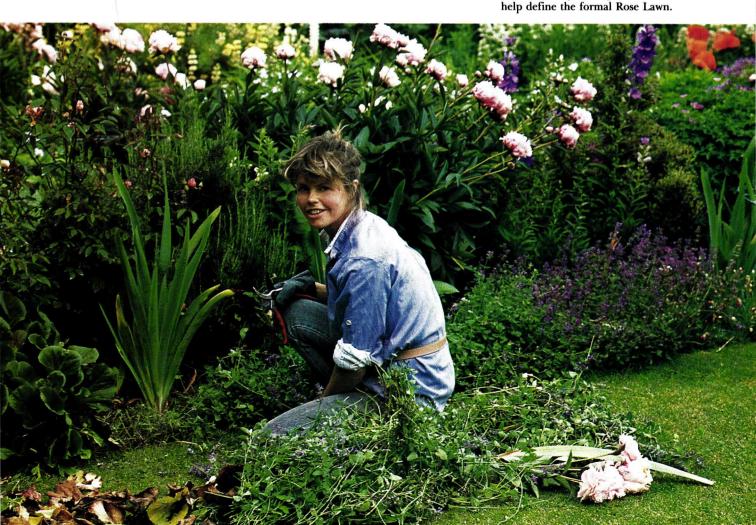




"Jekyll's friends used to call her Aunt Bumps, and Ros, to me, is getting to be like Aunt Bumps" of the stone walls flanking it, it is actually a terrace that leads down to more lawns fashioned into a bowling green and, beyond, a tennis court. The grounds are framed by old shade trees that have taken on the same billowy shapes as the cumulus clouds that roll across the skies of southern England.

In true Jekyll style, the skeleton is clad voluptuously in masses of perennials and a few annuals, roses, and herbs. The garden is planted for color and interest from April to late summer, but it comes into its own in late May and June when the roses are in full flush, the peonies are out, and the ubiquitous lamb's ears—used to edge the rose beds—have sent forth their flower spikes. Beyond the stone walls on either side of the Rose Lawn

The pond, opposite, which predates the Manor House, was enlarged by Jekyll as part of the Wild Garden. Beyond the water are the village church and the graveyard where the original owner, Charles Holme, is buried. Below: Ros Wallinger thins front-of-the-border catmint. Above left: Hedges and stonework help define the formal Rose Lawn.







are rich borders that play to Jekyll's famous orchestrations of color. The south-facing border is brightened with oriental poppies, kniphofia, and other hot-colored perennials. The north-facing border is kept cooler. Everywhere, the walls are softened with trailing or rock plants chosen for their form and flowers.

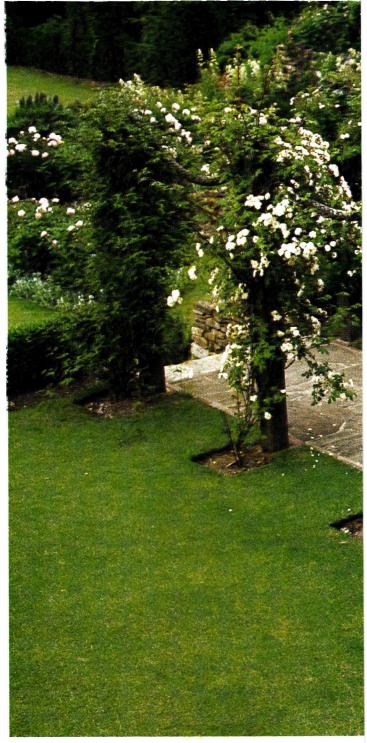
Even by Jekyll's standards, the range of color and the sophistication

Wallinger has planted not just the same species in Jekyll's plan but the very same old varieties

of plant materials are unusual. The reason lies with another whose ghost walks Upton Grey: Charles Holme, an industrialist who retired in his forties to pursue an interest in the arts and crafts movement. A year later, in 1893, he founded *The Studio* magazine. At the turn

of the century, he had the manor built around the shell of a sixteenthcentury farmhouse. For the garden he turned, naturally, to Jekyll. (Holme is buried in the graveyard of the village church, adjoining the Wild Garden she designed for him.) The complexity of Jekyll's work at Upton Grey is a direct result of Holme's own commitment to art and expertise as a gardener. This, in turn, has made Ros Wallinger's task more challenging-and rewarding. Her endeavors are the second half of the manor's story, for the restoration has transformed not just a garden but a human being.

Before moving to Upton Grey in 1984, Ros Wallinger had a small garden at the (Continued on page 200)

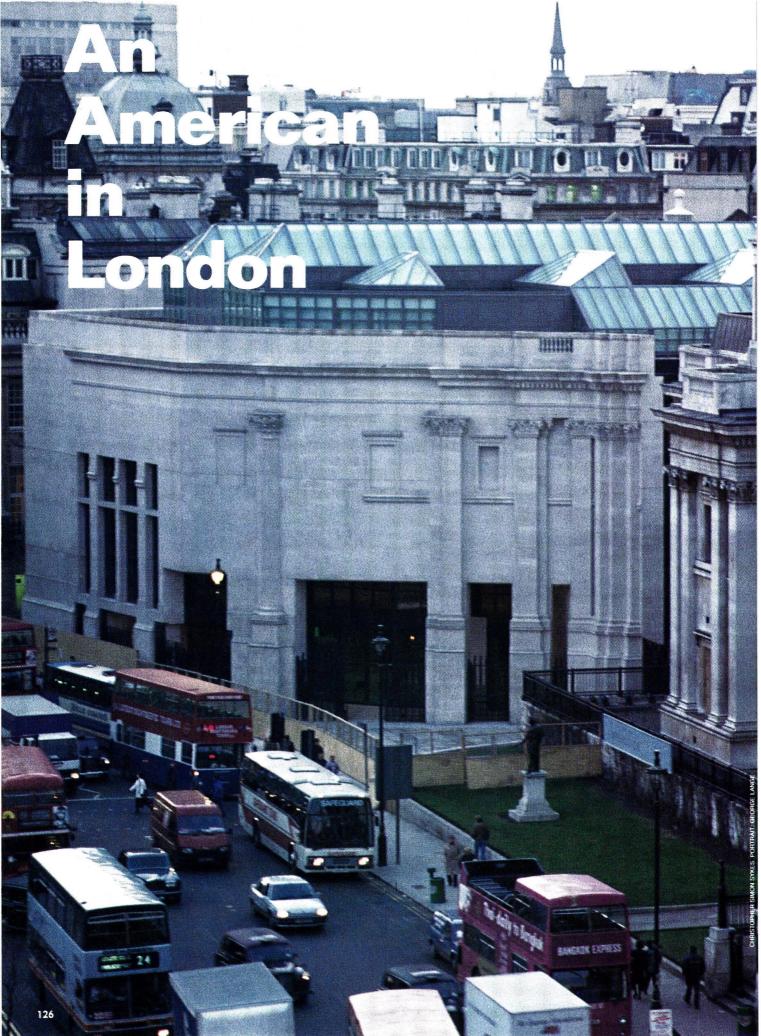


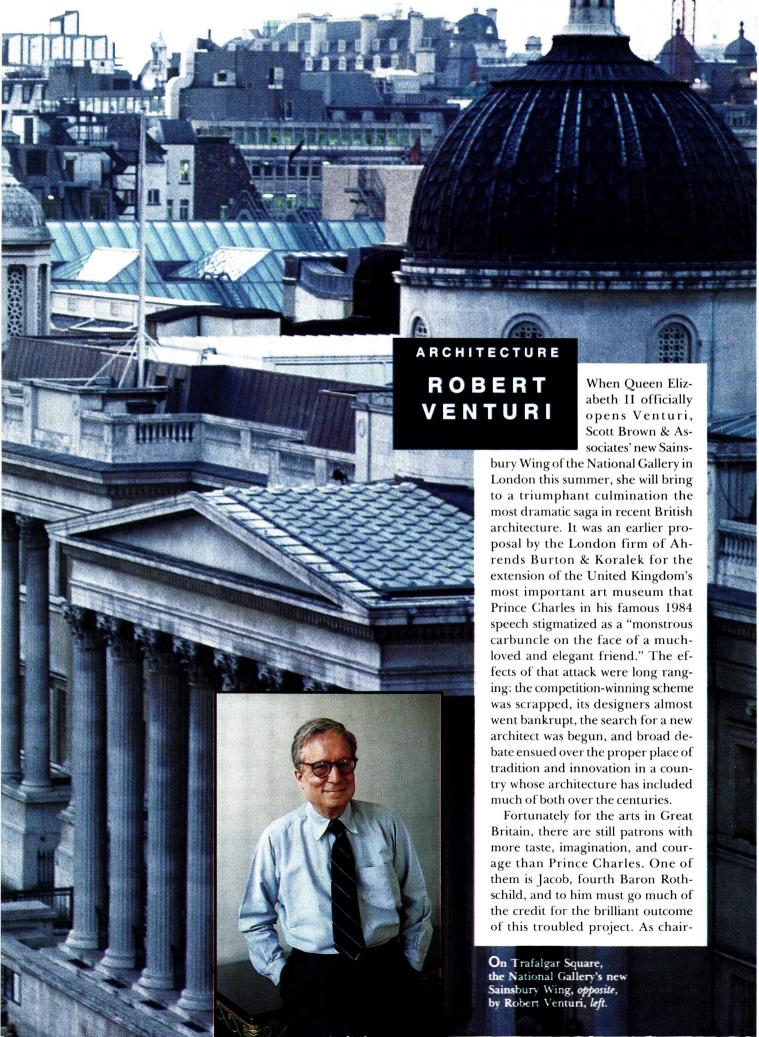




Wallinger rebuilt the main pergola, above, with rope swags used by Jekyll in other gardens. Posts are softened with roses and climbing plants, including aristolochia with its heart-shaped leaves. Opposite above left: Along the side entrance to the garden, Wallinger has built another pergola. The climbing rose 'American Pillar' faces the kitchen garden. Left: In the Rose Lawn, lamb's ears edge beds of peonies and roses. Right: An iron arch added by Holme marks the passage from house to Wild Garden.









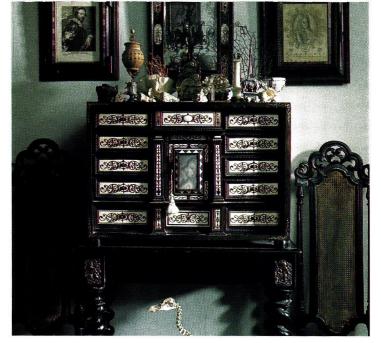




## A Laboratory for Eccentricity

A decorative arts historian and a ceramist experiment with design in a Georgian house. By Stephen Calloway Photographs by Simon Brown









sk anyone to describe his own house and you are likely to get a slice of his philosophy. I have always admired William Morris's characteristically forthright statement, "Have nothing in your homes that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful." But my favorite pronouncement, and the one with which I feel most in sympathy, was made by my hero, that great eighteenth-century writer, collector, and witabout-town Horace Walpole. In a guidebook for visitors to Strawberry Hill, his "little play thing house," Walpole wrote: "It was built to please my own taste, and in some degree to realize my own visions."

That has been the guiding principle for me and for my wife, the ceramic artist Oriel Harwood, since we first came to our London house. When we were married

four years ago, we began to hunt for a place that was near enough to the center of town yet affordable. It had to be Georgian in period—to give us the sort of proportions

## Each of our rooms becomes a stage set, each scheme a theatrical statement

and details we wanted—and big enough to take my ninety crates of books and several monumental Harwood architectural ceramics, while still leaving us room to play the decorative games we were beginning to plot.

The search ended in Walworth, a strangely forgotten inner-city wrong-side-of-the-tracks sort of neighborhood with a few forlorn but still noble terraces. Otranto House, as we christened our discovery, in honor of Walpole's first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, was built in 1797. It is a handsome five-story row house, typical of its date in London. For Oriel the house is both workshop and showcase for her art; for me it is where I research and write about the history of decoration and collecting. As we both become more involved with advising others on the creation of interiors, our own rooms also take on the role of a "taste laboratory" in which to try out ideas.

Though Oriel and I share an obsessive interest in the past and its decorative styles and artifacts, we were determined from the start that Otranto House would not become a museumlike exercise in putting everything back to its supposed eighteenth-century appearance. That deadly approach is one of the saddest things that can happen to an old house. How much more fun it is to mix the best of the old and the best of the new, to interweave

The somber dining room, left, is dominated by large pewter-glazed pieces by Harwood. Her smaller baroque tablewares and candlesticks grace the table. Center left: Prints and drawings of 18th- and 19th-century dandies complement a drawing room screen covered in vivid chinoiserie-pattern toile de Jouy. Top left: Beneath an inlaid mirror and a pair of 17th-century portraits, William and Mary period chairs flank an ebony and ivory cabinet topped with curiosities. Opposite: An Irish portrait of the 1700s hangs against old Italian crimson silk in the book-filled Gothick library.



real and fake to produce a living aesthetic statement. We began to conceive rooms that take ideas or elements from all kinds of interiors we have admired in our travels. In England we have sought out surviving fragments of eccentric decorative schemes. In France, First Empire grandeur and Second Empire opulence have tempted us. And in Spain, or down through the south of Italy and beyond to Sicily, we have followed Sacheverell Sitwell's footsteps in search of the bizarre and the baroque.

In this way each room becomes a stage set, a theatrical statement rich in historical or literary allusions but, above all, one that appeals directly to the senses and the imagination. That great decadent and dandy of the 1890s Comte Robert de Montesquiou got it right when he said, "A room is a mood." Sometimes it is a single piece of furniture or an object we have found or made that has sparked off a whole decorative train of thought. At other moments it is a more abstract desire to evoke the feel of a particular kind of place, such as the dark and mysterious sacristies of seventeenth-century Spain, that has been our starting point.

Thus the dining room is hung with deep gray taffeta edged with silver lace and lit only by candles. In the ecclesiastical gloom, extravagantly high-backed carved chairs



stand around a table swathed in heavy fringed damask. Empty, the room has what we like to think of as solemn grandeur, but with a fire crackling in the big hearth and the walls ringing with talk and laughter, the atmosphere is certainly more Roger Corman than Torquemada.

Beyond the dining room is the cabinet of curiosities. Again mainly seventeenth century in feel, the monochrome scheme is taken from the ebony and ivory of Dutch and Italian chests on stands and rows of engravings and drawings in frames of the period. We have grouped shells, fossils, pieces of armor, skulls, and other strange relics as they appear in those wonderful pictures of the rooms of German princely collectors before polite French taste swept away their quirkiness and fantasy.

As one goes upstairs to the first floor—in London houses, as in Italian palaces, the principal and most elegantly propor-

tioned story—the mood lightens. Here is the library, which developed around a pair of English Gothick bookcases from a long since demolished mansion, Lee Priory. Next door lies the drawing room, where pride of place is given to Oriel's wild green snake fireplace and its matching chandelier. We have played up the exotic theme with brilliant Regency colors and decorative patterns that recall the chinoiserie interiors of the Brighton Pavilion and the Palazzina Cinese in Palermo. The curtains with little red and gold ceramic bells, based on old prints of the Prince Regent's first essay in the Chinese style at Carlton House, are carried out in a mixture of modern and antique fabrics, including swags from a set of curtains made for Napoleon III's visit to Windsor Castle.

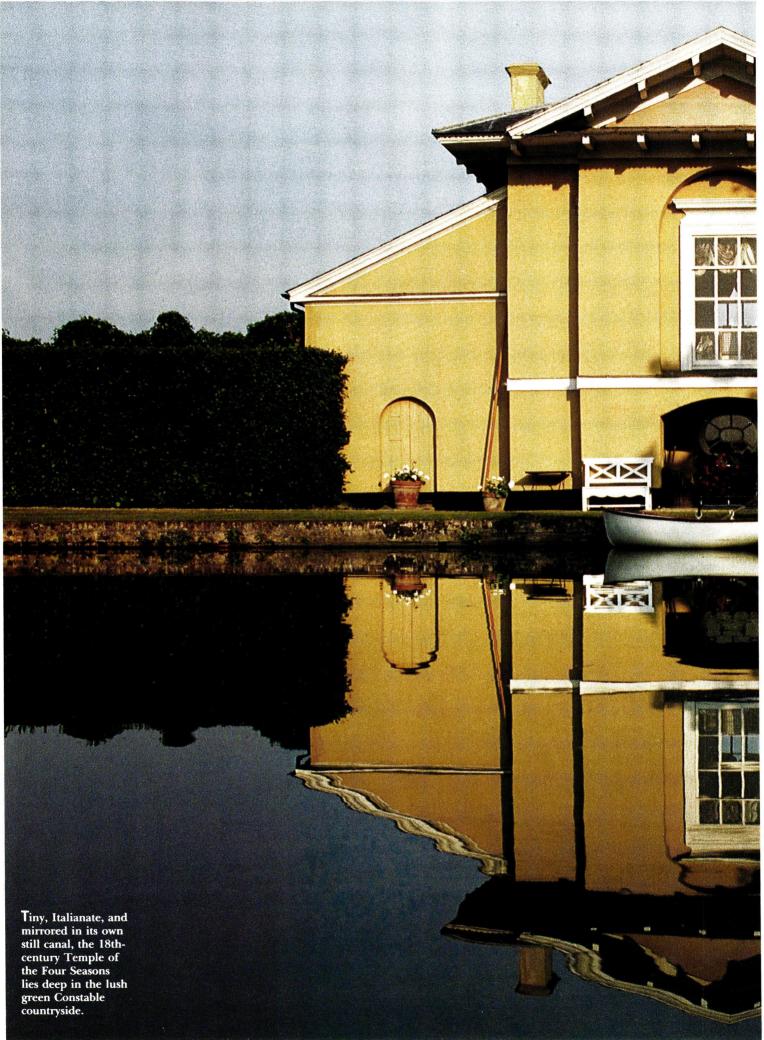
The upper bedroom floors are much more cottagelike in scale and detail; everything is kept simpler, like the rooms in those early nineteenth century watercolors of which Mario Praz was so fond. But at the very top of the staircase is our newest creation, a sculpture gallery which is both an homage to Sir John Soane's manic vision of the classical world and the culmination of a series of busts and other figures that begins (Continued on page 204)

