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November 1984

HOUSE & GARDEN

THE MAGAZINE OF
CREATIVE LIVING
Volume 156, Number 11

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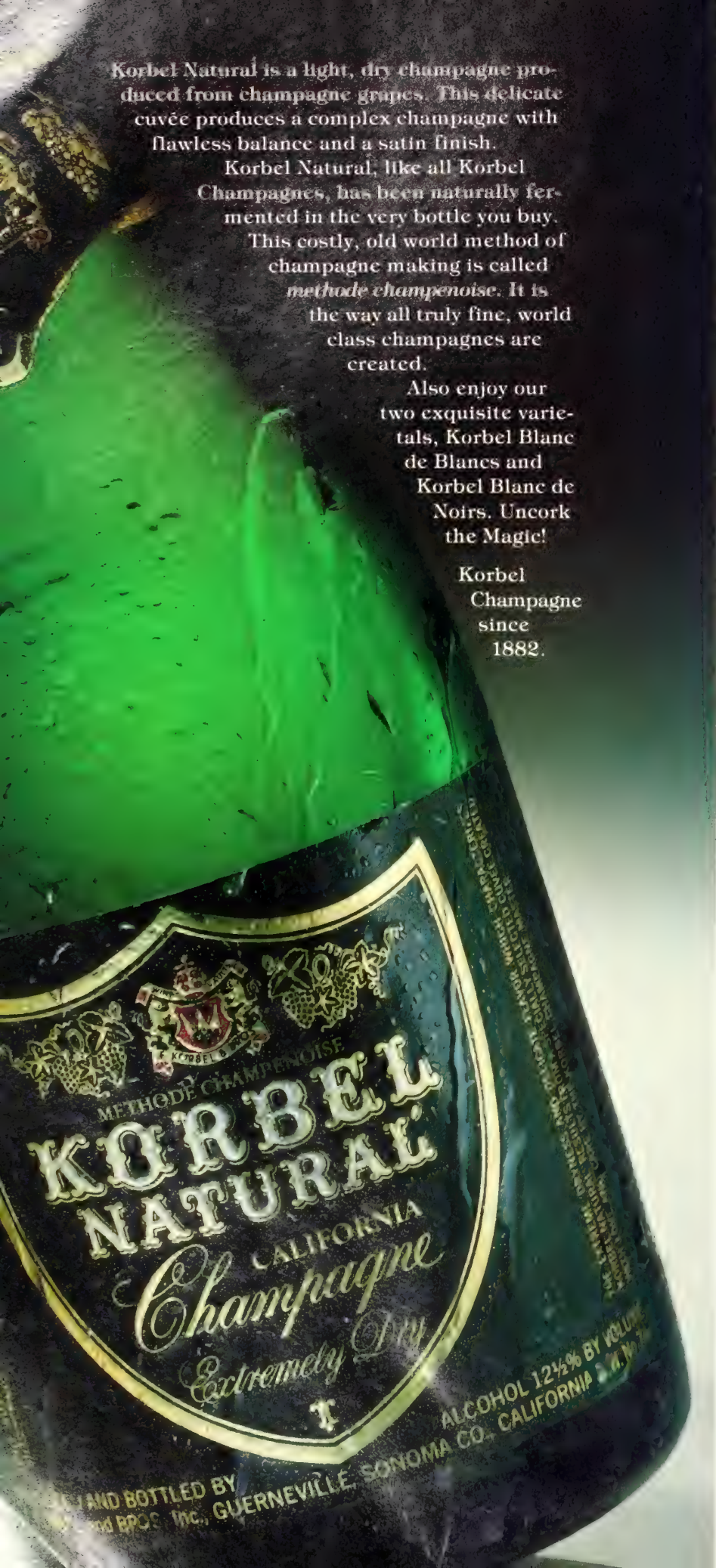


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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

Alexander Cockburn's review of this season's new photography books, page 28, reminds us of T. S. Eliot's thoughts on the way works of art speak to each other across time. As we choose our material for each issue, we have in mind that House & Garden will be a record of civilization in our time, and we want that record to reflect the full range of decoration and design, art and architecture in the eighties.

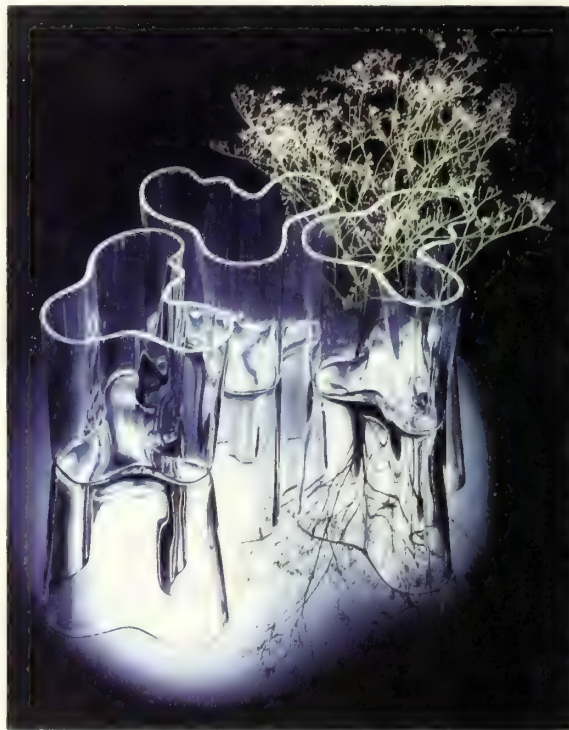
Of course, this invariably leads us into the thorny question of taste. Perhaps that is why I so enjoy the quote from Ralph Caplan's book, *By Design*, which says: "I can always tell when someone's taste is improving: it moves closer to my own." Caplan maintains that the public does not resist the superior but does reject the thoroughly unfamiliar. Still, we see at least part of our job as selecting out the superior even when it is unfamiliar, so that more that is superior will become familiar to us all.