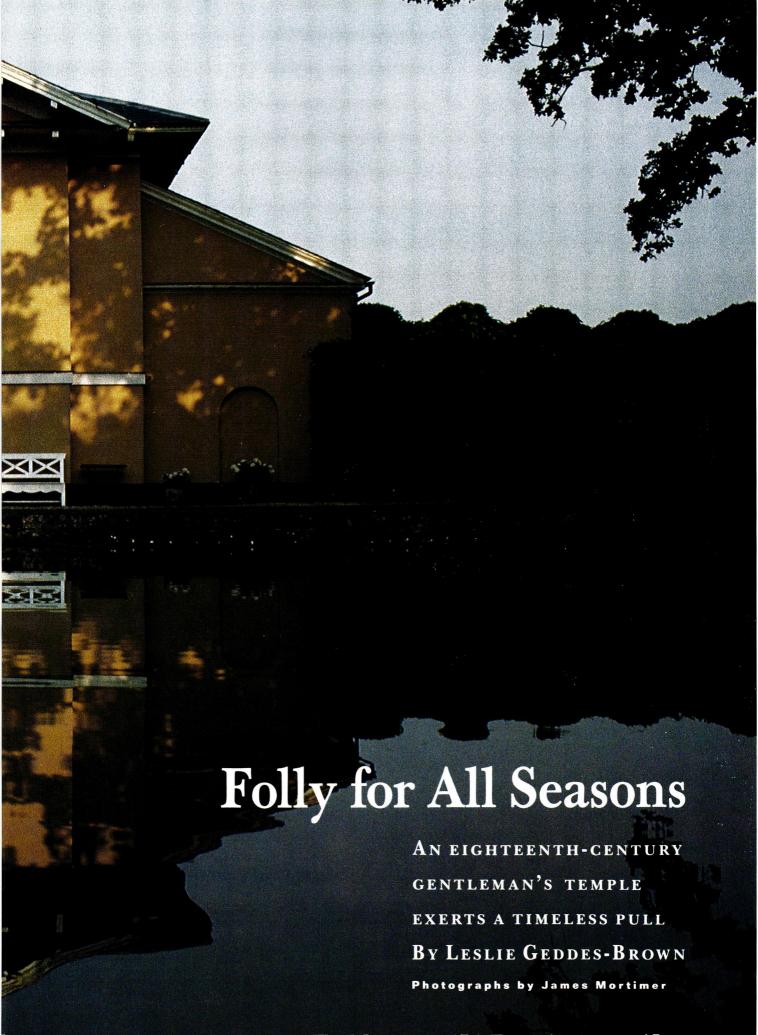
A cast of the Vatican's head of Zeus dominates English and Italian architectural prints and drawings in the sculpture gallery at the head of the staircase, *opposite*. *Above*: Among the busts and figures in the master bedroom are a Sèvres porcelain head of Napoleon and a cast of Pajou's Madame Du Barry. *Right*: The mahogany bed and canopy are Charles X.



In France we sought Empire grandeur, in Italy the bizarre and the baroque











A low Georgian door gives maximum surprise when it is flung open to reveal a drawing room and fourteen-foot ceiling





THE TEMPLE OF THE FOUR SEASONS WAS made for pleasure, and for over two centuries it has amply fulfilled its purpose. Every fine proportion, every niche and tiny twirl of its ornate plasterwork has delighted a series of sophisticates since the eighteenth century. It was probably built, circa 1760, by the architect Robert Taylor shortly after he returned to England from studying in Rome, and it resembles the country houses and town villas for which he became famous and was knighted. That Taylor's travels in Italy influenced him deeply is obvious, for this little temple, washed in the earthy ocher of Italian villages, conjures up Palladio's grand pleasure houses at Vicenza and on the Brenta in its strict classical proportions and in the unforgiving rectangular canal that stretches for two hundred yards from its arched loggia.

The temple was outfitted in the mid eighteenth century by the Rowley family, who lived at nearby Tendring Hall in the lush pasture of rural Suffolk, so that they and their guests could stroll down on a summer's eve for a spot of fishing. The canal, which still has sluices to keep the water running fresh, was specially stocked with trout, and many a day's sport the periwigged gentlemen would have had sitting under the formal avenue of sweet chestnuts along its shore, watching the water-skimming swifts while waiting for a bite. The ladies were expected to have gentler pursuits: they would chat, paint a pastel watercolor, or ply a dainty embroidery needle in the exquisite room that takes up the whole of the upper floor of the temple.

Ruinous and collapsing, the folly was discovered in 1955 by that doyen of British interior decorators, David Hicks. He leased it from the Rowley family, which still owns the estate today, and, with the help of the great but then-unregarded classical architect Raymond Erith, restored the temple for weekend use. Two leases later, the little temple was acquired by the London antiques dealer Charles Beresford-Clark, who dredged the canal and turned the elegant but spartan cottage into a chintzy country house in

The temple's grand upstairs room, above left, combines strong yellow walls with blue and white Chinese porcelain and French fabrics. Roman busts adorn the walls. Left: In the summer, meals are eaten beside water lilies. Opposite: A high wall abounds with roses. Details see Resources.

the Colefax manner. In 1983 the New Zealand interior designer Veere Grenney took over the lease and began to remodel the rooms in his more classic style.

Grenney finds it almost incredible that the temple is now his, for he has been lusting after it ever since, as a boy of fourteen, he saw it in a magazine. "David Hicks was my absolute hero at that age," he says, "when my passion for decoration was developing. And the temple has followed me ever since." Friends describe it as Grenney's mistress, because he spends all his money on it and it gives him incalculable pleasure. "Everybody loves the water and the peace it gives the place. And the great room has tremendous architectural quality because it obeys all the classical laws of harmony. Like all the best buildings, it is east-west facing. The sun rises over the water and sets into the landscape that Constable loved to paint."

Another reason that the temple has fascinated so many interior designers must be that, with barely three rooms, it offers the chance to play with so many styles. The tiny ground-floor rooms cry out for country treatment: the kitchen and dining room's seven and a half foot ceilings, little shuttered panes, and single oeil-de-boeuf window by Erith looking out over the water are best served by Grenney's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century naive oil paintings of animals, which hang on the walls unframed, while the bedroom and bathroom carved out of one of the wings are appropriately outfitted in simple ticking fabric. But the pièce de résistance, the great room—subtly approached by a wide staircase and a low Georgian door that gives maximum surprise when it is flung open to reveal a gasp-inducing drawing room with a fourteen-foot ornately plastered ceiling—is in the grandest country house style.

The ceiling is enlivened with swags and flourishes and four heads representing the seasons. Four Roman busts—two of emperors, two of philosophers—stand on carved brackets, stark against the Chinese yellow walls, and two full-length statues of huntsmen with their hounds are in the niches. On the rush floor, covered as though by Suffolk's medieval yeomen—and still serviceable after thirty years—are French country chairs, their Brunschwig upholstery of blue and white stylized Chinese jars mirroring the real Jiangxi on the imposing mantelpiece. There are heavily ruched but plain calico curtains, and the

window behind them, gazing out over the canal, was cleverly designed by the architect to rise up into the building's pediment so that when open in summer and with the west-facing bay window also ajar light and air flood in. (Continued on page 204)

An oeil-de-boeuf window in the cottagey downstairs dining room, right, overlooks the canal. Above right:
Clipped box and gravel add Italian formality to the garden. Opposite:
Guest rooms in the old dog kennels offer such comforts as a painted Swedish four-poster.

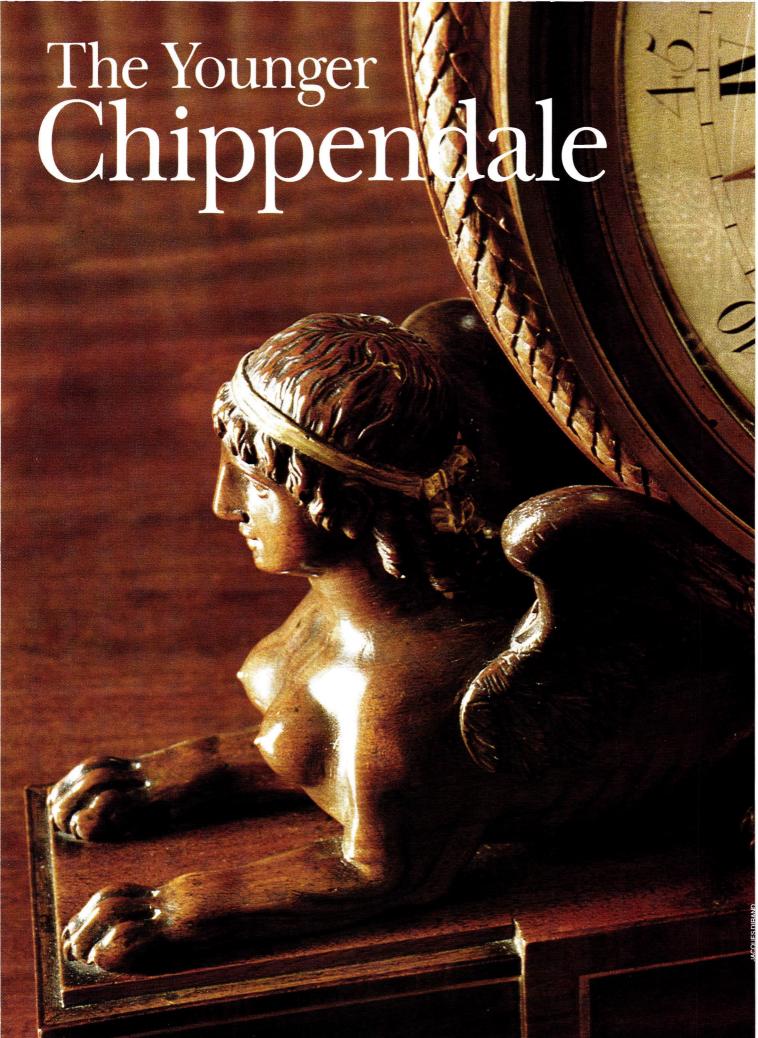


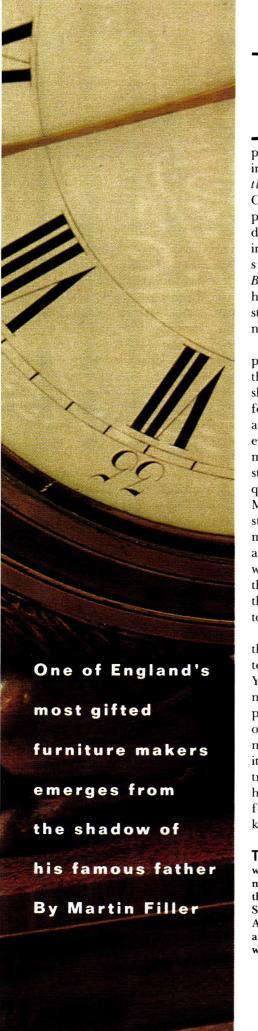


Guests are put up in country comfort and can wander barefoot and cotton-gowned out into the shade









IGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND WAS A golden age of furniture design and manufacture when even provincial towns might boast craftsmen capable of creating pieces of exceptional line and finish reflecting the latest London taste. A major factor in that phenomenon was the publication in 1754 of the most influential furniture pattern book of all time, The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director by Thomas Chippendale. A heavily illustrated trade catalogue, depicting scores of chairs, tables, beds, case goods, and decorative accessories in highly detailed engravings, Chippendale's manual was to interior design what Colen Campbell's Vitruvius Britannicus was to architecture: a comprehensive national guide to a philosophy of style so concise and clear that a rural journeyman could learn from it. Thus it was not just Thomas Chippendale's considerable artistic gifts that propelled the ambitious Yorkshireman to the pinnacle of his profession. Rather, his canny business and promotional skills won him preeminence in a highly competitive market, and the Cabinet & Upholstery Warehouse, his London headquarters and showroom in Saint Martin's Lane, attracted a steady stream of lords, ladies, and gentlemen eager to get the latest in luxury and the utmost in refinement with which to decorate their houses. When the master died in 1779, he left to his thirty-year-old eldest son a legacy second to none in the annals of English furniture. Yet, despite having designed some of the handsomest objects of the early nineteenth century, Thomas Chippendale the Younger is virtually forgotten today. Had he not borne the same name as and served as apprentice to the leading interior design arbiter of the age, Chippendale the Younger might now be accorded the recognition he richly merits. Although he developed on his own into a true original, when mentioned at all in the history books it is usually only as a footnote to his father. No known portrait of Chippen-The magnificent table clock with mahogany case, left, was made by Thomas Chippendale the Younger for the library of Stourhead in Wiltshire. Right: Also for Stourhead, a mahogany and satinwood wheelback chair with the crest of the Hoare family.

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dale the Younger exists, the Victoria and Albert Museum owns not a single example of his furniture, and because of his parent's colossal fame it is likely that many early pieces executed by the son have been misattributed to his more sought-after predecessor.

Chippendale the Younger has been known only to a few antiques specialists who prize the furniture he made between 1795 and 1820, when England was isolated from the continent by the Napoleonic Wars and became less dependent on France for design inspiration. Unlike his contemporaries, he did not aim for the delicate proportions and pretty surface decoration in gilt and lacquer typical of the Regency period. Rather, this individualist favored a bolder, more masculine scale, emphasized by dark burnished woods and unconventional, often startling, details. He remained true to his parental heritage and relied on elaborate carving rather than metal mountings to achieve the distinctive effects he was after. Yet unlike his father, who had a rococo tendency to let a surfeit of ornament overrun his important pieces, the son excelled at compositions, as strong as architecture, in which large surfaces of unembellished wood contrast with carved details as intricate as jewelry.

One reason for Chippendale the Younger's obscurity is that several of his largest commissions for country houses have remained intact and thus prevented single objects from circulating in the marketplace. Today, the survival of such hoards of furniture accompanied by the attendant documents and bills provides inestimable resources for historians, but it is almost as if evidence of this custom craftsman does not exist outside a handful of Georgian time capsules in the shires. One major treasure trove, Paxton House in Berwickshire, Scotland, which

will open to the public next spring, is likely to increase interest in this consummate artisan's designs.

As a young man still working for his father but taking on greater responsibility as the master shifted into semi-retirement, Chippendale the Younger was involved in several stately home projects. One of the earliest was Harewood House, the country seat of the Lascelles family in Yorkshire. Another commission in that county was Nostell Priory, the Palladian mansion of the Winn family in the vicinity of Otley, the village where the senior Chippendale was born. Some of the furniture at Nostell Priory, supplied around 1780, is carved with dainty neoclassical motifs and gilded in a close approximation of the emergent Louis XVI style in France.

Chippendale the Younger's particular interest in clas-

Chippendale the Younger's particular interest in classicism is clear in his early work, but there is little hint of the dynamic manner he was later to devise by himself. That opportunity finally came after the late Thomas Chippendale's old partner, Thomas Haig, retired from the firm in 1796. A new sense of originality and daring can be seen in the work that Chippendale the Younger executed for his greatest customer, Sir Richard Colt Hoare of Stourhead, the Wiltshire estate with England's finest neoclassical landscape garden. An aesthete who wanted to make his own artistic contribution to what his forebears created, Colt Hoare equaled their efforts with the superlative furniture made for him by Chippendale the Younger, who with this job at last came into his own.

As centerpiece of the library at Stourhead, one of the most remarkable interiors of its period, Chippendale in 1804–05 made a stupendous mahogany writing table decorated with "therm'd legs with philosophers heads carved on ditto. 4 end therms (Continued on page 204)

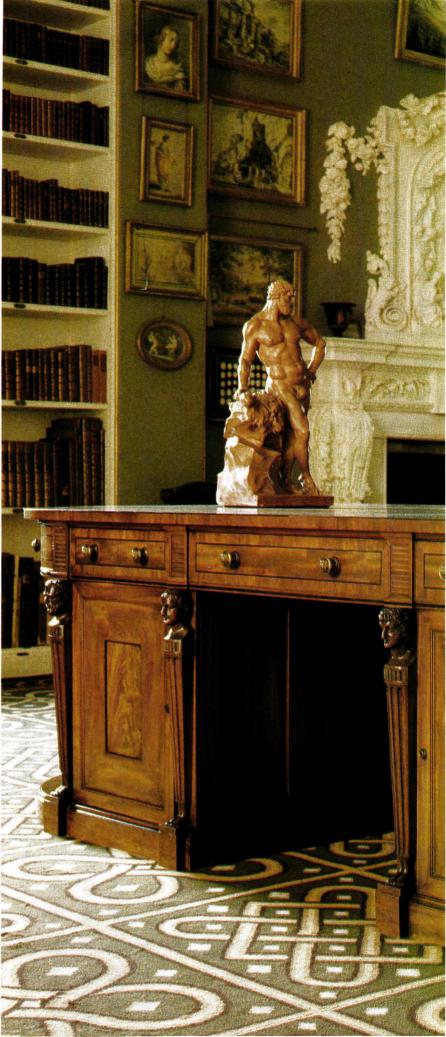




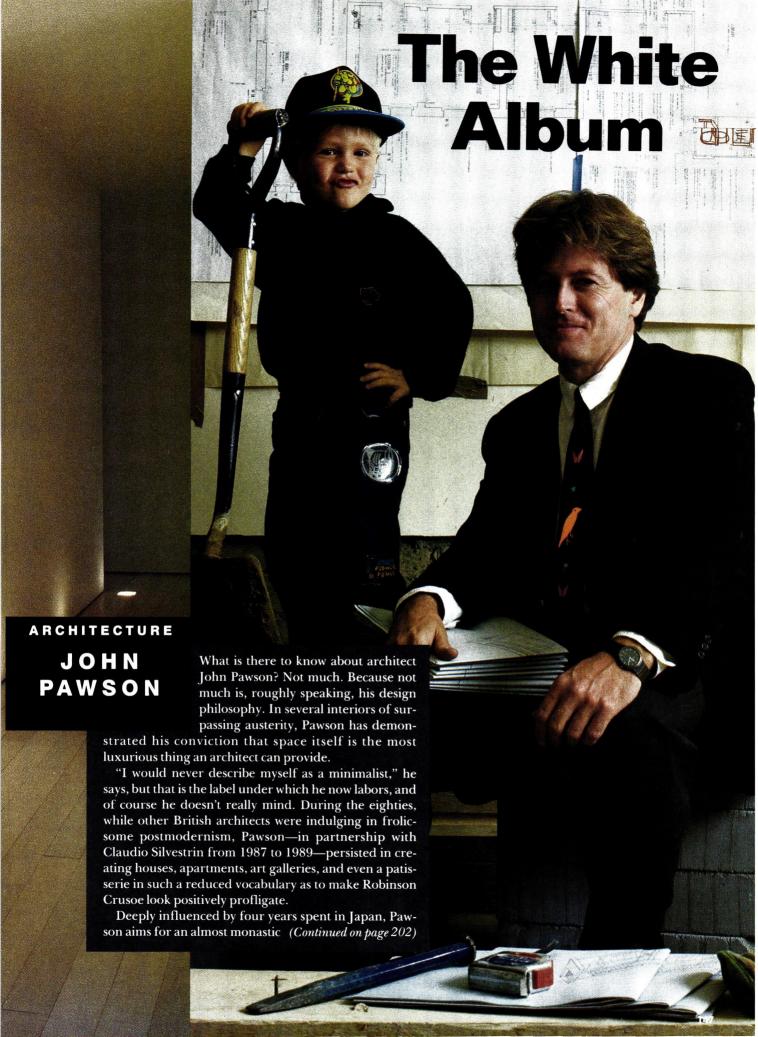


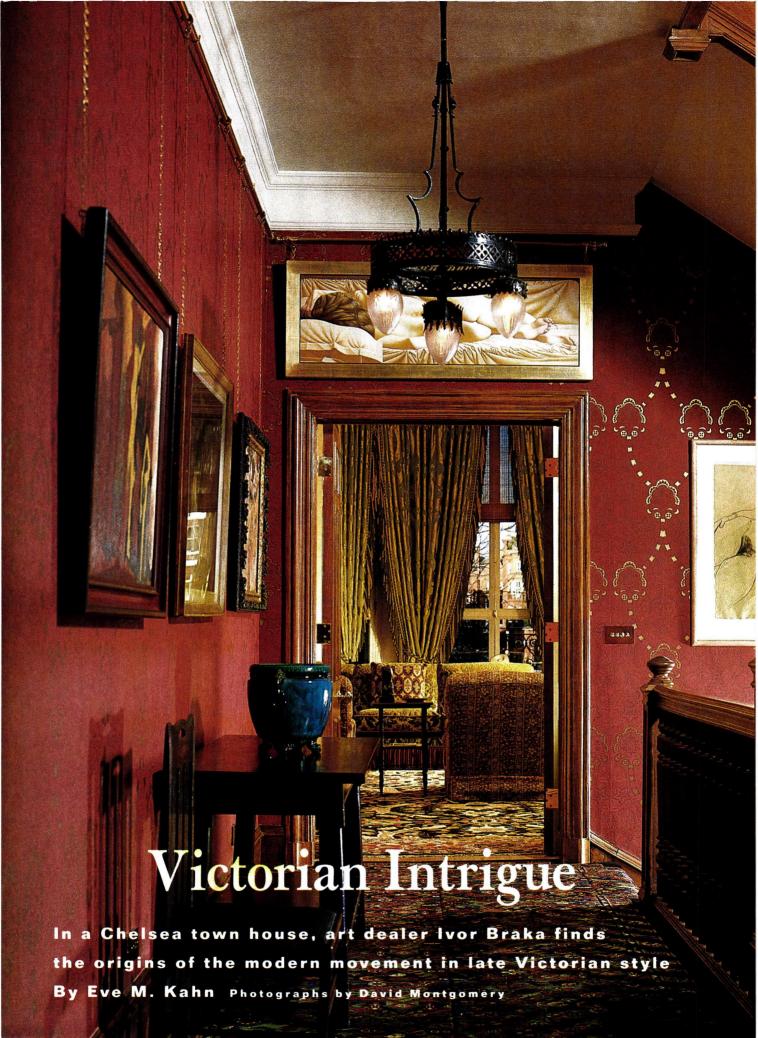
Mahogany writing table, right, and library arm-chair, below, 1804–05. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Satinwood and ebony armchair, 1812; receipt for Chippendale's work; satinwood and ebony armchair, 1802; parcel-gilt neoclassical armchair, c. 1780; white-painted jardinière, 1802; and mahogany side chair, 1805. All at Stourhead except gilt chair at Nostell Priory.











lvor Braka, right, in his front hall with Stanley Spencer's The Crucifixion and drawings by David Bomberg. Left: Decorator Tino Zervudachi pays tribute to the late Victorian vintage of the furniture with a Pugindesigned wallpaper in the hall.

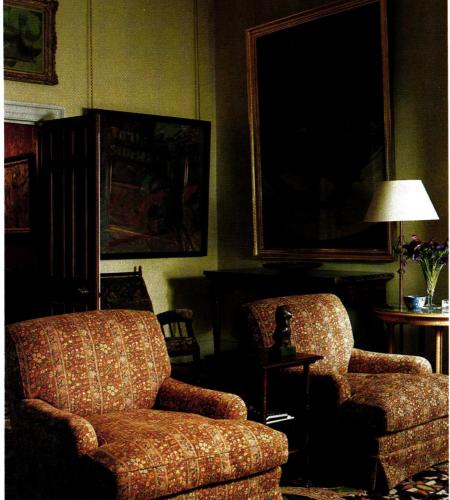


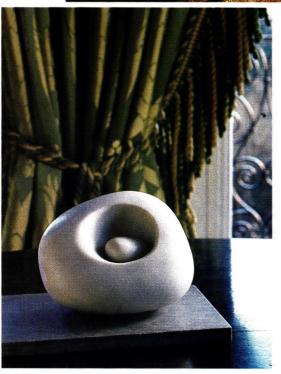
ALE, HIGH-STRUNG, INTENSE, and an art dealer, Ivor Braka has two obsessions: late Victorian furnishings by such renowned tastemakers as William Morris, Owen Jones, and Christopher Dresser and British modern paintings by, among others, Stanley Spencer, Francis Bacon, and Frank Auerbach. He has filled his circa 1890 Chelsea town house with this seeming clash of collections, and he delights in explaining its philosophical underpinnings: that all of the furniture and designs reflect the late nineteenth century swing toward simplicity, the origin of the modernist movement which inspired the artwork. Braka realizes that not everyone will understand his decor at first glance, and that fact makes him happy. "Places that are

only pretty," he says, "can bore you stiff in five minutes."

"Ivor wanted something unconventional," says Tino Zervudachi, Braka's decorator and a twenty-seven-year-old partner at Mlinaric, Henry & Zervudachi, a London firm famed for its agile interpretations of historical styles. "He wasn't difficult to work with, but he can be strangely cautious; he'll agonize for days over the size of a wastebasket. He has an extraordinary eye, and the results, I believe, are truly exciting."

Braka's fascination with art and architecture arose at Oxford. "I fell in love with the ecclesiastical feeling communicated by the buildings," he says. He began collecting Victorian furniture soon after graduation, first concentrating on "linear designs of ebonized wood, many of them by

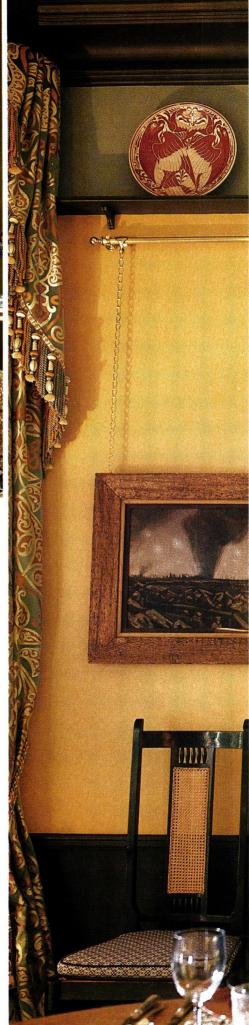


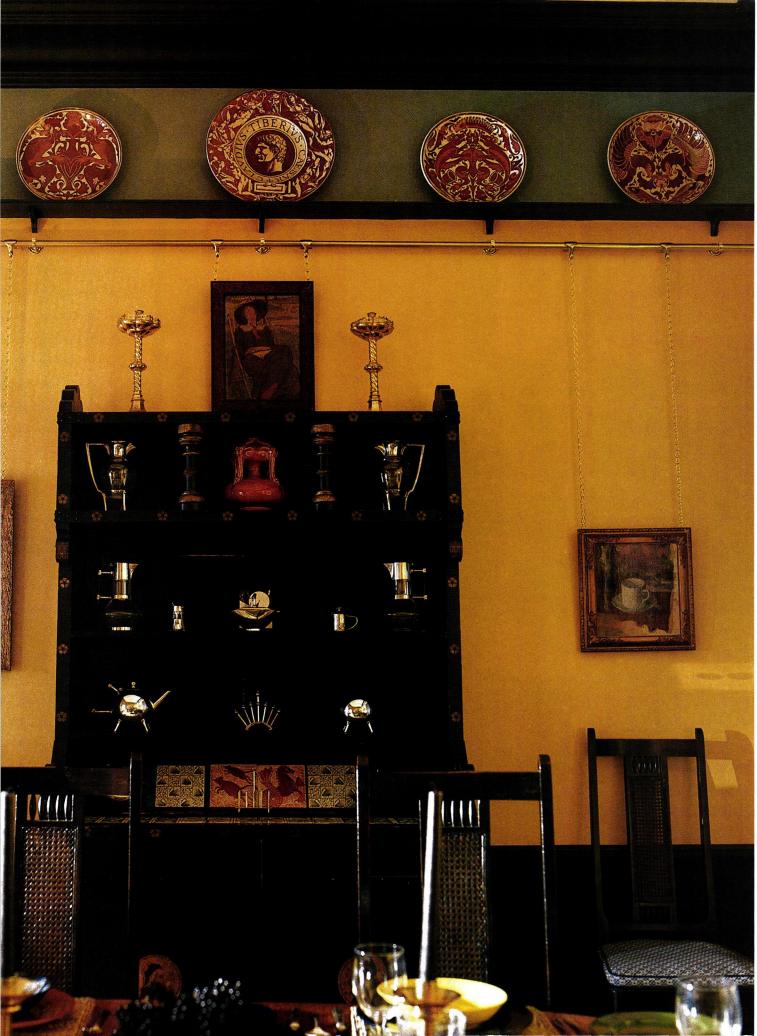


E. W. Godwin, but I soon realized that was a fairly reductive way to live, and I moved towards exuberant, playful, Gothic and medieval-style works by Morris, William Burges, and Bruce Talbert." Two years ago he swapped a meek Regency town house that made his furniture look "horrible" for his present terra-cotta brick dwelling, which contains six expansive rooms and is studded with Gothic stained glass. "It was the closest I could get to medieval architecture in London," he says.

Previous owners had butchered the interior. "They tried to anesthetize the Gothic effects," says Zervudachi. "It was madness." Built-in cupboards blocked windows, white paint smothered the massive oak staircase, cheap French provincial paneling lined walls, and pastel carpets stretched across intricate par-

The dining room, right, is a pristine showcase of English arts and crafts design from its William Burges hutch full of Christopher Dresser silver to its plate rail of William de Morgan lusterware and Persian-style platters. The ebonized chairs are by George Walton. Top: The drawing room features paintings by Frank Auerbach and Francis Bacon which hang above a c. 1815 George Bullock table. Above: Fringed damask curtains modeled after a 16th-century Ottoman design dangle behind a Barbara Hepworth sculpture.











quet floors. But in orchestrating the restoration work, Zervudachi avoided pure historicism. He applied wallpaper only in the hall, purchased tame vintage fireplaces, and installed no new moldings except for a spartan plate rail and dado in the dining room. "We wanted to capture the furniture's late Victorian transitional period and allow the house to regain its architectural integrity," he says. "We also kept in mind that Ivor lives a contemporary life, owns contemporary art, and moves things around." Braka adds, with a bemused smile, "Tino kept me from living in a museum."

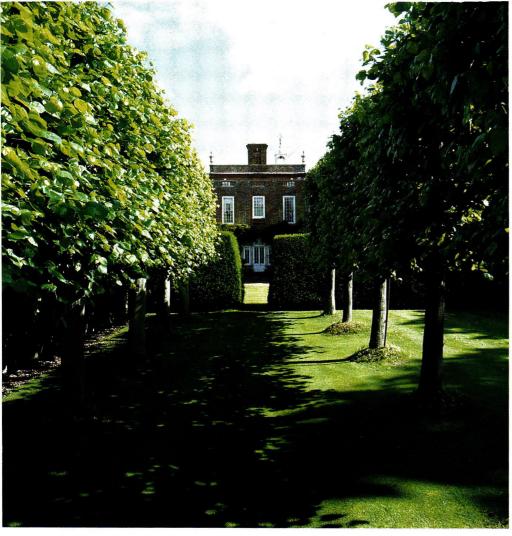
The house does resemble a series of period rooms, but period rooms with an independent streak. In the Gothic revival library, Puginesque brass andirons glitter in a carved

A floral Voysey carpet sets the palette in the master bedroom, left, where a fern-patterned brocade sets off a crewelwork bedspread. The sofa is by E. W. Godwin. Above: A Moroccan fretwork screen ensures privacy in the Moorish bathroom, which has a Philip Webbdesigned chair and William Morris rug.

## The house resembles a series of period rooms with an independent streak

stone fireplace that looks like a fallen chunk of Chartres cathedral, and Tunisian tiles and Arabic screens make the Moorish revival bath fit for a Victorian sheikh. Long-armed brass light fixtures designed in the 1840s by John Crace blaze in the stairwell on top of Pugin's gilt-embellished wallpaper. For visual relief, a cool abstract sculpture by Henry Moore poses in one windowsill.

In the dining and drawing rooms, delicate aesthetic movement chairs and tables by Godwin and George Walton contrast with powerful paintings. A tour of the drawing room walls reveals a bleak Auerbach view of a meat market, a Bacon landscape depicting swirls of Moroccan sand, and an anorectic Lucian Freud nude. Over the faux marbre dining room fireplace (Continued on page 206)



## Harmony in Wiltshire

Decorator John Stefanidis brings
his signature urbanity to a
country estate. By Susanna Moore

Photographs by Richard Davies







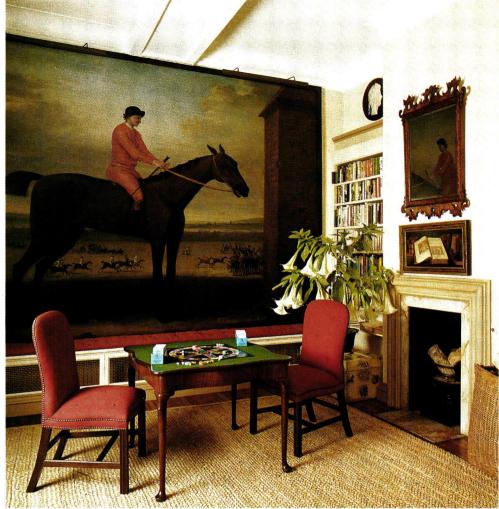
The influence of Stefanidis's early life in Egypt is evident in his choice of clean whites and translucent pastels

HE ELEGANCE OF OARE House, an eighteenth-century former rectory in Wiltshire, is the work of two men of different generation and influence: Sir Clough Williams-Ellis and John Stefanidis. Although they did not share a similar background or training-Williams-Ellis was a largely self-taught Welsh architect, and John Stefanidis is a highly educated English decorator born in Cairo—both men, working sixty years apart, brought charm and classicism to what had been a simple, unprepossessing Georgian structure.

Williams-Ellis, who lived from 1883 to 1978, is the eccentric genius behind Portmeirion, the Welsh holiday village begun in 1925 which has a campanile, a dome, a few towers, and a cluster of pastel-colored cottages. His inspiration was said to have been the Italian resort of Portofino, and the very notion of re-creating a Mediterranean village amid the heathland of the Eryri Mountains gives some indication of the playful inventiveness of its maker.

In the 1920s, Williams-Ellis was called upon to expand Oare House and to develop its grounds by its then-owner Sir Geoffrey Fry, a private secretary to Stanley Baldwin, who had impetuously purchased the hillside estate after glimpsing it on a horseback ride. Williams-Ellis was a fortunate choice for the house. Having grown up in a Northamptonshire rectory, he well understood the requirements of this vernacular architecture and, casting aside dreams of sun-washed villas, went to work, turning Oare House into the very model of an English country estate. To the existing structure he added two sympathetic wings of old brick

A Queen Anne game table, above right, stands before a John Wootton horse and rider, c. 1720, in the library. Right: A painting by Sir John Lavery hangs over a collection of Chinese export porcelain in the dining room. Opposite: The expansive entry hall occasionally serves as an extra dining room. The pine staircase was installed by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis in the 1920s.







that look as if they've always been there. He gave light to the interior by way of numerous French doors and windows. And to the already lush landscape he added an expansive walled garden, an arboretum, a grove with thirty varieties of magnolias, a croquet lawn, allées of towering hedges, and a large potting shed said to be one of the tidiest and most charming in England.

Tended for the past thirty-five years by chief gardener Bernard Upton, assisted by Michael Giddings, the property today retains the exuberance and elegance intended by Williams-Ellis. The outlying fields, which ennoble the surrounding downs, are unusually majestic thanks to Williams-Ellis's sensitivity to the relationship between architecture and landscape.

Oare House is the country residence of a successful businessman and his beautiful bluestocking wife, whose careers keep them in London five days of the week. He is a great outdoorsman and a famed shot; she

The estate's vegetable garden, above, punctuated with fruit trees, roses, and herbaceous borders, has been tended by the same gardener for thirty-five years. Opposite: The library ends with a skylit bay of floor-to-ceiling windows. Stefanidis marbleized the far columns and pilasters after those in a Veronese painting. The sofa and pillows are in Fortuny cotton. The pale stripe on the armchairs is a Stefanidis design.

is a celebrated hostess, horsewoman, and traveler, who fills the house with interesting people, particularly politicians and artists. Guests walk in the old magnolia grove or sit peacefully in the walled garden where roses and lavender grow amid the myriad vegetables that keep the kitchen stocked year-round.