The superior was all around us as we toured the current Museum of Modern Art show, "Alvar Aalto: Furniture and Glass," covered in this month's Design column, page 68. Linoleum-topped birch tables and stools like the ones in the show were in my first apartment in New York, and they've served my family well to this day, moving from living room to kitchen to study as our life and circumstances have changed. Wherever they are placed, they look as handsome and right as they did when they were bought at Bonniers twenty years ago.

To see another side of design, anyone who can should take up Nancy Richardson's invitation to visit the newly restored and recently reopened Rockefeller rooms on the fifth floor of the Museum of the City of New York. Nancy's invitation is in a new House & Garden column beginning on page 19. Launched with our September issue, All About Style will keep readers post-

ed on what's new, what's in, and what's happening.

It was Nancy who took me to visit Aileen Mehle, which led to our story on how "Suzy" lives and works. I had heard about the cases of champagne hiding under the skirts of the tables in her New York duplex, but I didn't have any that afternoon as Aileen entertained us with the stories behind the stories in her daily column on society.



Alvar Aalto's classic free-form glass vase

When you are with Suzy there are bubbles enough without the champagne.

In New York on a break from weeks of shooting for the fall run of *Dallas*, Larry and Maj Hagman stopped by to see our photographs of their house, page 182. While they were here, House & Garden writer Gabrielle Winkel had lunch with them at "21" and discovered some of the differences between Larry Hagman and J.R. Ewing, particularly the life he shares with his Swedish-born designer wife, Maj, on the beach in Malibu.


Another visitor to New York recently was the Paris journalist Christina de Liagre, a frequent contributor to our pages. It turns out that she knew firsthand just what a miracle it is to find an apartment in the Place des Vosges, for Christina lives above the Noble Spaces in this issue, page 118. Working with photographer David Massey on the shoot was House & Garden's new European Creative Director, Marie-Paule Pellé.

Marina Schinz's spectacular portfolio of photographs of the Desert Garden at the Huntington in California is further proof that you don't have to be fashionable to be beautiful. As a transplanted Midwesterner, I have always found the unfashionable cacti some of nature's most extraordinary plants. For a very special look at the splendor of cactus, see page 162.

The once-empty acres around our house in Quogue are filling up with new houses, so we have instituted a new fall tradition—putting in a few trees here and there to protect a view or provide a bit of screening for outdoor living on the decks around the house. No wonder, then, that I read with more than an editor's interest Anthony Huxley's piece on Trees for Small Kingdoms, page 42. But

it was the editor in me that delighted in discovering a new word: the "fastigiata" or narrow-erect trees that Huxley suggests for limited spaces. I can't wait for our next round of tree shopping so that I can ask garden-center merchants what they have in the way of "fastigiates" this year. If they take me straight to their "narrow erect" varieties, I'll know they read House & Garden, too.

Lou Gropp
Editor-in-Chief

A man and a woman are shown in a close-up, intimate pose. The man, on the left, has short, light-colored hair and is wearing a dark, textured knit sweater. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The woman, on the right, has long, wavy blonde hair and is wearing a grey knit beanie, a gold choker necklace, and a patterned, textured jacket. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera. Her left hand is visible, adorned with a gold ring and two gold bracelets. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting.

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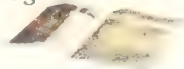
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ALL ABOUT STYLE

By Nancy Richardson

■ **ROCKEFELLER ROOMS** In 1937, when The Museum of Modern Art needed the space for its sculpture garden, the house that was in the way had belonged to John D. Rockefeller Sr. This house represented the aesthetic antithesis of what was later to go up in its place. What is amazing—in that it must have been embarrassing in the late thirties to make a case for fashionable anything in the 1880s let alone *decoration*—was that John D. Rockefeller Jr. had the instinct to preserve two rooms of his father's house, and the Museum of the City of New York had the sense to accept them. Thanks to the Rockefellers, these splendid rooms, done in the 1880s by George A. Schastey, have been recently restored and reopened to the public on the museum's fifth floor. A "Japanese" bedroom and an American Renaissance dressing room—think what the word Japanese came to mean when applied to MOMA's garden—are at once garish, rectilinear, functional, and like a stage set. Anyone having wood paneling stenciled should have a look at the dressing room.