One approach to the house, through an allée of pleached limes, changes with the light from hour to hour as shadows fall across the greensward. The landscape is both a reminder and a recognition of what Henry James called the conscious hospitality of nature. The interior, however, is the work of John Stefani-

dis. A great friend of the owners, Stefanidis was recently brought in to reshape and decorate the rooms, while, as he says, "paying my respects to Williams-Ellis's very 1920s, entirely English style."

A designer of wide influence—he has left his imprint on everything from teacups to textiles—Stefanidis creates interiors that are both worldly and simple. The influence of his early life, whether it be his memory of desert bedouin tying their camels to the trees outside his schoolroom or of the dusty golden light of Cairo and the opalescent light of Alexandria, is clearly evident in his use of color and space. At Oare House he introduced a palette of clean whites and translucent pastels, opened indoors to out, and filled the rooms with his own crisply contoured designs as well as English antiques. The rooms are sophisticated, but there is nothing in them that is superfluous; they are restful and fresh.

In the drawing room the walls are the color of green tea ice cream. A



The rooms are sophisticated, but there is nothing in them that is superfluous—they are restful and fresh



guest room bed is draped in a cloud of white organza. In the library a luxuriant datura plant bends over an eighteenth-century game table that sits before an immense John Wootton painting of a horse and rider. Nearby an art deco dancing girl is about to alight from her pedestal, skirt in hand. There are white oleander trees in a bedroom. There is, in other words, romance.

The woman of the house recalls that when she first saw it, the rooms were filled with "boring brown English furniture placed squarely on pink wall-to-wall carpeting." But its site, at the bottom of a vale, entranced. "You know," she says, "when Geoffrey Fry first spotted the house while riding, he promised his lawyer that should he be able to obtain the property for him, he would

build a house for the lawyer's son. That house is still standing, three fields over, and the descendants of the lawyer's son are still living in it."

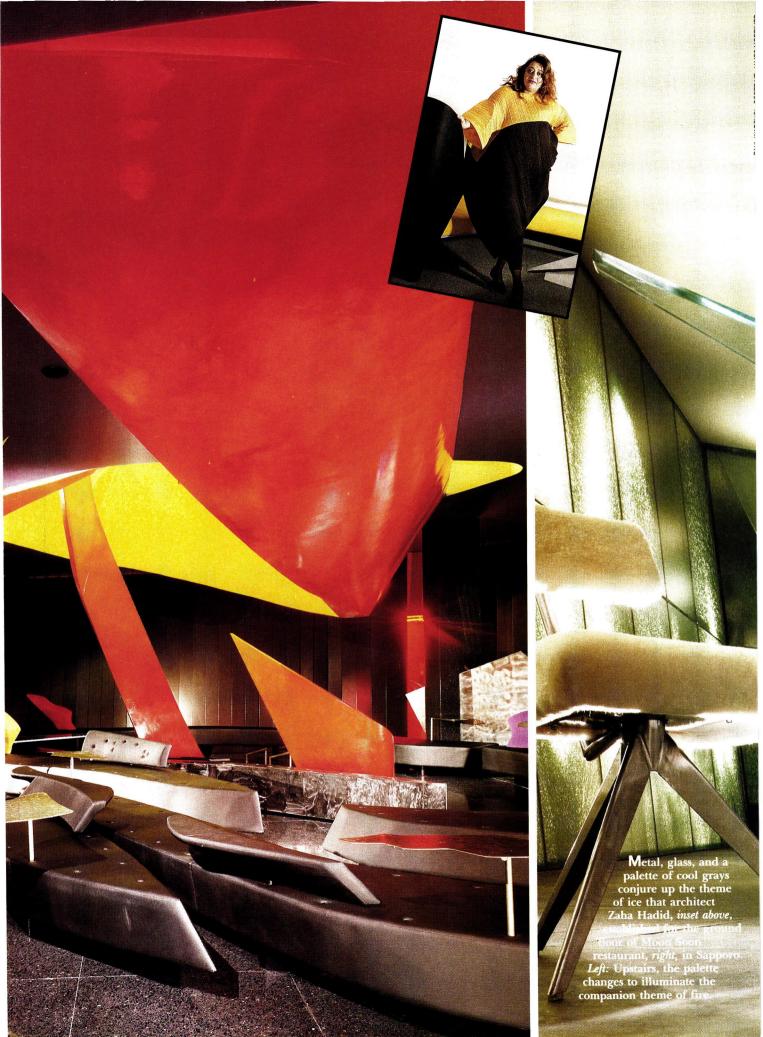
Oare House represents, in ways that are both gently fanciful and historical, the best of English eccentricity. Williams-Ellis was able, in his inspired way, to take a solid little Georgian box and transform it into a graceful house placed in its own enchanted garden. He was unusually adept at creating enclosed spaces. John Stefanidis, perhaps because of his Eastern influences, was able to illuminate and aerify those enclosed spaces. At Oare House he has altered the limitations of enclosure so that the best hopes of architect, designer, and resident are realized in the harmony of the house and its setting.

Editor: Emma Marrian

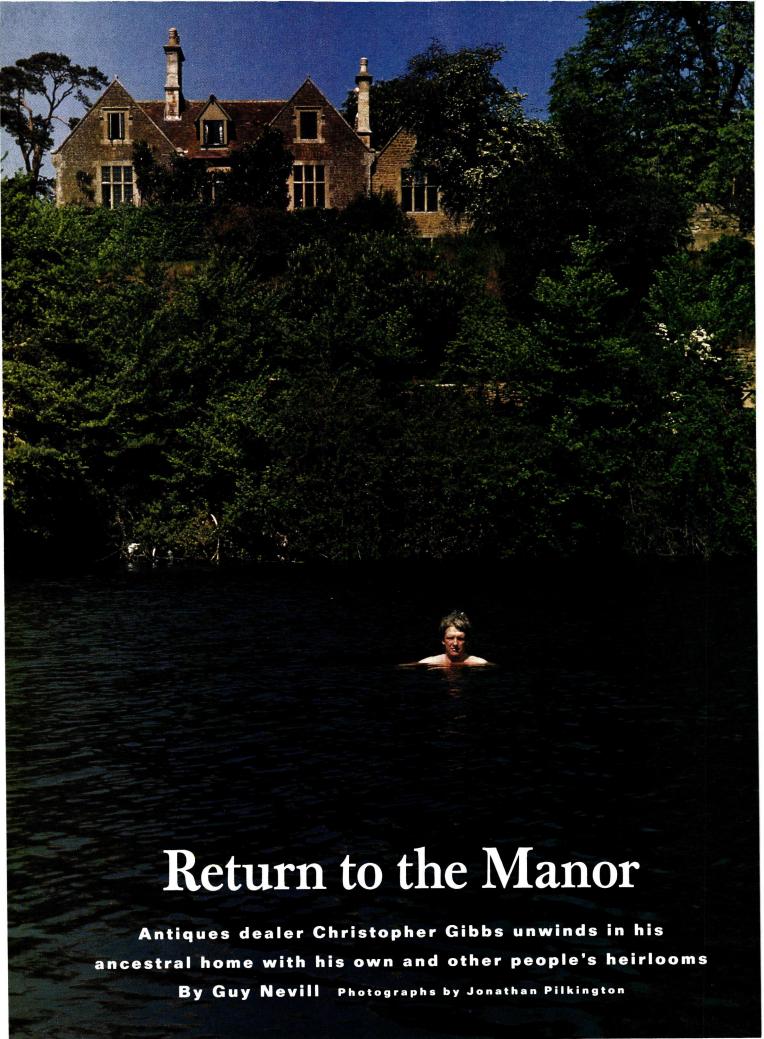
In a guest room, *right*, pleated and bow-tied organza envelops an 18th-century bed originally designed to be easily collapsible for traveling. The bedspread is an 18th-century silk quilt. The basket-form table is Austrian Biedermeier. *Above:* Stefanidis brought airiness and light to the master bedroom with a pale palette that extends from the upholstery on the 1920s furniture to the heirloom Chippendale bed and its checked valance, skirt, and chinoiserie-patterned spread of Stefanidis fabrics.













HRISTOPHER GIBBS IS THE QUINTESSENTIAL English gentleman. A celebrated London antiques dealer, genealogist, onetime archaeologist, and advocate of the sensible leisured way of life, he has a family tree that extends from a tailor who married George III's shoemaker's daughter to the barons of Aldenham. In the tradition of the grand tourists, he travels frequently and shops ceaselessly, but he is happiest when ensconced at his family manor in the village of Clifton Hampden, Oxfordshire. The fifth son of Sir Geoffrey Gibbs, he inherited his childhood home in 1980 by a fortuitous quirk of circumstance: "Happily none of my brothers wanted it. Their wives couldn't be bothered."

Located on a majestic spur of limestone overlooking the Thames, the property has been in Gibbs's family for six generations. It was first acquired circa 1720 by his ancestor William Hucks, head of an ambitious clan of beer brewers and members of Parliament who amassed great wealth and land in southern England. Until 1843, Clifton Hampden consisted of little more than a crumbling Norman church and a small village of thatched and half-

Christopher Gibbs, opposite, takes a dip in a stretch of the Thames beneath his 1840s manor house. Above: In the book room a revolving bookcase by Alexis de La Falaise stands before a c. 1820 scenic blind. Right: An Irish marble bust of William III presides over a grassy walkway.







timbered cottages. Taken with the wild beauty of the cliffside setting, Gibbs's great-grandfather called in the eminent English architect Gilbert Scott (who later designed London's Albert Memorial) to restore and Gothicize the ancient church and to build him a manor house above what was the last navigable stretch of the Thames between Roman Dorchester and Nuneham Courtenay. (In fact, it was only nearly navigable: early in the nineteenth century the Regency lord mayor of London joined the mayor of Oxford for a jaunt in a state barge and wound up mired in the rocks for three days.)

A bold Victorian structure made of local gray Headington stone clad with magnolia, the house has been expanded and embellished over the years by its various occupants who were, says Gibbs, "the most respectable people imaginable, all either vicars or bankers." After World War II, Gibbs's parents moved in, bringing with them six children, a lifelong supply of fishing rods and sporting guns, and a lot of genteel Queen Anne furniture. They arrived to a repository of the antique, the cu-

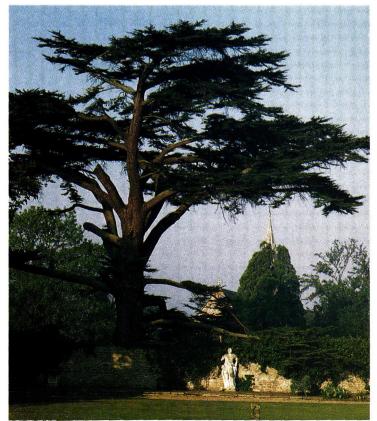
The house is a repository of the antique, the curious, and the arcane



rious, and the arcane: puzzles of turned ivory and boxwood, South Sea Islands clubs, Great-Uncle Alban's tiny blue booties, a tooth once presented by the queen of Tonga to Lady Gibbs, and elaborate instruments for measuring the girths of trees.

All of these objects still crowd the tables and cabinets, now accompanied by Gibbs's own collections and curiosities. "It was a case of putting back," he says of his restoration, which involved removing false ceilings, excavating blocked windows, and replacing inappropriate Georgian mantels with Victorian designs. Water-stained walls have been revived with a forest of William Morris greenery, and in place of his parents' staid furniture there are the marvels that all antiques dealers keep for

A magnificent cedar tree, right, planted in 1864 from a cone brought back from Lebanon, spreads its branches near a Gothicized Norman church near the manor. Above: The dining room features a watercolor after Sir Joshua Reynolds and 18th-century chairs by Robert Manwaring. Opposite above: A pleasingly trampled 18th-century Ghiordes carpet spans the drawing room presided over by a dummy board of a sweeping maid. Opposite below: An early 17th century English courtship scene in plaster relief embellishes the staircase hall.





Gibbs replaced his parents' staid furniture with the marvels all antiques



dealers keep for themselves

themselves: a 1620 hall chair that survived the Holland House bombing by being blown out a window; a four-poster made of Mason's Ironstone china; a House of Lords desk designed by Pugin; and a table that once occupied the railway abode of a discerning tramp. ("The central part is Louis XV," notes Gibbs. "The top was made to say hello to it one hundred years later.") On the walls, family portraits mingle with Gibbs's favorite likenesses of servants, rogues, and eccentrics, including the scullion of Chirk Castle; the one-legged Dennis Collins,



who tried to assassinate George III at Abingdon; Henry Jenkins, the man who lived to the age of 169; and the famed Irish Giant being measured for a new suit.

The exuberant overflow of objects extends well beyond the house to the garden. Long tended with devotion, the grounds have been revived, reordered, and filled with sculpture, including period busts of an unlikely pair, William III and Oliver Cromwell, who face each other

Gibbs's bed, *left*, is a c. 1830s four-poster of Mason's Ironstone china. Curtains and valances are vintage painted satin; the bedcover is 18th-century Indian needlework. *Above:* William Morris's willow pattern, in paper and fabric from Arthur Sanderson & Sons, blankets a sitting room with greenery. Details see Resources.

on a grassy axis. Gibbs says his friend Harold Nicolson taught him the "importance of using plants and flowers to paint forms"—advice that he has artfully put to work in a series of towering hedges of hornbeam and yew, a tunnel of lime carpeted with lily of the valley, and beds of old-fashioned roses, black tulips, and tobacco plants. Year-round he delights in creating new vistas to astonish visitors, whether by digging a volcanolike ridge of smoldering delicious-smelling applewood branches or by placing, at the edge of a bank, a clay pot that looks like a giant russet egg cup.

"The manor is enjoying a lovely revival," says Gibbs, who sees to it that family tradition is maintained: summers he follows the path of his forebears when he ambles down to the boathouse landing for midnight swims.

## Secret

Some of England's choicest plots are hidden behind high walls
Text and photographs by Christopher Simon Sykes

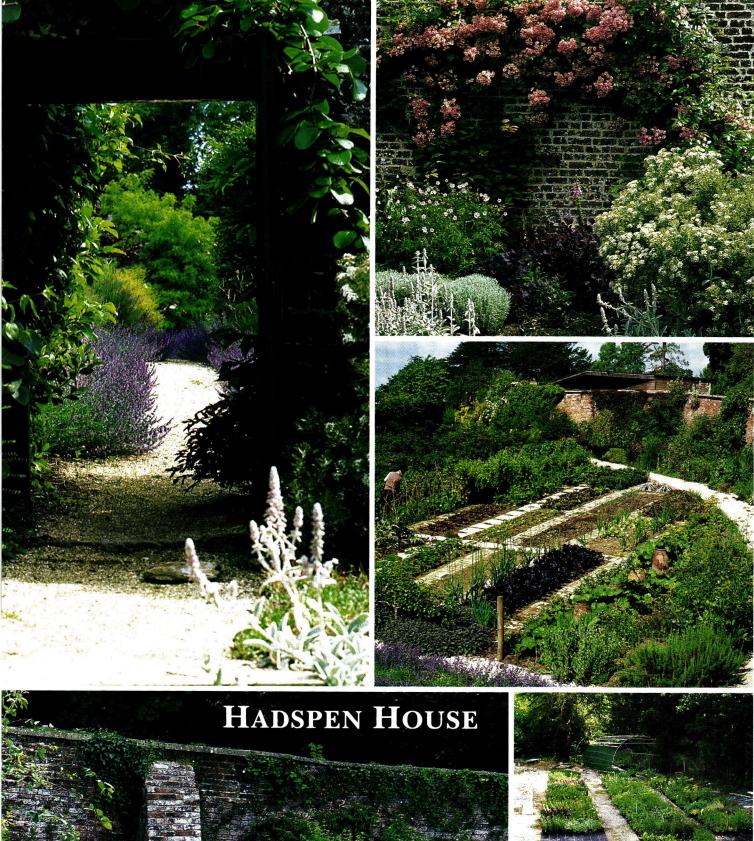
N CHANGING TIMES, WHEN MANY OLD walled gardens, which are expensive to maintain, have been severely reduced or even abandoned, it is rare to find one that has not only been rescued but restored to full flower. Such has been the lucky fate of the walled garden at Hadspen House in Somerset, which is tended by plantsmen Nori and Sandra Pope, a young Canadian couple who had formerly owned a specialist nursery on Vancouver Island. When they came to Hadspen four years ago, the garden was sadly neglected, but the fact that it still had good bones and a wealth of plants inspired them to take on the job of running it as a business. "The garden was famous for developing plants in the past," Nori explains, "and we have continued a breeding program as well, the idea being to introduce interesting cultivars from abroad."

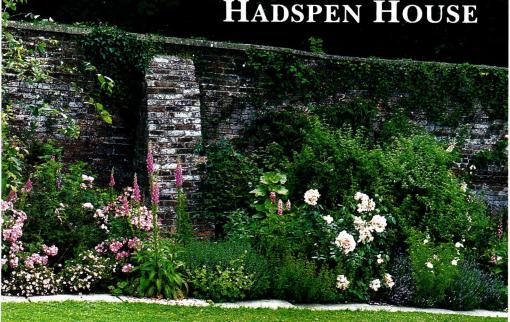
Hadspen's walled garden is divided in half by a path with big double borders and a beech hedge on either side. In the center is a charming kitchen garden with roses separating the fruit from the vegetables, which are themselves divided into beds by brick paths, so that red alternates with green. But the crowning feature is a curved wall within which the Popes have designed their spectrum border. "In keeping with the idea of the curve, we planted things on the color spectrum," Nori says. "At the sunnier northern end are the hotter colors, going from yellows to oranges to

Two plantsmen's walled domain. Clockwise from top left: Nori and Sandra Pope stand between borders they designed on the site of Victorian greenhouses. Actinidia chinensis climbs over the gateway to a nepeta-lined path that bisects the two-acre enclosure. The multiflora rose 'Gardener's Pink' arches above the outer border. Old leaded-glass cloches and terra-cotta rhubarb forcing pots are fixtures of the kitchen garden. The nursery displays plants for sale. Foxgloves and lupines rise beside the old rose 'Fantin-Latour' and the modern rose 'Sally Holmes'. A curved brick wall shelters the spectrum border.

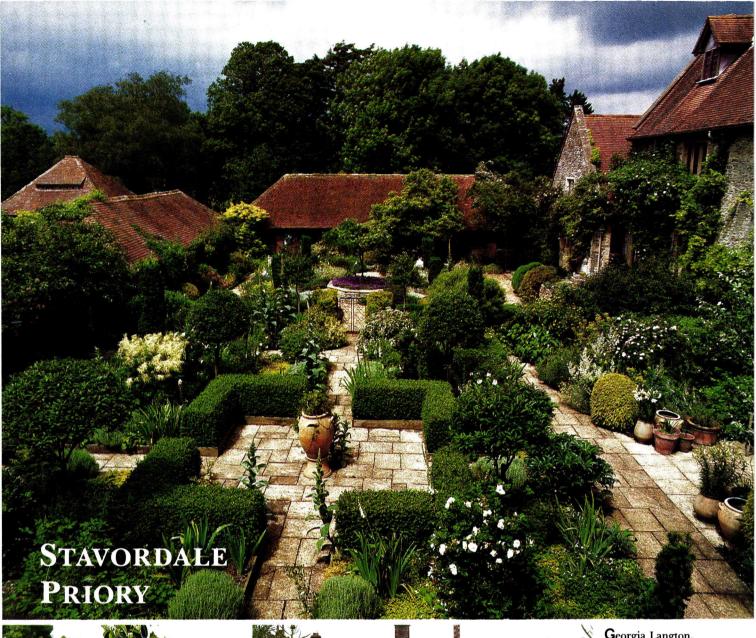










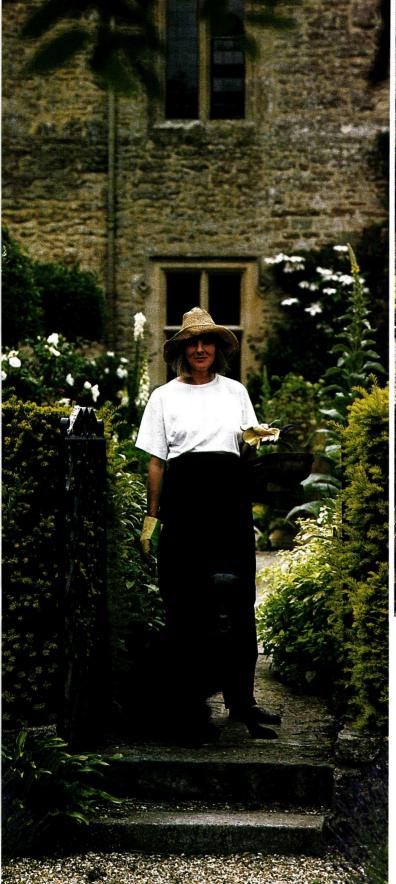








Georgia Langton, opposite left. Opposite right: A standard wisteria is underplanted with Campanula portenschlagiana. Above: Raised beds in the 13th-century cloister garden contain a formal array of clipped box, lonicera, Irish yew, santolina, and standards of forsythia, roses, and holly. Far left: A wigwam of sweet peas. Above left: Main path through the vegetable garden. Left: Campanula latiloba, goat's rue, and verbascum are among the flowers mixed with herbs.



"Everything is in pots or raised beds. There isn't a proper border."

-GEORGIA LANGTON



reds and then on to violets and blues; toward the shadier, cooler end of the wall are the same colors but in pastel tones." In winter the curve of the wall makes the spectrum border almost ten degrees warmer than the rest of the garden, in effect creating a microclimate shielded from frost.

Frost presented a major problem for David and Georgia Langton when they made their garden at nearby Stavordale Priory. "When we moved here twelve years ago," remembers Georgia, "in what is now the cloister garden there was nothing but rusting iron bedsteads, ducks, a children's slide, and grass that wasn't growing well because there was too little winter sunshine. We've gardened all our lives, but I had no idea it was going to be so difficult." This was partly because the site the Langtons had chosen, adjoining the now-vanished thirteenth-century cloister, not only faced north but sat in a slight dip in the ground, which made it a terrible frost pocket. "And there was nowhere for the frost to drain away to," Georgia adds. "Since there was

very little soil anyway, the answer was to create the whole garden in raised beds and pots. Everything has to be fed all the time, and we have to work to keep the drainage. If you walk round here now, you'll see there isn't a proper herbaceous border—or indeed a proper garden."

The walls of the garden are the walls of the old priory, which is now the Langtons' house, and since every room looks into the enclosure, this is a veritable garden for all seasons. In winter there is the green of yew and holly. In February and March the standard forsythias make bright yellow balls, and the Christmas roses come out. Then in spring there are species daffodils, wood anemones, and tulips, followed by roses, lilies, and foxgloves. After the roses, masses of white Michaelmas daisies bloom for weeks. There are fragrant plants like perennial stocks, which are kept in pots round the outdoor sitting area, and when these wane, they are replaced by masses of scented-leaf geraniums, also in pots, which stay till the frosts come back.

Georgia Langton's philosophy of gardening is simple, and she speaks for all of us, whether our gardens are walled or not: "When I'm peeling potatoes and looking out the window, however bad tempered I may be feeling, it calms me to think about what's out there, the trees planted in the right place producing shadows, producing leaves...I love it because it's not controllable. Our lives are so frantic, but you can never change the pace of a garden."

The walled garden at Barton Court, the Berkshire country house of Sir Terence and Lady Conran, has long been a haven from busy lives. "When we came to Barton Court nearly twenty years ago, the garden was completely derelict," Lady Conran remembers. "It was a mass of brambles and weeds and rough grass. But it was such a romantic idea to have one of these lovely old kitchen gardens, and we set about restoring it right away." After repointing the weathered brick walls and repairing the greenhouses, the Conrans mapped all traces of existing walkways to reestablish the original plan while adding new gravel paths of their own.

Over the years the garden has become a showpiece in which vegetables, fruit, and flowers all "romp around together," as Lady Conran puts it. "I was originally inspired by a beautiful little garden I saw from the train while traveling through the Dordogne. There was an old peasant digging away and all along the edge of his vegetable beds were espaliered pear trees about a foot high. I thought, 'That's just how I'd like my garden to be.' " With the help of the Conrans' young gardener, Jonathan Chidsey, (Continued on page 200)

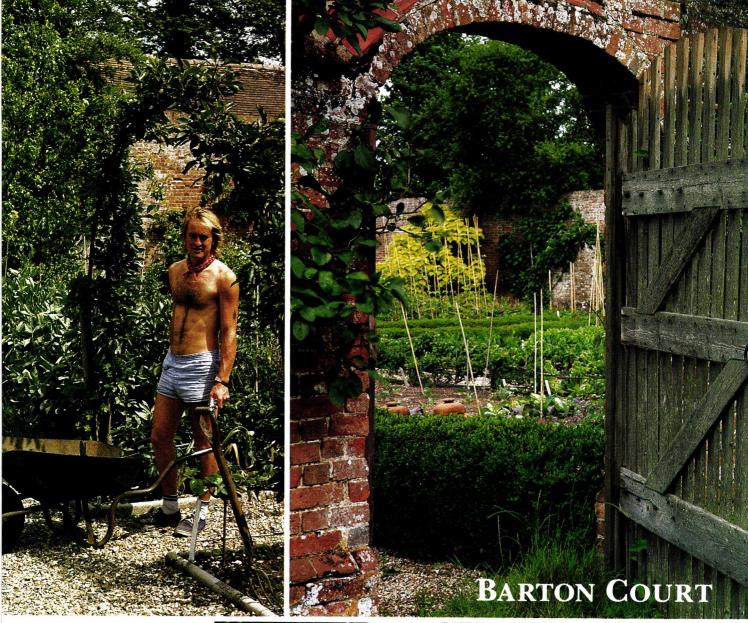






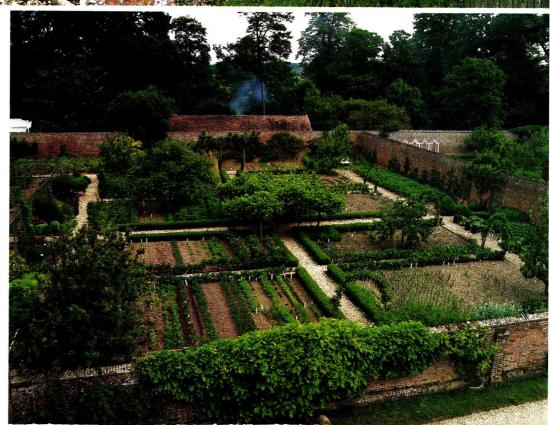


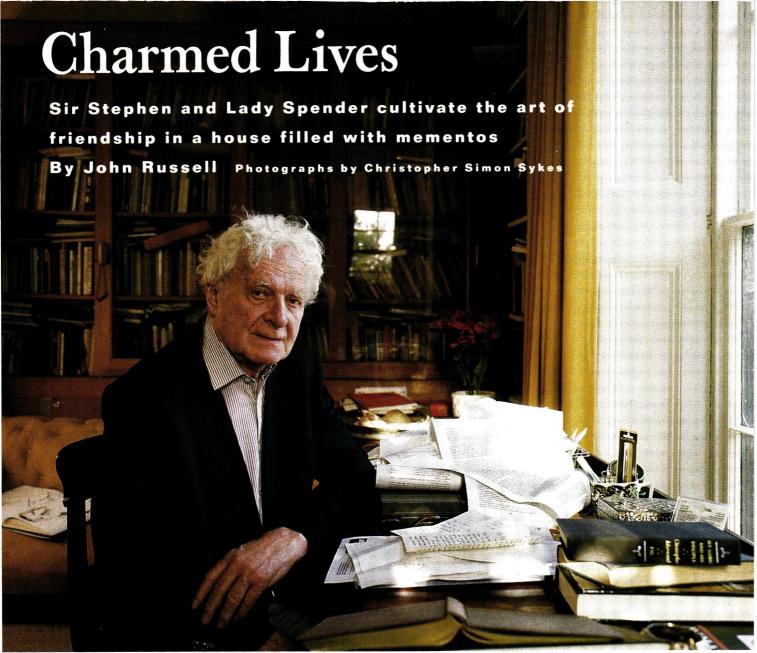
Sir Terence and Lady Conran's kitchen garden. Clockwise from above: Rosa Mundi, sweet peas, and peonies in front of the fruit cage planted with currants and gooseberries. Antina lettuce beneath a box hedge. Celery, haricots verts, and lettuce alongside flowers. A trompe l'oeil trellis. Gardener Jonathan Chidsey under an arch of apple trees. A glimpse of bean poles, forcing pots, and beds divided by box hedges and low espaliered trees. A bird's-eye view of fruit trees trained against walls and an arbor of plane trees.



"I was originally inspired by a little garden I saw from the train while traveling through the Dordogne."

-LADY CONRAN







OUR YEARS AFTER THEIR MARRIAGE, in 1945, the English poet Stephen Spender and his young wife, the concert pianist Natasha Litvin, were looking for somewhere to live in London with their infant son, Matthew. Their choice fell on a leafy and companionable quarter that for a hundred years and more had been the heartland of the seductive three-story villa. Uphill and down the little roads went, each with its little three-story houses and its handkerchief-size gardens. All was quiet and secure and discreet. (To this day, if a long-term resident claims to have seen a fox in her garden, no one doubts it.) As a quarter, it has a distinct history. George Eliot lived there, as did the naturalist T. H. Huxley, a whole raft of painters and poets, and a long line of hideaway couples. The street in which the Spenders finally settled can claim, among former residents, the purported



original of Becky Sharp, the heroine of Thackeray's novel *Vanity Fair*.

The Spenders were not rich, and they fixed upon a house that was cracked from top to bottom and held together at one point by a pane of glass. Even the real estate agent despaired of it. But they loved the house then, and they love it today. "The perfect house!" they say whenever they return from Provence, where they also live, or from the United States, where Sir Stephen (as he has been called since 1983) was until lately a regular visitor as teacher, lecturer, and charter member of the poetry-reading circuit.

All generations feel at home at the Spenders'. In few London houses is the talk as good or the food and drink more delicious. (Natasha Spender is one of the great cooks.) Everyone is at his best, even if long ago there was an occasion on which the writer Arthur Koestler had too much to drink and told Philippe de Rothschild, the

owner of what may well be the world's most famous vineyard, that if he really wanted to know about wine he should consult the manager of the Army & Navy Stores in London.

Among presences from the past in the Spenders' house, W. H. Auden is the largest and the least escapable. "As a guest, Auden

was totally dominating," says Stephen Spender. "Breakfast had to be at eight o'clock on the nose, then he expected to be helped with the *Times* crossword puzzle—Natasha was better at that than I am—and at eleven he wanted the light snack that the English call elevenses. He always wanted to get back to 'Mother and home and tea at exactly four thirty.' At six precisely he wanted



Sir Stephen Spender, opposite above, in his study. Opposite below: John Craxton made the Spenders' bookplate in 1943. Top: Books and pictures by friends crowd the living room. Above: W. H. Auden with Lizzie Spender, c. 1954.



martinis, and if dinner wasn't at seven thirty on the dot, he got very drunk and blamed you for it. We loved to have him, but it was arduous.

"Auden didn't want to go out, never went to the theater or to an art gallery, grumbled if people came to dinner. At the very end of his life, when Sonia Orwell asked him to spend Christmas in the country, he refused to leave the house. 'Go for a walk? Whatever for?' I never knew anyone who changed so completely between being young and being old. When he was young, he was completely spontaneous—'Let's do that, let's go there, let's see that...'—but later he completely lost that spontaneity. When he was fifty-five, Auden said to me that he wanted to live to be eighty. When I happened to see his doctor that evening, he said, 'But he is eighty now. He has made himself eighty.'"

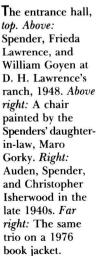
Spender is as spontaneous as he ever was, which is saying a great deal. And the house stands, just as he does, for an open-ended and

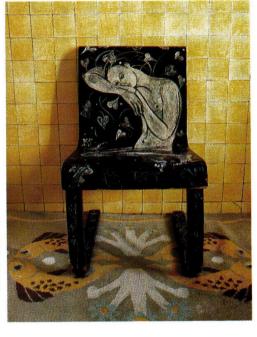
lyrical continuity. It is not a house that has ever been "done up." Nothing is there to impress. The piano is put to use, though Natasha Spender retired some years ago from the concert platform and has made herself a pioneer authority on the psychology of music. The Oxford English Dictionary is put to use, too. Auden was as if chained to it for hours on end.

Stephen Spender does not come on as a collector, but he has been around painters and sculptors all his life. It is as natural for him to have the work of friends around him as it was for the mailman to bring him letters from T. S. Eliot and Boris Pasternak when they were alive. In 1934, when an English magazine decided to run portraits of younger poets, Spender said he would

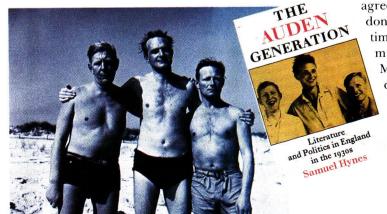
agree to be included only if his were done by Henry Moore, who at that time was little known and had never made a commissioned portrait. Moore was amused to do it. Several drawings resulted, and with them a lifelong friendship that caused Spender to be asked to deliver an address at Moore's memorial service in Westminster Abbey.







"If dinner wasn't at seven thirty on the dot, Auden got drunk and blamed you"



It was in front of the Spenders' house, on a morning in February 1989, that Sir Stephen was serenaded by a deputation of young women from a nearby American school. "Happy birthday, dear Stephen" was not performed in the version composed in 1955 by Igor Stravinsky, a family friend, but it rang out bravely. Spender peered from the house with an expression in which delight was mingled with astonishment that young strangers would take note of his eightieth birthday. "After all," he said later, "the great thing about being eighty is that you've outlived so many of your enemies."

"I may be vain, but I don't think that I am at all conceited," Spender will say if asked about occasions of that sort. As a matter of fact, he is one of the rare human beings who, once seen, are never forgotten. ("Big nosed, bright eyed, like a giant thrush," was how Virginia Woolf thought of him

in 1933.) He has been a force for good in the international literary world since the mid thirties-not least as coeditor, with Cyril Connolly, of Horizon magazine between 1939 and 1941, coeditor of Encounter from 1953 to 1966, and founder in 1968 of Index on Censorship, a review for which many a persecuted author has had reason to be grateful. But a certain residual diffidence sometimes besets Spender. It is as if, he once wrote in his di-

ary, he went around like Papageno in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with a padlock on his mouth.