■ **ANCIENT TABLEWARE** In some departments, the Metropolitan Museum is like an iceberg. The collections on display represent a fraction of the museum's holdings. No wonder then that the museum's director, Philippe de Montebello, is especially proud of a new permanent installation of ancient Greek and Roman silver—both domestic and ceremonial—that has just been completed in the shadow of the museum's great staircase. This Greek and Roman treasury is the special achievement of Dr. Dietrich von Bothmer, chairman of the

department of Greek and Roman art, who is a contemporary legend in his field. A tiny but important part of the collection is from a nineteenth-century bequest but the great part has been acquired since the sixties under Dr. von Bothmer. The shapes of the winebowls, pitchers, goblets, beakers, flacons, strainers, and other utensils as well as the ancient names—*situla*, *kylix*, *oinochoe*, *skyphos*, *alabastron*, *phiale*—form the stylistic basis for more than two thousand years of design since.

A bride could do no better than to start here before choosing her patterns. The collection is cleanly and rhythmically displayed. Wait until you see the Roman spoons "swimming" on a slanting scrim like a school of minnows. ■ **FABRICS AND PATINA** White-background chintzes have been an established American taste since Billy Baldwin made them popular in the sixties. Even then, as Baldwin and others were establishing the taste for clear, clean colors, there was a group of women in both England and America who systematically soaked materials with bright white backgrounds in tea to mellow and "age" the colors. This tea-stained



Rockefeller dressing room in the 1880s.



Rockefeller bedroom, originally on West 54th Street.



Elaborate handle for a second-century A.D. Roman silver dish.

Sixth-century B.C. Greek pitcher.



PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ROCKEFELLER ROOMS FROM THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM; ROMAN HANDLE AND GREEK PITCHER FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

ALL ABOUT STYLE



look is now catching on officially with a number of beautiful chintzes that have been deliberately designed to look old. Geoffrey Bennison, 91 Pimlico Road, London SW1, has taken a richly textured cotton-linen of a heavy beautiful quality and had it printed with huge softly colored roses from an eighteenth-century design. Bennison has used it for Marie-Hélène de Rothschild's bedroom in New York. Vincent Fourcade used another coloring for Nancy Kissinger's new house in the country. John Stefanidis has a fabric in the same spirit, Bokhara. At Brunshaw, ask for a material called Kandahar Print. ■ HORST'S WORLD Not a journalist, a realist, or a recorder of any vernacular but the most attractive, Horst has been *the* photographer of our era who caught the mood and gesture of fashionable life. What he saw in the camera has influenced not just fashion and photography but decoration itself. On view at the International Center of Photography in New York until November 4 is an exhibition of Horst's fashion photographs, two of which we show here. They date from his life in Paris in the thirties. A



Bennison "Roses" fabric



Gloria Vanderbilt by Horst, 1940s.

reputation as a photographer of interiors developed in the sixties in New York when for *Vogue* and Diana Vreeland he and Valentine Lawford traveled the world. The centerpiece of these stories was often a beautiful woman shown barefoot and—in some of the best shots—with stylishly messy hair. He applied the same off-handed view to houses, specializing in photographs of front halls with stone floors and massive architectural tables on which armfuls of flowers had been plunked en route to a flower-room to be arranged. He liked living rooms that had been turned into studios, bedrooms that were libraries, unplumped down cushions. He often added something red—a leather book, a flower, a towel—to pick a room up. Few people, let alone few photographers, have had the ability to use flowers that had almost had it in such a poignant way. Women would leave a room just as it was after



Corset, 1939 fashion photograph by Horst.

Horst had composed his photographs because his arrangement of chairs, cushions, objects gave an atmosphere of ease and assurance that no amount of matched-up decoration could.

■ LACQUER RED BABY The piano as we know it was developed in the mid nineteenth century, and its enormous non-musical case was always regarded—as were clock cases and book bindings—as something to go to town on as an element of decoration. Alma-Tadema decorated a grand piano for Henry Gurdon Marquand in the 1880s; about the same time a piano that looked like an ormolu-encrusted commode was being made for the Whitneys. Syrie Maugham did pianos in a pickled white, and let's just not list what happened to the

Red hot piano



PHOTOGRAPH BY HENRY MAUGHAM, ETC.