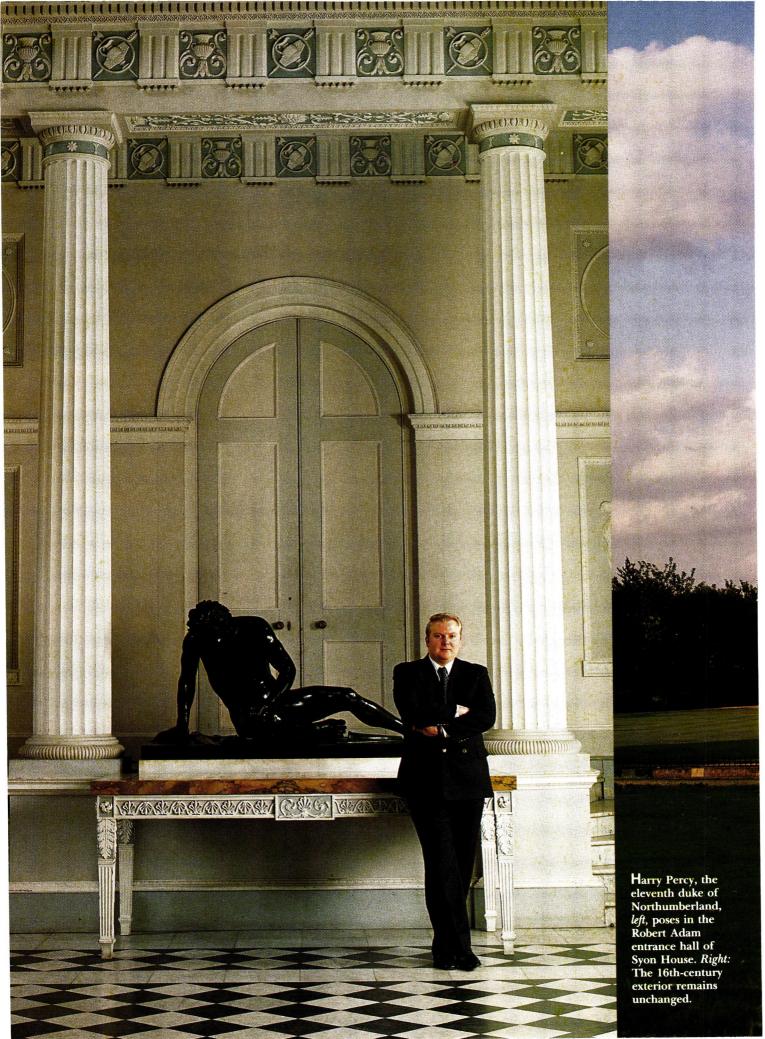
If Spender speaks of himself at all, it is likely to be in terms of the mildly ridiculous mishaps to which he considers himself particularly subject. A prize instance is the evening on which he was the guest of honor at a spectacularly tedious dinner party in a large American city. After what seemed to him like three or four hours he wondered why nobody had left. Was it because he was the guest of honor and they were waiting for him to get up? Spurred on by this idea, he got up, made his adieux, and left. Outside, the streets were humming and the lights were ablaze. "What an amazing place America is," he said to himself. "It's all of 2 A.M., and the night is just beginning." At that moment he saw by the city hall clock that the time was exactly 9 P.M. What his hosts made of the incident is not known. But one thing is certain: no one ever made that kind of mistake at the Spenders'. Editor: Rosamond Bernier

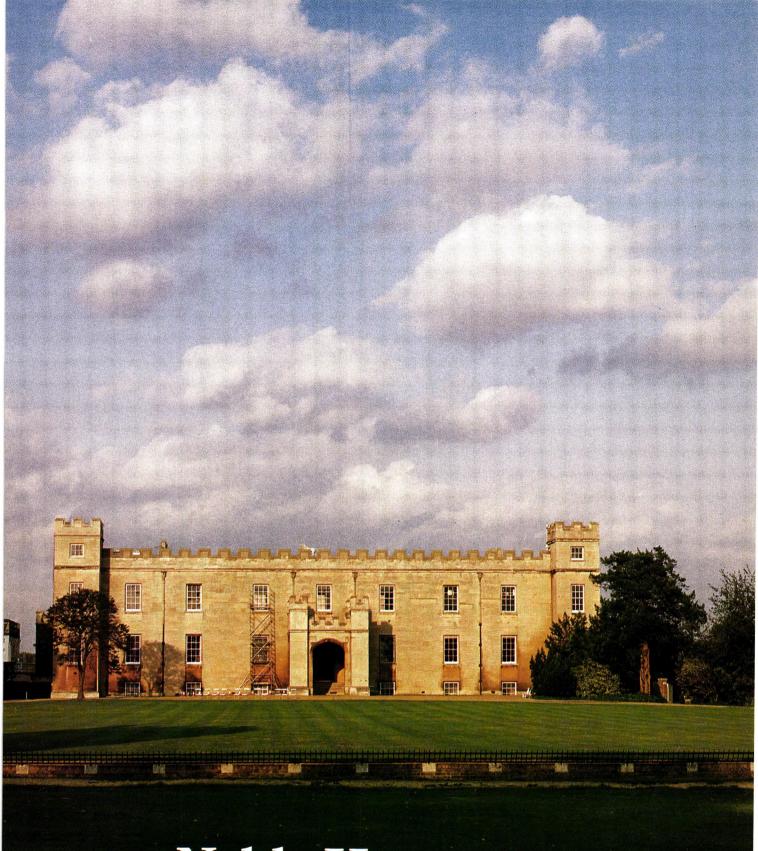




Behind Lady Spender's piano, above, hang Henry Moore's portraits of her husband. Left: Lizzie Spender, at left; Rosamond Bernier: Sir Stephen; Lizzie's husband, the humorist Barry Humphries; and Lady Spender. Below: A portrait of Isherwood in the dining room.







## Noble House

Three generations of Percys enjoy
Robert Adam's neoclassical grandeur
By Nancy Holmes Photographs by David Montgomery







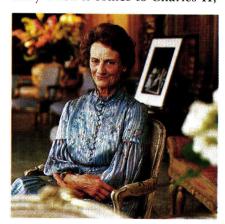
I SUPPOSE I COULD SAY I HAVE TO keep one foot in the past and both eyes on the future," says Henry Alan Walter Richard Percy, the eleventh duke of Northumberland, standing in the great hall at Syon House, a seat of the Northumberland family since the early seventeenth century. The sentence is pure British understatement. The thirty-seven-year-old bachelor duke, known as Harry, could hardly get the past out from under his feet if he wanted to—and he doesn't.

Fortunately, recent Syon history has been positively benign compared with events of earlier centuries. In 1541, half a century before James I granted the former nunnery to the ninth earl of Northumberland, it served as way station for Catherine Howard before Henry VIII had her taken to the tower for beheading. Henry VIII's own corpse lay in state on a tiered funeral bier at Syon, and in the aftermath of his death, Lady Jane Grey, whose father-in-law was a Northumberland, was offered the crown, which she reluctantly accepted—the child queen lasted nine days before she too was beheaded.

If walls could talk, Syon's stories would make a compelling encyclopedia of English history; the tales of living members of the family are no less captivating. The present duchess, who will hold the title until Harry, her eldest son, marries and she becomes the dowager duchess, is the mother of six children and grandmother of twelve. The oldest daughter of the duke of Buccleuch, she married Hugh Percy, the tenth duke of Northumberland, in 1946 and has lived at Syon House or Alnwick Castle, the principal Northumberland estate in the north of England, ever since. Her conversations weave and

cut across the centuries with ease.

"There is an eighteen-year spread between my six children," she says, "and my youngest son is only nine years older than my oldest granddaughter. I had the three girls first and then the boys. They are all very different, the girls being more like their father." Her eyes rove over the dozen Stuart portraits hanging on the crimson silk walls of one of the drawing rooms, and she pauses for a moment, concentrating on a Jacob Huysmans painting of Charles II and Catherine of Braganza. "I love the Stuart portraits," she continues. "My children all have Charles II blood three times over. My mother was descended from Nell Gwyn, my father from Lucy Walters, and my husband from Louise-Renée de Keroualle, all mistresses of the king." In some families, this sort of information tends to get swept under the carpet, but English history, especially when it comes to Charles II,



Elizabeth, the duchess of Northumberland, sits in the long gallery, above.

Top: The conservatory was designed by Charles Fowler in 1820. Left: A Holbein portrait of Edward VI as a child hangs over an Adam mantel in the sitting room.







"If one is born into such splendor," says the duchess, "one has an obligation to it"



Lady Caroline Percy and her family enjoy a picnic on the grounds, *above*. *Top:* A Sèvres vase from Charles X dwarfs a French clock and a Rubens portrait. *Right:* A Victorian bed in a guest bedroom is hung with blue silk.

is another kettle of fish altogether.

"I do believe that noblesse oblige should be continued," says the duchess. "My husband was an intensely public-spirited man with many interests, and I'm sure Harry will continue in his vein. If one is born into such splendor, one has an obligation to it. When my husband went off to war, leaving Syon House, he thought he would never see it lived in again. During the war, sixty-nine bombs fell here on the grounds, plus firebombs on the roof and a pair of doodlebugs that did a nasty lot of damage. The furniture was stored in the basements, and the paintings and porcelains had to be secured while Syon was used to house the nurses from the West Middlesex Hospital, which had been bombed. Robert Adam's entrance gates with the rampant lion on top were badly damaged as well. When my husband came safely home, he couldn't wait to get to work putting Syon back together again."

It was not the first time Syon had undergone extensive restoration, and it (Continued on page 208)



In well-heeled
Hampstead
two collectors
conjure a
thoroughly
modern folly



# Great ideas



TUCKED BETWEEN A ROW OF SHOPS and a Victorian Gothic church in the picturesque London village of Hampstead, four tiny mews houses have been turned into a single white volume with the grandeur of a drydocked liner. David Blackburn, a real estate developer, and his wife, Janice, who works for the Saatchi Collection, had in mind an airy showcase for their collection of modern crafts and commissioned furniture—a counterpoint to their "very maximal, tightly packed" main house located nearby. So they hired Peter Wilson, a soft-spoken mustachioed Australian architect who worked in collaboration with the architecture firm Chassay Wright to create a private gallery/guest pavilion above David's offices.

One of two patinated-copper doors in the enigmatic exterior leads abruptly upstairs into a hallway. Here already there are signs that this is not your usual Hampstead house. A window at floor level allows peeks of the churchyard. A slate "hearth" has a glass grate, permitting a view of the space next door. A hefty plaster stair zigzags out of one wall and up to the ceiling. And at the far end a dainty one-armed chair by Jon Mills is poised seemingly on tiptoe.

Banded sycamore doors at either end of the hall lead to the guest bed-



# great ideas

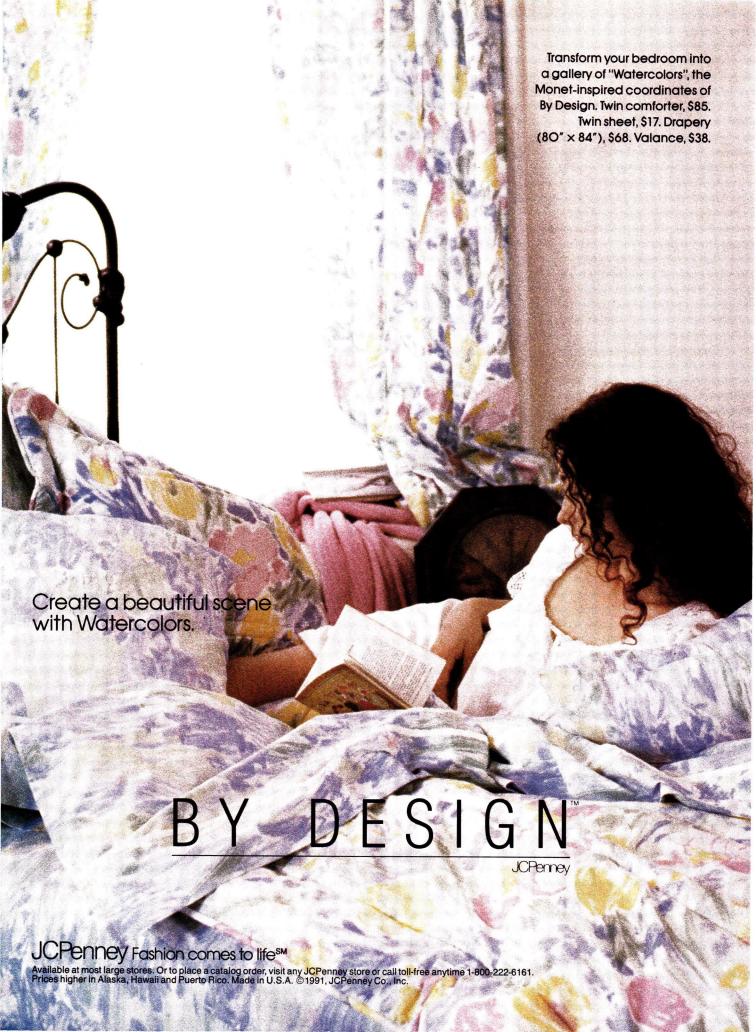
room and to Janice Blackburn's study. In both rooms, small gestures work to large effect. A sliding frosted-glass door in the guest room admits to the inner sanctum of the bathroom where the tub and sink are promoted to ceremonial vessels. In the study—which Janice Blackburn calls the "bottle room" after its tapering plan—an arrow-slit window looks directly onto a tree trunk so that the room's smooth-grained sycamore paneling frames a pillar of rough gnarled bark.

The closure and containment of this floor provides a necessary prelude to the next level where a single space flows the length of the mews. The room is anchored around an open stairwell and is illuminated by a vast window tied across by a red beam and a gray support. An abstract design is sandblasted onto the panes of the window that pushes out from the front wall, corrupting the linear geometry of the house. The stair balustrading is broochlike: one section of it forms a seat which looks as if a giant dragonfly has alighted on the wall. A vitrine delimits the enter-

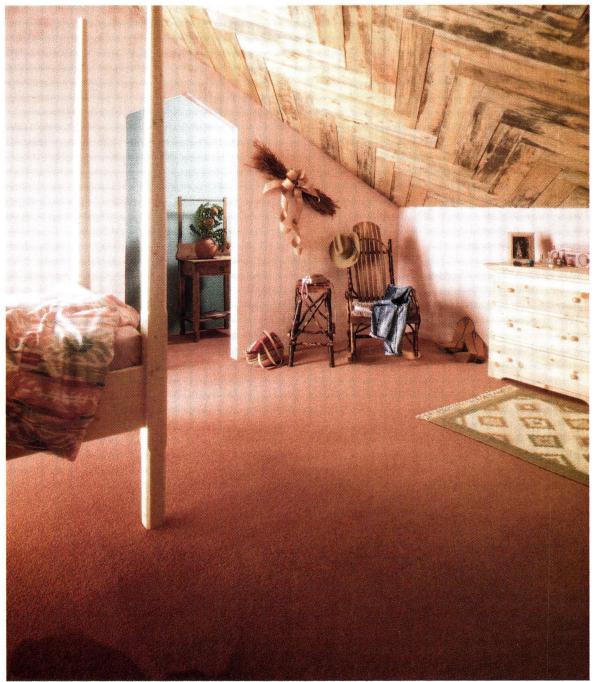


Owners David and Janice Blackburn, top left. Above and top right: In the dining room, Conran's chairs surround a table of steel mesh and glass by Ron Arad. A painting by Tony Bevan and a Michael Craig-Martin sculpture flank a mouse's-eye view to the outside.

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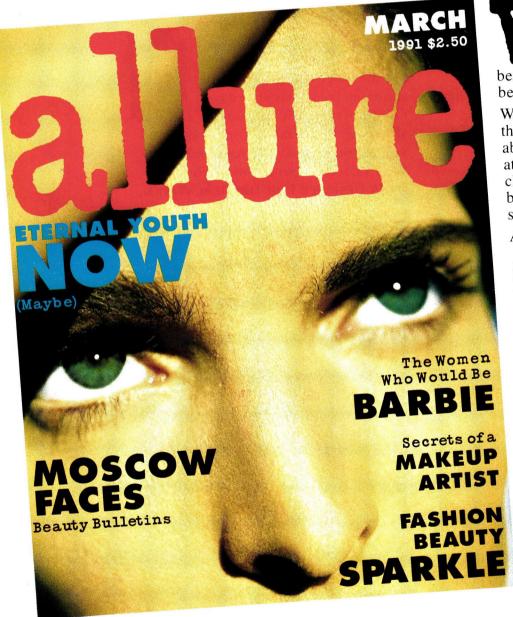
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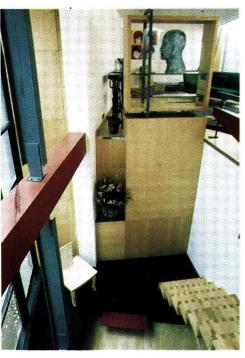
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# Great ideas

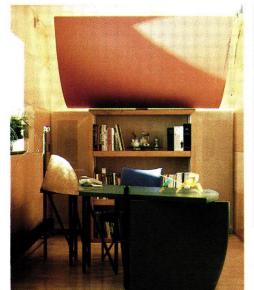
taining space. In the dining zone, a table by Ron Arad and Conran's chairs—ready-made from Conran's but modified with touches of red paint—take pride of place. Tubular radiators skirt the rear wall, their spiraling grilles suggesting a hybrid of a cucumber and a mushroom. Above them, the ends of the red roof beams cross beneath a row of skylights; fine wire tracks line the length of the upper galleries, carrying spotlights that provide an extra glow by night.

Wilson describes the house as an "obsessive work," with a level of detailing that can only be achieved between a dedicated architect and committed client, and compares his relationship with the Blackburns to that between Gerrit Thomas Rietveld and Truus Schröder-Schräder. "The place seems Californian or Spanish because we don't have houses like this in London," he says. "The English are frightened of them." The Blackburns are braver than some. Says David Blackburn, "The pleasure of this house is that it doesn't have to be practical because, business and entertaining aside, we're not about to live in it."



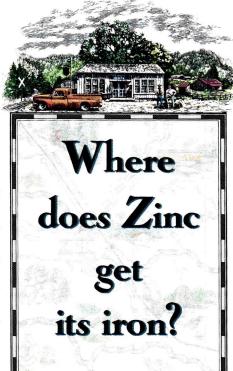


"The English are frightened of houses like this"





Checkered sycamore cupboards line Janice Blackburn's study, above, furnished with a desk by Floris van den Broecke, far left. Left: In the guest bedroom a glass door leading to the bathroom slides behind a bed by Fred Baier. Above left: Stairs leading to the top floor pop through a wall. Top left: A ceramic head by Glenys Barton overlooks the two-story stairwell.



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8.5 gms total fat \* (3.2 gms sat. fat)

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4.2 gms total fat\* (1.5 gms sat. fat)

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\*Sources: USDA Handbook 8-13 1990 Rev., U.S. RDA National Research Council 1989, 10th Edition. Figures are for a cooked and trimmed 3 oz. serving. 4 oz. uncooked yield 3 oz. cooked. ©1991 Beef Industry Council and Beef Board.

ROUND TIP 157 calories

5.9 gms total fat\* (2.1 gms sat. fat)

## Secret Gardens

(Continued from page 174) the French influence has taken root at Barton Court. Paths are now bordered by miniature espaliered fruit trees—apples and pears—or by low box hedging, be-

neath both of which nestle brownedged Antina lettuce and herbs.

Sir Terence and Lady Conran find different pleasures in their garden. He prefers the greenhouses filled with jasmine, plumbago, geraniums, and lemon trees, while she has a favorite spot in the south corner. "There is a bench and a rosemary hedge, lilies and nasturtiums, and little white strawberries growing in tubs. I love sitting here, after it's been raining and the sun has come out and there is that freshness, that wonderful smell, and everything sparkles. The view inside these walls lifts one's spirit."