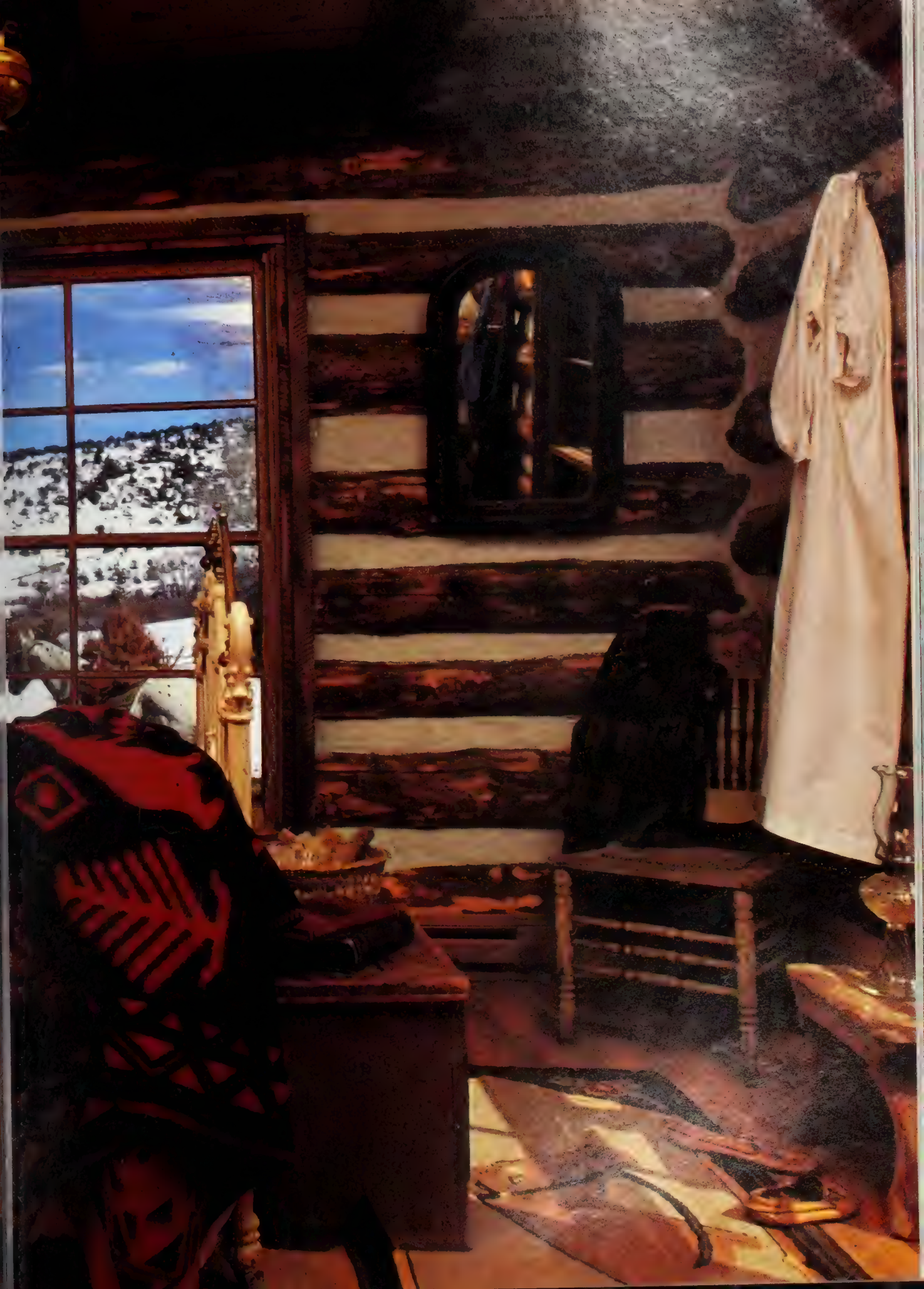
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ALL ABOUT STYLE

piano in Hollywood production numbers. But who recently has had an easy time of incorporating a big black piano into the arrangement of a room? Why not find an old baby grand and lacquer it red as Vince Latucca did for the Cenzo room at the Southampton Designer Show House last summer? Craftsman Kalman Detrich—tel. (212) 245-1234—did the actual work. ■ **LOOK IT UP** Since 1977 when John Fleming and Hugh Honour's *Dictionary of the Decorative Arts* (Harper & Row) appeared in America it has become a one-book course in how to show off at dinner. You could start off with Alvar Aalto, progress through Robert Adam, skip down to a delicious bit on Alençon lace, wallow happily in an explanation of a monkey orchestra of *Affenkapelle* before going to sleep at night. Funny thing was that the information stuck in memory as vividly as gossip you wished you hadn't heard, and indeed, it could be redelivered at the proper moment as if it were gossip. Englishmen who write dictionaries have the same sense of commitment as a novelist, and their readers look forward to new reference books as if they were the latest episode from Anthony Powell. You can imagine the excitement then when this year Simon Jervis, deputy keeper of furniture and woodwork at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, produced a new *Dictionary of Design and Designers* (Penguin, London; Facts on File, New York), which while using the pet modernist term *design* in the title really serves anything but a modernist purpose. The Victoria & Albert has the most comprehensive collections in the world of four hundred years of the decorative arts, and Simon Jervis has very wide-ranging tastes. Realizing that twentieth-century reference books often reflect modernist likes—plain surfaces and geometric forms—and dislikes—anything thought to be mere surface decoration—Jervis set out to have a fresh look at out-of-favor talent wherever he found it. In fact he seeks to broaden the term designer to include artists such as Raphael, Rubens, and Simon Vouet, who all worked on tapestries. Though he does not cover the American scene adequately, Jervis finally offers us passionate entries on major and minor nineteenth-century

European talent from Alma-Tadema to Viollet-le-Duc and does justice to some non-modernist twentieth-century figures like John Fowler and Syrie Maugham. ■ **FORGOTTEN TEXTILES** Nineteenth-century tapestries, rugs, portières, and needlework were as important to the appearance of nineteenth-century interiors as verdure, commedia dell'arte, chinoiserie, and Boucher-designed tapestries and



Needlework rug, 18 by 18, Juan Portela, New York.