# Family Treasure

(Continued from page 116) dominated by a full-size statue of Bacchus. The decoration here is unequivocally neoclassical. But although he first consulted Robert Adam, Constable's highly individual tastes were better served by the more amenable Lightoler, working with the Italian plasterer Cortese and the sculptor William Collins. The great drawing room was the last major interior Constable remodeled, at the time of his marriage in 1775. By contrast with the other rooms, this was very much in the London fashion, designed by James Wyatt and with mirrors and seat furniture by Thomas Chippendale. A note of still more exotic grandeur was introduced in the 1840s, when gold brocade was hung on the walls and the frieze and dado rail were painted in bright blues and reds.

Sir Thomas Clifford Constable, who

owned the house at that time, entertained King Louis Philippe of France at Burton Constable in 1847, redecorating a suite of rooms for him at the head of the great staircase. With their grand Empire furniture and heavy canopied beds, these have recently been restored—and given bathrooms for the first time in their existence. Other rooms that have been given a new lease on life include the chapel, with its rich stenciled decoration of the 1830s, and the Chinese Room, where hand-painted wallpaper was hung in 1783—and covered with mad dragons, à la Brighton Pavilion, in the early nineteenth century. Both rooms were meticulously restored by John Sutcliffe in the early 1970s, replacing whole areas that were missing. William Constable's own small drawing room was redecorated later by David Mlinaric, who furnished it according to the eighteenth-century inventories with blue and white painted Chippendale chairs and settee and blue gray walls—a perfect background for paintings showing the house in Capability Brown's new landscape setting. Another brave decision was to paint the staircase hall a rich egg-yolk yellow, to set off the huge Casali paintings in their rococo frames and the massed family portraits.

In a house like Burton Constable there is always more to do. At present carpenters and plasterers are busy repairing the Menagerie, a charming pavilion where a miniature zoo was kept in the eighteenth century. This is to become a Yorkshire base for John Chichester-Constable's only daughter, Rodrica, and her husband, James Straker. With the birth of their first child, John, last October, another chapter in the history of this ancient place has begun. A Editor: Judy Brittain

For visitors information: Burton Constable Hall, Near Hull, North Humberside HU11 4LN; (964) 562400.

# In Jekyll's Footsteps

(Continued from page 124) family's Chelsea town house. Friends joked that, as Drummond puts it, "she didn't know a dahlia from a daylily." By the time Ros and John Wallinger came to the manor, the garden was a shambles. Holme had died in 1923. Little of the original design was evident, the walls were crumbling, and the borders were overrun with perennial weeds. Still, the couple knew that their garden had been the work of Gertrude Jekyll, and they felt an obligation to bring it back to life. Drummond introduced Ros Wallinger to Jane Brown and, through the Gardens Trust, to the writer and plantswoman Penelope Hobhouse. While Brown gave historical perspective on the garden, Hobhouse offered advice on how to grow it again.

What has astonished Hobhouse, Brown, and Drummond is not just Ros Wallinger's courage in taking on the project but the passion that has gone with it. She has visited or written to dozens of specialty nurseries in her quest to plant not just the same species dictated in Jekyll's plan but the very same old varieties. She has been helped by the resurgence of interest in longforgotten plants, by new books on the subject, and by gardens like the famous Roseraie in l'Hay-les-Roses near Paris, whose staff gave her ten cuttings of rare rose varieties. She gathered copies of the plans for her own garden from the Jekyll collection at the University of California at Berkeley.

Now maturing, the garden is giving Wallinger an insight into Jekyll's work that few others—even scholars—can have. She lives with the garden in December, when shadows creep at the

foot of the walls, and in June, when roses sparkle in the late evening sun. "Nobody has got under the skin of the original design to the extent Ros has," Drummond observes. "It's her own humility that has allowed her to do it." Jane Brown, who lives nearby, comes by now and then to see how the garden is doing. In her view, Charles Holme rests peacefully in his grave, and Aunt Bumps would find a kindred spirit in his—and her—successor at the manor. "The remarkable thing about Jekyll," says Brown, "was a complete lack of pretension. The whole point of the arts and crafts movement was honesty and a belief in what you were doing." \(\textstyle \)

Editor: Emma Marrian

The Manor House garden is open to the public May 26 and June 7, 23, and 30 between 2 P.M. and 5 P.M. or by appointment. Visitors should call (256) 862-827.

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## White Album

(Continued from page 147) simplicity, using natural materials and light and not a lot else besides. But the pure uncluttered space, like the proverbial little black frock, is neither simple to produce nor to maintain. It requires perfectionist finishes and a paring away of inessentials. "I've always been attracted to empty space," he says, "desert, treeless landscapes, traveling light," inheriting this indifference to material goods from his father. "He was a very successful businessman but never nostalgic, never attached to possessions."

In the Pawson universe, basics and bibelots alike are banished into a secret thickness of Gatsby-like closets lining the walls, made to measure by a firm of Yorkshire cabinetmakers. Even the kitchens concede little about their culinary purpose: sinks are recessed into Pawson's trademark marble work tops while interfering fixtures, like taps, are fitted low enough not to sully the pure horizontality of the altarlike slabs. Windows are usually screened by hori-

zontal venetian blinds, all the better not to see out. Instead, daylight filters through silkily. Full-tone acid-etched glass—another frequent texture—allows a certain degree of concealment while transmitting an aqueous green light. The curving wall at Wakaba, a Japanese restaurant in London, makes tropical fish of passersby. At Cannelle, a London patisserie, a cubic showcase of clear glass protrudes from the acidetched façade, exposing a solitary example of the delicacies on sale within.

Pawson's client list reads like a roster of top international art dealers and collectors, including Leslie Waddington, Janet Green, and Warren and Victoria Miro. Most recently, he converted a tiny apartment in central London into an oasis of calm for an American couple. Here the signature denials are in evidence: the "shadow gap" between walls and floor which avoids the use of a baseboard and makes the walls appear to float; underfloor heating beneath wide planks of creamy natural Japanese oak; and the familiar handle-free white closets with their sixteen coats of polyester lacquer and extra-thick shelving. The tub—a veritable Marat's tomb—is carved from the same block of Carrara marble as the lavish slabs lining the floor, while great sheets of acid-etched glass divide the bathroom from the bedroom and office on either side.

"What's disturbing to me is seeing other people doing the same details that we've been doing for ten years," says Pawson. "If the shadow gap starts being used as decorative effect, then you get into trouble. But it's the life that goes on in these apartments that's interesting, not the wood on the floor or the plaster on the walls." Nonetheless, he rues that clients can "negate the space very quickly" with their own stuff. "They are in a sense unforgiving spaces; they get canceled out by possessions. But though they might seem austere, they're not deprived and certainly not sterile." He laughs. "And they're not cheap."

Pawson is set for wider horizons in the 1990s. At Dean Clough, a refurbished early nineteenth century mill complex in his native Yorkshire, he is on-site with the second phase expansion of the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust's studios. On the drawing board are several more apartments (one, to his delight, featuring a corridor 120 feet long), some shops, and a private museum in Dublin. And Pawson looks forward to finding new problems to solve. "I'd love to do a skyscraper or a hotel or a hospital. The best building of the twentieth century is that done by engineers: bridges, dams, and all those containers for things." For once, he doesn't mean white closets.

But he wouldn't mind a few more at home. In 1989 he married Catherine Berning, who worked for the interior decoration specialists Colefax & Fowler. Friends did not fail to remark on this merger of stylistic opposites, but so far it has not spawned any hybrid "chintzimalist" style. "Living in a nineteenth-century interior drives me mad," says Pawson, who moved into Berning's Battersea apartment. "I can appreciate it, but I can never understand why people need so much clutter. Catherine genuinely enjoys that stuff, but at such a cost. To me, there's no room to breathe." **Janet Abrams** 

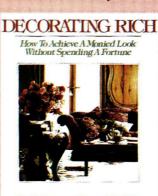
Editors: Judy Brittain and Heather Smith MacIsaac

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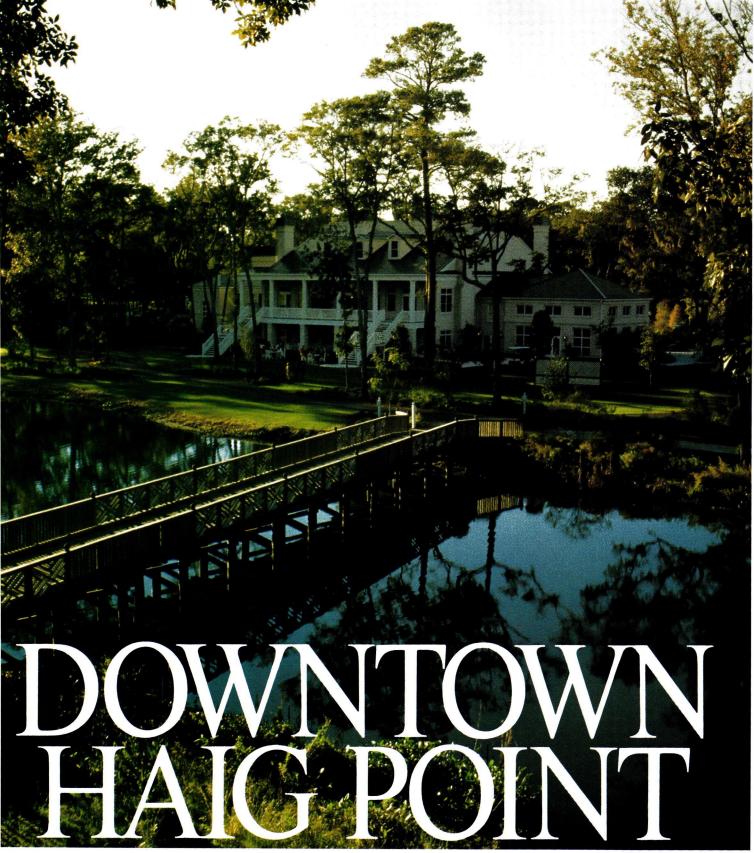
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# Chippendale

(Continued from page 144) with Egyptian heads." Robust armchairs in matching wood, with curving back rails so sturdy that they might have yoked oxen, were given barley-twist back splats that bring to mind Jacobean furniture. The high mahogany library steps, supported by slender fluted columns as tall as a man, are veritable interior architecture and exemplify the simplicity of their maker's mature style. Later pieces go even further: stunning satinwood and ebony chairs he did in 1812 might well be Russian, so highly abstracted and severe is their classical detailing.

Although Chippendale the Younger was a successful businessman who enjoyed royal patronage—he styled himself "upholsterer and cabinet-maker to the Duke of Gloucester" and was commissioned by the Prince Regent to design an elmwood chair from the famous tree the duke of Wellington used as his command post during the battle of Waterloo—he was forced into bankruptcy in 1804 to settle inheri-

tance claims on the business after Thomas Haig died. But Chippendale the Younger's clientele, appreciating a unique talent, continued to call on him for designs that still seem like paragons of aristocratic style in which richness is intensified by powerful proportions and a control that never inhibits expressiveness.

He was eulogized after his death in 1822 by another great Regency furniture maker, George Smith, for his "very great degree of taste... as a draughtsman and designer," but that was scant praise for such a singular inventor of form. Although he lived in the shadow of his charismatic father, that could have been the source of his determination to stand out from others in his work. He achieved that not through the gimmickry with which Regency design was rife but because of his obvious conviction that great furniture must to some extent stand outside contemporary fashion. It is that quality of timelessness that saves Chippendale the Younger from the dark corners of history and makes us aware of this dutiful son's rightful stature.

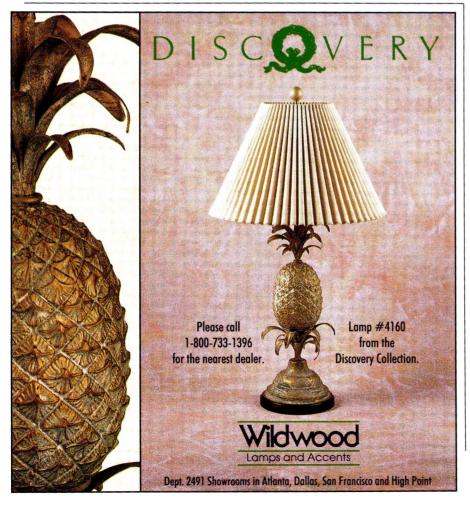
# Lab for Eccentricity

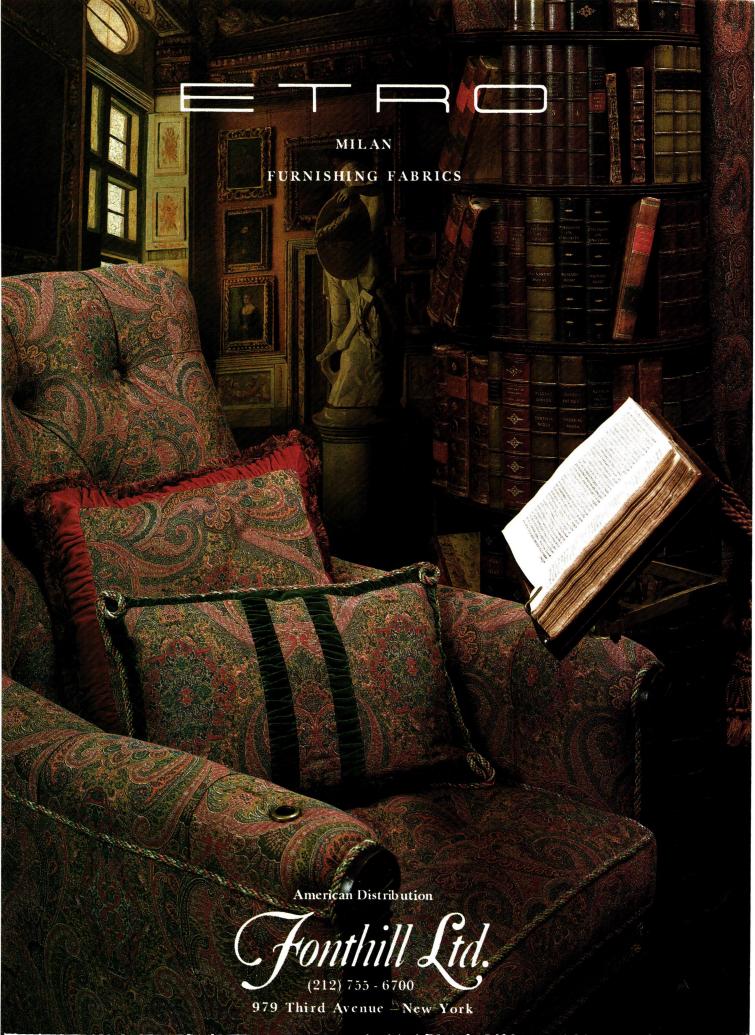
(Continued from page 135) in the entrance hall and continues throughout the house. Here plaster casts of antique statuary and architectural details are massed on brackets and shelves. Some pieces are quite old, while others, brought back from Spain, are more recent casts which I have antiqued.

Every house, every room even, is to some degree someone's personal museum. All interiors, however grand or simple, are places where past and present, reality and dream mingle. We all gather about us the things we need, but more important, we also collect things we don't need—those inexplicable objects we keep just because we like them or because of the "Proust factor," the power some things have to stimulate remembrance of a person or place we have loved. In making our schemes and arranging our objects at Otranto House, Oriel and I are playing an elaborate and endlessly entertaining game. It is a game like no other, for in it we make reality obey all the rules of theater; in it we realize our own visions.

# Folly for All Seasons

(Continued from page 140) According to its owner, the temple is aptly named: "On a summer day at dawn, with the mist low over the water, it's an Indian palace. In the depth of winter, with skaters on the ice, it's like a Brueghel or a little Russian palace in the snow." Every spring Grenney exclaims over the green lushness of the pasture around it and in the fall enjoys the golden wheatfields beyond. He encourages a relaxed informal air among his guests, who are put up in country comfort in what were once the dog kennels. They can wander, barefoot and cottongowned, out into the trees' shade by the water for an alfresco breakfast and then, after boating on the calm canal, return for a country lunch beside the water lilies and the arcadian eighteenth-century stone statue of a shepherd. People, says Veere Grenney, love to come to the Temple of the Four Seasons, and there is no reason on earth to doubt him. Editor: Wendy Harrop







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## American in London

(Continued from page 128) commendable craftsmanship throughout, especially the crisp stonework and fastidious bricklaying, which Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (his partner and wife) coaxed from the masons.

But the best things have been reserved for the interior. Entering the foyer off Pall Mall, one then passes through a portal leading to the soaring stairway that ascends beyond the mezzanine to the permanent collection galleries on the uppermost floor. This regal cascade of stone steps is flooded with daylight from the glass window wall overlooking the original structure and the bridge linking the two.

Whatever its civic presence, a museum building succeeds or fails on the quality of its exhibition spaces, and at that Venturi has outdone himself. An enfilade of four large galleries is flanked by rows of smaller rooms whose doorways are staggered to break up vistas and give a more intimate feeling than the imposing central space. Walls are painted a soothing but full-bodied gray, the perfect complement to the glorious colors of the early Renaissance masters for whose works the wing was conceived. Illumination comes from lantern skylights atop tapering vaults based on those of Sir John Soane's celebrated Dulwich Picture Gallery.

Venturi's impressive confidence, ex-

pansiveness, and authority here also bring to mind the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens, greatest of all twentieth-century classicists. Gallery portals framed by paired engaged columns and compound arches in false perspective recall Lutyens's late imperial mode, as does the stately sequence of spaces, which unfolds with a processional grandeur utterly devoid of bombast. Venturi has achieved a classicism as original, animated, and appropriate for our time as Lutyens's was for his.

Most surprising of all is how indigenous this building seems. It is not only because of Venturi's nods to some of his most interesting local predecessors. Rather it lies in the American's command of several typically English architectural attributes: intelligent siting; clarity and directness of expression; a sane balance between splendor and restraint; and a reverence for established form mitigated by a fond tolerance of eccentricity.

Whether or not this magnificent addition to London is immediately appreciated will have more to do with Britain's current contentious climate of architectural discourse than with the Sainsbury Wing's manifest virtues. But there can be little doubt that it will stand as one of the proudest landmarks of a period in that nation's history when some wished to beat a retreat, while braver souls pushed forward and against all odds won a real artistic victory at Trafalgar.