upholstery made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were to those earlier settings. Today we know exactly what an eighteenth-century Aubusson looks like and how it ought to be used. But nineteenth-century textiles done either at factories like Aubusson, Beauvais, and Gobelins or by a wide range of amateurs remain as exotic and little understood as a home computer to a nonagenarian. Because of the richness these textiles add to a room, certain dealers are fast figuring out how they were initially used and how they fit with nineteenth-century furniture being bought today. A good example from Juan Portela, above, is a crewel rug in a nonnarrative design that was made in India for the English market, probably put on the floor a few months a year, then rolled up and stored as the seasons changed. It has a black background with the design in a range of pale colors from beige to mustard, and it looks especially well on top of a wall-to-wall sisal carpet. Smaller needlework rugs look as well on the wall as they do on the floor. Portela cautions against using too many small rugs in one room and warns that even though nineteenth-century rooms were known for their eclecticism, all textiles should be tied into a scheme if only by color. □

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CONVERSATIONS ACROSS TIME

By Alexander Cockburn



An Australian landscape by Larry Babis from Sally Eaucloire's *New Color/New Work*

AN OPEN LAND: PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MIDWEST, 1852-1982
Text by Rhondal McKinney, essay by Stephen F. Christy
Aperture, 80 pp., \$19.50

NEW COLOR/NEW WORK
by Sally Eaucloire
Abbeville Press, 286 pp., \$39.95

JULIA MARGARET CAMERON: 1815-1879
by Mike Weaver
New York Graphic Society Book
160 pp., \$19.95

THE GOLDEN AGE OF BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHY: 1839-1900
edited and introduced by Mark Haworth
Booth Aperture, 189 pp., \$40

THE VICTORIAN ART WORLD IN PHOTOGRAPHS
by Jeremy Maas
Universe Books, 224 pp., \$35

DIANE ARBUS: MAGAZINE WORK
Photographs and text by Diane Arbus
Essay by Thomas W. Southall
Aperture, 176 pp., \$35

HORST
by Valentine Lawford
Alfred A. Knopf, 384 pp., \$55

CAMERAWORKS
by David Hockney
Alfred A. Knopf, 288 pp., \$50

CINDY SHERMAN
by Cindy Sherman; Peter Schjeldahl
Pantheon, 197 pp., \$16.95

There's a moving passage in one of T.S. Eliot's essays where he writes of the way works of art speak to each other across time and of the way each new work qualifies its predecessors. Because photography is still so young a form the echoes of such "conversations" across time are often startling in their strengths. On the table before me are photographs of two abbeys, each nourishing the other. One, taken by Roger Fenton in 1854, is of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire; the other, taken

by David Hockney in 1982, is of Bolton Abbey, also in Yorkshire. Fenton's composition is confident and tranquil. Through the window of the camera's lens the observer's eye is led boldly down the length of the church to the second "window" of the open southern end of the ruin, which gives onto the receding perspective of the countryside beyond. In the left middle ground Fenton posed a seated woman, as a grace note to the picture.

Hockney's picture is not, to be precise, a photograph at all, but many photographs assembled as a photo-collage. The eye is not so much led through the composition but let loose upon it, drifting from the abbey's ruins at the top of the picture, past the tombstones, past his mother's wistful face, past the montage of her blue-green plastic raincoat to her black old-person's shoes which address, across a patch of closely



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studied grass, the brogue shoe-tips of her son. Both photographs are elegiac but one imagines Fenton manhandling his heavy camera and tripod into position and thinks of time's assured Victorian tread. One can virtually hear the busy click of Hockney's 35-millimeter Pentax or Nikon and time becomes an anxious, nervy affair in which reality seems only to be ratified by the pictures one takes of it. One looks at the Fenton and sees how in the end it will demand the response of the Hockney, but how also the anxiety of the Hockney is allayed by Fenton's repose.

Of all the "conversations" between photographs in the books before me, that between our own times and the Pre-Raphaelite era seem the strongest. To be sure, other decades touch fingers, too. Clementina Lady Hawarden's "photographic study" of two women evokes (though the two share little else) the similarly formal posing of Horst's models. Horst's picture of Princess Elizabeth Chavchavadze, looking absurd on a vast sofa designed

by Richard Wagner, anticipates the grotesqueries of Diane Arbus; Cindy Sherman's theatrical concerns recall the Victorians; the entire history of photographic minimalism is evoked in *An Open Land: Photographs of the Midwest, 1852-1982*. But the voices that ring out most clearly are those first photographers who so influenced the Pre-Raphaelites, whose mentor, Ruskin, could as well be speaking to the new photographic colorists of today (the other clear voices) as he was when he commanded young artists "to go to Nature in all singleness of heart and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning. . . . Then when their memories are stored and their imaginations fed, and their hands firm, let them take up the scarlet and gold, give reins to their fancy and show in what their heads are made of."

The photographers assembled in Sally Eauciaire's *New Color/New Work*—William Eggleston, Joel Meyerowitz, Joel Sternfeld, Larry Ba-

bis, Mitch Epstein, Len Jenschel, and the others—invoke not Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but Robert Frank, Cartier-Bresson, Walker Evans, Atget, Sander and, beyond these great documentarists within the humanist's tradition, the photographers of the American frontier such as William Henry Jackson and Timothy O'Sullivan. Even so, the chromatic, formal, theatrical, and moral concerns seem to point to the Pre-Raphaelites and their photographer contemporaries such as Julia Cameron. And if the early frontier photographers really "invented" the look of the American West, Evans the look of a monochromatic Depression, Frank the American road in the fifties, then these colorists are still in the midst of an invention of America today as exciting as any from these great predecessors. Thus far they have remade the landscape, and now they must fully populate it. The signs are that they have transcended the "Americana" phase and will not collapse into an addiction to the eccentric and the perverse which gave Arbus her reputation, but which today lend her work a dated and vulgar timbre.

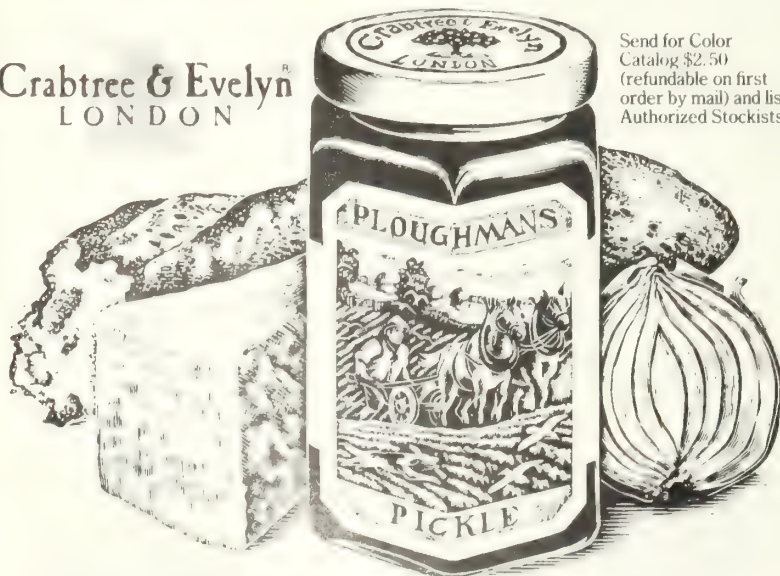
The Victorian photographic world is finely dealt with in Mike Weaver's intelligent *Julia Margaret Cameron and in The Golden Age of British Photography: 1839-1900* (not only a book but a superb exhibition starting its travels around the U.S. in Philadelphia this month). *The Victorian Art World in Photographs* by Jeremy Maas is a delightful complement with many entertaining anecdotes such as of the fecund William Powell Frith fathering twelve children by his wife Isabel and seven by his mistress Mary Alford. Alford lived conveniently near Paddington Station, which Frith spent two years painting. Mrs. Frith became suspicious when she observed her husband posting a letter in London telling her what a nice time he was having in Brighton.

If anyone invented the look of a certain period and place it was Horst in Paris in the thirties. Valentine Lawford's memoir of his old friend's life and work is not only a resplendent anthology of the photographic *oeuvre* but also a sensitive and entertaining tale. There is a Balzacian lilt to the evocation of the suffocating propriety of Horst Bohrmann's provincial origins in Thuringia, the desolation of work in

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Le Corbusier's atelier in Paris and gradual triumph as fashion photographer under the patronage of George Hoyningen-Huene and the Condé Nast organization. There are some marvelous flashes, often in Horst's captions to the photographs: Louise de Vilmorin meeting Horst in a Paris restaurant and dumping her poems, which she wanted him to illustrate, on the table in a child's coffin; Horst visiting Chanel and absent-mindedly rolling some modeling clay between finger and thumb and two weeks later receiving from Chanel a silver cigarette lighter molded from that same putty doodle; the Duchess of Windsor being photographed in New York in 1940 with just two pictures on the mantelpiece, of Queen Mary and of the Duke and Duchess in the company of Hitler. Horst's professionally alert eye perceives the tedium of Dietrich's face without von Sternberg lighting, and notes, alongside another memorable photograph, how Dietrich is using her mirror compact to spy on Jean Gabin, who is zealously lighting the cigarette of a female dinner companion.

If these books are "conversations" across time they are also emotional dialogues: Lawford with Horst, Steichen with Dorothy Norman (which could have been called "Pictures of Someone in Love"), and finally Hockney and his friend Gregory Evans. In his introduction to *Cameraworks* (an essay which appeared in *The New Yorker* earlier this year), Lawrence Weschler gives a good account of Hockney's Polaroid collages and of the later, more supple photo-collages and he competently outlines Hockney's formal and technical concerns. But Weschler's exposition leaves one unprepared for the strong emotional content of the collages, in which the fractured sensuous world is constantly defined in terms of the spatial relationship of the artist to intimates such as Gregory or the artist's mother. Hockney's famous feet constantly intrude as registration of the fact that the artist is not just looking but partaking and, with the end paper of two pairs of shoe tips facing each other across the white spread—shoe tips which we know from other pictures belong to Hockney and Gregory—we can recognize that *Cameraworks* is a technical reverie but also a sentimental education. □



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By Anthony Huxley



Flower, leaf, budded twig, and fruit—cross section (upper left) and whole (upper right) of the tulip tree, *Liriodendron Tulipifera*

There must, I think, be few people who do not derive pleasure from trees in principle. To many, indeed, there is something almost sacred about trees. This veneration probably goes back to very ancient times when most of the land was forest-covered; to short-lived primitive man trees must have seemed immortal, and almost every culture worshiped trees, tree-inhabiting deities, or at altars made in sacred groves.