Martin Filler

# Victorian Intrigue

(Continued from page 153) looms Edward Wadsworth's surreal collage of nautical relics, and above the Burges medieval-style hutch (filled with Dresser's presciently streamlined Victorian silver) hangs a faceless portrait of Virginia Woolf by Vanessa Bell.

Braka saved two of his favorite paintings for his bedroom: Spencer's 1935 portrait of his wife, whose feet are cut off by the frame and whose expression is terrified, and Ben Nicholson's 1934 abstract all-white *White Relief*. "I liked the opposition of the Gothic Spencer and the pure international modernism of the Nicholson," says Braka. "There can be unity in disunity." The room's

furnishings are friendlier than elsewhere in the house: pink roses are scattered across the Voysey carpet, and cutout hearts grace the backs of the Voysey desk chair and the Walton armchairs flanking the fireplace. "I wanted the bedroom to be low-key and more restful," says Braka.

And then he drags one of the Walton chairs into the center of the room and exults over it. "This is what I love about Victorian furniture: it's *sculpture*!" he cries as he swings the chair around. "Look, it has the presence of a person." Indeed it does: viewed from the rear, it even seems to have a face, with a slim back slat for a nose, arms for eyes, and a seat for a mouth.

"It's human," he says. "It lives!" ▲

Editor: Judy Brittain



## **Noble House**

(Continued from page 186) doubtless will not be the last. Over four centuries, earl after earl and duke after duke have left their marks on Syon. The most dramatic change came in 1762, when the last earl engaged Robert Adam and Capability Brown to transform the monastic fortress into a private palace—and the wandering gardens beside the Thames into open landscapes and grand designs, including a thousand-foot-long lake. Adam's magnificent suite of staterooms remain exactly as they were, from his almost perfect double cube of a great hall to the 136-foot-long long gallery to the anteroom, gilded and columned into a lavish reflection of the Roman Empire.

A series of private-entrance apartments on the top floor comprise the family quarters—although the museum qualities of Syon House, like Alnwick Castle, dictate the invasion of family privacy from May until October. The main entrance leads directly into the Great Hall and is flooded with

tourists the minute the doors are opened. The tremendous costs of maintaining Syon are helped along by the entrance fee, but the main support comes from a burgeoning self-service garden center on the property, introduced by Harry's father in the 1960s.

A pretty apartment overlooking the rose garden and the river is home to Lady Caroline Percy, the oldest of the six Percy children. Married to Comte Pierre de Cabarrus and mother of two daughters, Chiara and Diana, Caroline has only recently come home to live. "I've spent most of my life around the Mediterranean," she says, seated in front of an Adam fireplace and Holbein's portrait of Edward VI. Titian hair tumbling around her shoulders, Caroline's resemblance to both Elizabeth I and Meryl Streep is somewhat disconcerting. "If one has had a secure upbringing, as I had, it's only natural to want to spread one's wings. My husband is Basque, so we have both Spanish and French connections, and we have a house in Spain. But when the time came for the girls to have a traditional English education, my father let us have the flat here." Caroline buys English antiques for a shop in Seville, and her husband is involved in the development of a spa near Marbella.

As for her brother the duke, Harry's days are occupied by the multitudinous projects inherited from his father as well as a full slate of his own. A chair of rural economy at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne has been designated as a fitting memorial to the tenth duke, and helping raise the money for it is an effort dear to the entire family. Local conservation is another favorite cause. "Then there are dozens of small things that range from the Northumberland Fusiliers to a parish priest needing money," says Harry, "and to some of the most blatant requests. It's well known that I have a great interest in filmmaking, and I was seriously approached recently to support a project that turned out to be a blue movie!"

Both eyes on the future, Harry. ▲ *Editor: Judy Brittain* 

For information: Estate Administrator, Syon House, Syon Park, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 8JF; (81) 560-0881.

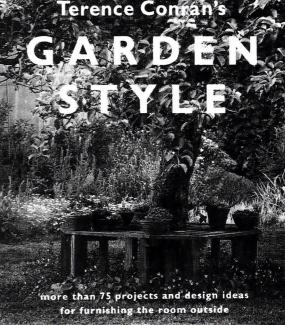
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#### WORKROOM

Page 54 Commission linen and cotton furnishing fabrics, from \$250 yd, bone china, from \$125 ea, to order from Lesley & Jonathan Heale, Montgomery, Wales (686) 668430; fax (938) 552233. 60 One-ofa-kind metalwork pieces, from Michael Rowe, c/o Department of Goldsmithing, Silversmithing, Metalwork, and Jewellry, Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2EU, England; (71) 584-5020 ext 256. Similar one-of-a-kind furniture and frames, to order from John Harwood, London (71) 727-2432. 66 Kores (cat. #26), £692 ea, head of Hermes (cat. #23), £467, funeral monuments of Epikrates (cat. #21), £432 ea, relief showing centaurs, musicians, and a tearful Eros on funeral monument (cat. #18), £139, relief of ball game (cat. #3), £207, grave stele of warrior standing by a pillar (cat. #28), £260, Aphrodite (cat. #22), £605, all casts by John McGill, to order or specially commission from Anne Champness of Champness Canosa, London (81) 747-0436 by appt.

#### **DESIGN**

Page 76 Trisidos velvet/cast-aluminum-legged chaise longue, Blue Marlin agate shell/wood cheval glass, Agateo agate shell/wood/glass low table, Onda shagreen/wood stool, Cresta shagreen/ wood stool, and other Cebuan de la Rochette pieces, to order at Ikon, London (71) 867-8440. Commission furniture only, to order from Cebuan de la Rochette, 55 Kensington Garden Square. London, W2 4BA, England; (71) 727-0219 by appt.

Page 84 Maple four-poster bed with storage space, similar commissions to order from Will Wentworth-Stanley, London (81) 969-4046.

Page 106 Plastic/wood illuminated globe, \$95, at Zona, NYC (212) 925-6750. Silk screen on linen Leo Belgicus 17th-century map-patterned pillow, \$175, at the Pillowry, NYC (212) 628-3844. Frescoed cast-concrete Earth plate, by Yuvall Gluska. \$250, at Archetype Gallery, NYC (212) 334-0100 Map paper/wood decorative trunk, 14" x 13" x 20" \$560, from Drexel Heritage, for stores (800) 447-4700. Livingstone sisal rug, 5' x 7', \$1,335, from Ralph Lauren Home Collection at Polo/Ralph Lauren, NYC, Austin, Beverly Hills, Boca Raton, Boston, Chicago, Costa Mesa, Dallas, Denver, Edina, Georgetown, Honolulu, Kansas City, La Jolla, Little Rock, Manhasset, Miami, Minneapolis, Palm Beach, Palo Alto, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Princeton. San Antonio, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Short Hills, Tulsa, Winter Park. Rayon crêpe dress with lace embroidery, by Moschino Couture, \$2,000, at Bergdorf Goodman, NYC (212) 753-7300. Starfish sterling/mother-of-pearl earrings, by Stephen Dweck, \$400 pr, at Bergdorf Goodman, NYC; 24 Collection, Bal Harbour; Tootsies, Houston; Aversa, Milwaukee, Oak Brook; Etc, Mountain Brook; to order at Neiman Marcus. Black satin bracelet with faux pearls, by Debra Moises, \$175, at Debra Moises, NYC; to order at Ultimo, Chicago; Madeleine Gallay, West Hollywood. High Moon Globe sandblasted glass/steel/cement side table, by Nik Mills, \$1,050, at Archetype Gallery, NYC; Civilisation, NYC. World View china, \$45 per 5piece place setting, by Sasaki, at fine stores.

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Pages 130-35 Similar one-of-a-kind ceramic

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#### **FOLLY FOR ALL SEASONS**

Pages 138-39 Warwick Tapestry cotton on French armchairs at table, to the trade at Brunschwig & Fils, NYC, Atlanta, Beachwood, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Dania, Denver, Houston, Laguna Niguel, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, Troy, Washington, D.C Palma glazed cotton on table, 120 cm wide, £18.60 m, to order at Thorp Prints, London (71) 352-5457. French armchairs at table, 18th-century Venetian commode, similar at Shield & Allen, London (71) 736-7145. 19th-century painted birdcage on commode, similar at Beresford-Clark Antiques, London (71) 731-5079. Freshwater rush matting, in approx 3" plaited braids, by Waveney Apple Growers, Beccles, England, for nearest U.S. agent call (502) 77345. 140-41 Amoeba cotton on dining room chairs, 120 cm wide, £13.80 m, by Arthur Brown's Number Three, London (71) 385-4218. 19th-century pine table with drawer, similar at Myriad Antiques, London (71) 229-1709. Customized glass candlestick lamps on table, to the trade from Vaughan, London (71) 731-3133. 141 Chester Check cotton on bedroom chair, to the trade at Cowtan & Tout, NYC; Travis-Irvin, Atlanta; Shecter-Martin, Boston; Rozmallin, Chicago; Rozmallin at Baker, Knapp & Tubbs, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Troy, John Edward Hughes, Dallas, Houston, Bill Nessen, Dania; JEH/Denver, Denver; Kneedler-Fauchère, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco: Croce, Philadelphia; Wayne Martin, Portland, Seattle; Primavera, Toronto. Coir coconut matting, by Crucial Trading, London, for free brochure and samples call (71) 221-9000.

THE WHITE ALBUM
Pages 146-47 Architecture, by John Pawson, London (71) 495-1244. Flooring, cupboards, clos-

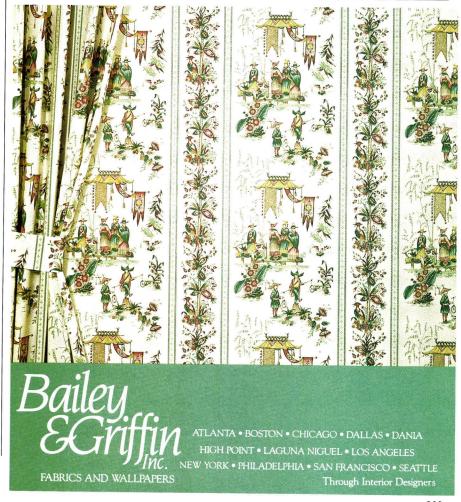
ets, designed by John Pawson, built by Designworkshop, Huddersfield, England (484) 602996. 146 Construction in apartment, by T.E.C. (Tungsten Engineering & Construction), London (71) 937-9625. Marblework in apartment, designed by John Pawson, crafted by Gianni Galli of Zantedeschi Marble & Granite, Verona, Italy, (45) 68-60631; fax (45) 68-60630.

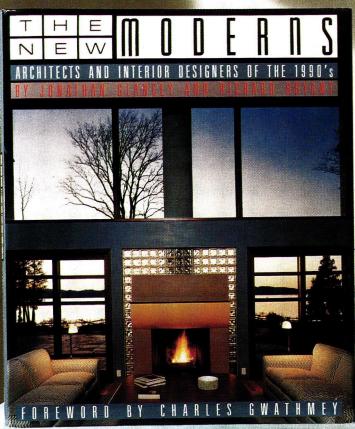
#### VICTORIAN INTRIGUE

Pages 148-53 Decoration of town house, by Mlinaric, Henry & Zervudachi, 38 Bourne Street, London SW1W 8JA, England

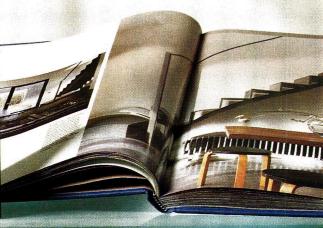
#### HARMONY IN WILTSHIRE

Pages 154-61 Decoration, by John Stefanidis, 6 Burnsall Street, London SW3 3ST, England; (71) 351-7511. 154-55 Pelargonium cotton on armchairs, by John Stefanidis, to the trade at China Seas, NYC, Los Angeles; Jerry Pair & Assocs., Atlanta, Dania; Ostrer House, Boston; Hinson & Co., Chicago; Walter Lee Culp, Dallas, Houston; Egg & Dart, Denver; Fee-McClaran, Honolulu; Habert, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Duncan Huggins Perez, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C.; Stephen E. Earls, Portland, Seattle; Designers Showcase, San Diego; Shears & Window, San Francisco; Campbell-Louis, Troy. Wood drum table with crackle glaze between chairs, to special order from John Stefanidis & Assocs., London (71) 352-3537. 156 Gonfalonière cotton for window shades, by John Stefanidis, to the trade at China Seas (see above). 157 Freshwater rush matting, in approx 3" plaited braids, by Waveney Apple Growers, Beccles, England, for nearest U.S. agent call (502) 77345. 159 Lucrezia long-staple cotton on sofa, 52"-55" wide, \$237 yd, Tapa long-staple cotton on pillows, 52" wide, \$237 yd, at Fortuny, NYC; to the trade at Bob Collins, Atlanta, Miami, Philadelphia; George & Frances Davison, Boston; Betterman's, Chicago; Ellouise Abbott Showroom, Houston; Keith McCoy





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& Assocs., Los Angeles, San Francisco; Stephen E. Earls, Portland, Seattle. Stripe cotton on armchairs, by John Stefanidis, to the trade at China Seas (see above). **160** Puccini cotton for master bedroom bedspread, by John Stefanidis, to the trade at China Seas (see above).

#### **AVANT-GARDE FOR EXPORT**

Pages 162–63 Moon Soon restaurant, designed by Zaha M. Hadid, London (71) 253-5147.

#### **RETURN TO THE MANOR**

Page 165 Revolving bookcase, by Alexis de La Falaise, available in various woods, at Cour Interieur, Paris (1) 42-77-33-10. 166 Antique Moroccan fabric cushions on sofa, by Bazar Tindouf, Tangier, Morocco (99) 31525. 169 Willow Bough handblocked wallpaper, 19th-century William Morris design, \$357 per 21" x 11" yd roll, to the trade at Arthur Sanderson & Sons, NYC; Marion Kent, Atlanta. High Point, Washington, D.C.; Shecter-Martin, Boston; Holly Hunt, Chicago, Minneapolis; De Cioccio, Cincinnati, John Edward Hughes, Dallas, Houston; Bill Nessen, Dania; Egg & Dart, Denver; J. Robert Scott, Laguna Niguel, Los Angeles; Delk & Morrison, New Orleans; JW Showroom, Philadelphia; McNamara & Harris, Phoenix; Shears & Window, San Francisco; Designers Showroom, Seattle. Willow Bough linen on sofa, 19th-century William Morris design, 48" wide, \$78 vd. to the trade at Arthur Sanderson & Sons (see above)

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# Gandee at large

## Nick Ashley: Life after Laura

Looking quite mod, if you can use that word again, thirty-fouryear-old Nick Ashley is dressed in a black turtleneck, black jeans, black boots, and a fuzzy purple

blazer—very fitted. The retro ensemble is not particularly remarkable: London is very sixties these days. It looks just right, as a matter of fact, on hip young Nick as he tears up the sleepy streets of London on his Hell's Angels—style Harley-Davidson motorcycle. But hip young Nick is dressed for work, and work is Laura Ashley, the company that, as we all know, invented buttons and bows and pinafores and petticoats and lavender and lilac and lace and little girls with long blond hair.

Appearances notwithstanding, Nick, who keeps a photograph of Jimi Hendrix above his desk, is keeper of the flame his mother (yes, Laura) inadvertently lit in 1953, when, reacting to the postwar rush to synthetics, she started making screen-printed linen dishcloths for herself and for friends. Six years ago Laura died in an accident, and Nick, then twenty-eight, assumed design control of the company. Which is quite a big job considering that Laura Ashley now has 475 stores in 15 countries and a product line that hovers somewhere around 25,000, and ranges from paint to perfume, from furniture to

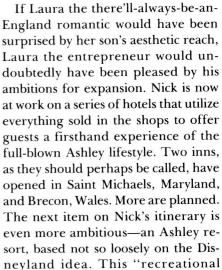
frocks, as the British say. Although nepotism undoubtedly played its part in Nick's meteoric ascension, his first contribution to the company back in 1980 was prescient. "I said to my mother, 'Look, in terms of fashion, all this frilly romantic stuff—eyelash to toenail in frills, tucks, and lace—is all very well, but it's not going to last in the eighties." Laura listened and checked her fascination with romantic Victorian excess-

off came the frills, tucks, and lace—which helped the company make its way through a decade when the clean lines and strong silhouettes of Giorgio Armani and Calvin Klein reigned. Ironically, adds Nick, in terms of interior design (the other fifty percent of Laura Ashley) the eighties were a period of flamboyance and excess and grandeur, a period of swags and overscale chintz, and a rendition of the country house look that was more, in his opinion, Hollywood than horse and hound. Perhaps because Laura was in tune with the times, or perhaps because she herself had become a bit grand ("In the eighties she was decorating her château in the south of France"),

the company was well prepared to supply the demand.

Now with the nineties, Nick is convinced that the trends in interior design and fashion design are reversing. On the home front the direction he is charting is light, airy, crisp, clean, pared-down, not so clutteredwith soft warm colors and smaller prints. "We are turning back to a much simpler approach. It's the English country-house look, but for the eighties English countryhouse look you had to wear a suit, whereas for the nineties English country-house look you can wear jeans." (You can also, evidently, ride a Harley-Davidson, according to Nick: "Motorcycles are actually a very healthy way of getting around. They don't burn much fuel, which means they don't pollute so much.") And the fashion forecast? "I am busy putting all the frills and the fun back. I am busy putting the fashion back into the fashion," reports Nick, who is also culling pattern and print ideas from such disparate locales as Wyoming, where he traveled "to research Native American patterns," and Russia, where he traveled "to research the ethnic side of Russia's heritage."

# Nick is now at work on an Ashley resort village in Japan



village," as Nick dubs it, includes all that you might expect: from hotels and restaurants to gardens, stables, and helipads. Residential accommodations are also offered—apartment or house, your option. Nick has now completed the design phase of his first resort, which, not surprisingly, is slated for Japan. "It's a massively exciting development on the Japanese scale," he reports, adding that the project will cost in the neighborhood of \$100 million. And how have the Japanese received Nick's grand plan? "Well, they have ten variations on the word 'brilliant' in Japan, and apparently they used the number-one version, the number-one 'brilliant.'"

Charles Gandee



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