The first gardens worthy of that name, when they arose perhaps five or six thousand years ago, seem to have fulfilled four basic conditions—encl

sure, deliberately grown vegetables and fruits, water to irrigate these, and a shade-giving tree—"every man under his vine and under his fig tree," as we read in the Bible. In the earliest gardens of which we have records—in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Homer's Greece, and also in China—trees are a vital feature, and they are there for pleasure, not for use. The word paradise, indeed, is derived from the Persian *pardes*, meaning a park planted with trees.

One might say that shade-casting is more a *value* than a pleasure—in the

Near East it was almost a necessity! In gardens some trees are indeed grown first for certain values, notably screening. But when one has room for only one tree, or a few, the possible pleasures rather than values must be carefully considered. A tree should have more assets than a single burst of flower—had I room for a single tree I do not think, for instance, it would be a deciduous magnolia, breathtaking and glorious as a big specimen can be when in flower.

The owner of the small garden must firstly choose trees which will not in

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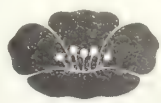


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GARDEN PLEASURES

time grow too huge, overshadowing the house, curtailing other kinds of gardening, and drying out the soil as roots spread—not to mention the dangers some tree roots pose to drains and house foundations. Nor should trees bush out too much in limited space: if too closely planted they will quite soon crowd and spoil each other.

Fortunately there are many fastigate or narrow-erect trees to be found. These have mostly arisen as chance mutations, or “sports,” as the gardener calls them, and include forms of maple, tulip tree, hornbeam, beech, oak, poplar, false acacia; among flowering and fruiting trees there are fastigate cherries, crab apples, hawthorns, and mountain ashes. The name *Fastigiata* or *Columnaris* often indicates this habit in catalogues. Other trees usually grow fairly narrow naturally, like the maidenhair-tree (ginkgo), and many eucalyptus have quite upright tops of airy glaucous foliage which produce relatively little shade.

A number of conifers are narrow-upright, like the barely hardy Italian cypress so beloved of Mediterranean gardeners. There are tougher alternatives to this, like the well-named juniper Skyrocket and, where space allows, the dark-foliaged incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*)—I recall a splendid tight group of these thrusting up like green flames among more orthodox trees at the Westonbirt Arboretum.

Most conifers, of course, are evergreen, and a proportion of evergreens helps to “furnish” a garden in winter. Too many can be oppressive, and one special pleasure of deciduous trees is to watch their bare outlines gradually soften as leaf buds burgeon in spring; how marvelous, for instance, to watch a chestnut leaf unfurling from its sticky casing—there’s prepackaging for you! Trees chosen for fall color (which seems to be so much more splendid in parts of North America than in Britain) give another bonus—a bittersweet one perhaps, presaging winter, but a spectacle I would not be without, with its temporary carpeting of the ground with gold and fire.

Winter outline can be a pleasure in itself. My favorite is the “dragon-claw willow” (*Salix Matsudana* “Tortuosa”), every branch and twig being spiraled. The native British hornbeam (*Carpinus Betulus*) has an elegant flamelike form,

which extends to a splendid symmetrical oval in the many-branched zelkovas. Pendulous trees like the classic weeping willow (really too large and root-invasive for town plots), or on smaller scale Young’s weeping birch (*Betula pendula* “Youngii”), the weeping purple beech (*Fagus sylvatica* “Purpurea Pendula”), and the curious grafted Camperdown elm are as pleasing in winter as summer, especially when coated in hoarfrost. Another very pleasing pendulous tree is the weeping pear (*Pyrus salicifolia* “Pendula”), with its gray willowlike leaves.

Weepers usually have branches down to the ground—nice for children’s secret domains if not for other plants. But in tight-planted plots like my own most of the trees are chosen for clear trunks—many are bought as standards already “run up” for this, or have their lower branches trimmed away as the trunks extend. This allows planting at ground level close around the tree and reduces the amount of shade cast—for the first few years at any rate!

This brings me to the trunks of trees, a most important pleasure at close quarters. I have mentioned eucalyptus—mostly their fast-rising trunks are gray or white, or have handsome peeling patches as in *E. niphophila*. White trunks stand out in enclosed yards, and birches are high on the list. The common birch, *Betula pendula*, is not to be despised (I knew a gardener who



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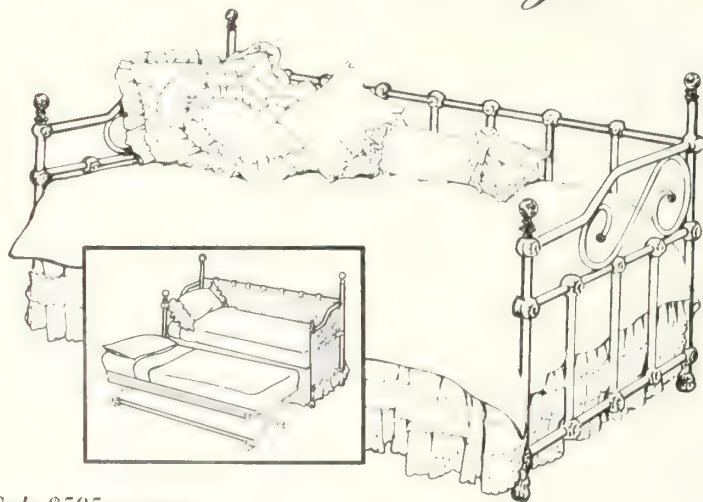
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GARDEN PLEASURES

scrubbed his birches with brush and soap to enhance their whiteness) and is particularly pretty grown as a miniature grove. The American paper birch, *B. papyrifera*, with its flaky bark is good, and the same effect comes from *B. Jacquemontii*, which forms groves in the Kashmir Himalayas. Forms of *B. Ermanii* are really pure white, while in *B. septentrionalis* the stems are in subtle orange shades. These are airy-leaved trees but a warning—their roots run radially just below soil level.

Cherries often have shiny trunks, the best of all being the Tibetan *Prunus serulata*, with mahogany-colored bark gleaming as if polished. Another group of exciting trunks is found among the maples. *Acer griseum* has cinnamon-colored bark which peels back in large flakes in a delightful manner. The snakebarks like *A. Davidii*, *A. Hersii*, and *A. Pensylvanicum* are aptly named for their dashing green-and-white-striped trunks and boughs.

Leaf color and leaf shape are further pleasures, the first perhaps more important. Startling associations can be made, like one in my own garden with bright gold *Robinia Frisia* next to an existing purple plum (*Prunus Pissardii*)—maybe a fraction obvious but certainly telling. Gold, yellow- or cream-variegated, red and purple, blue and gray and silver leaves are all available; among the last I must not forget my favorite whitebeam, *Sorbus Aria*—alas too large for my own garden—and its huge-leaved relation *S. mitchellii*.

As I suggested, to me flowers are a bonus on a tree which should provide pleasure most year round. Cherries, crab apples, thorns, magnolias, dogwoods are among the obvious contenders; chestnuts large and also small, like the American buckeyes; mauve-flowered paulownia and catalpa, aptly named tulip tree, evergreen eucryphia so splendid in late summer, and the handkerchief tree, davidia—what an amazing sight is a tree in flower, even if one has had to wait fifteen years for it. Fruits and seed pods follow on many of these to be appreciated in their turn.

A single tree in a small yard can combine many of these pleasures. But be warned—trees can become mania. In my 140-foot-long "suburban strip" I already have 35 trees. . . . The pleasure I really dream of is to possess grassy acres in which to continue planting. □

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Elizabeth Arden

BOURGEOIS VISIONARIES

Surrealists' houses embody a conventional sense of place

By George Melly

"Human psychism in its most universal aspect has found in the gothic castle and its accessories a point of fixation so precise that it becomes essential to discover what would be the equivalent for our own period. (Everything leads us to believe that there is no question of it being a factory.)" André Breton

Breton's observation, couched as usual in that exact and solemn tone, might suggest that the Surrealists, whenever it were practical, would have chosen to live in castles. In general, however, they were more modestly housed. Most of them, including Breton himself when in Paris, made do with studios or apartments, and even those painters who were later to achieve prosperity and retire to the country appear to have favored modern houses, or at any rate nothing so grandiose as a château.

Financial considerations apart, this yearning for the castle and the rejection of it as a suitable place to live is indicative of a dichotomy in the Surrealist soul; an aristocratic imagination at odds with the belief in the necessity for



continuous revolution and, for many years, "the triumph of the proletariat."

Above all there was the constant but by no means successful struggle to avoid the takeover of the visual aspects of Surrealism by fashionable society, whose decorators and couturiers recognized it as an easy and attractive method of amusing their bored and novelty-obsessed clients.

The solution for the hard-core Surrealists themselves, was, in the main, to cultivate a certain austerity in their daily lives. Their own interiors presented an almost academic banality relieved only by the pictures they hung on their walls and the objects they displayed on the carefully arranged shelves; bour-

geois order and good sense, even personal modesty dictated their surroundings. Imaginative extravagance surfaced only in their collections.

The classic Surrealist interior looks more like an alchemist's cell than anything else. Its effect was of the poetic incongruity of a sixteenth-century "cabinet of curiosities"; fantasy corrected by a severe geometry.

Breton occupied successively two studios at 42 rue Fontaine, Montmartre, and if the extraordinary artifacts they contained were replaced by, say, Egyptian or Greek antiquities, they could have been the apartments of an archaeologist of severe tastes. Their furniture was solid and practical, their color scheme restrained to the point of drabness. Writing of the earlier and larger studio, André Thirion described it as "Like one big museum." Everything "had its place." This curatorlike approach might appear at odds with the Surrealist aim of breaking down the barriers between dream and reality, but there were two prejudices that may help to explain this "normality": the Surrealist mistrust of aesthetics and their vigorous rejection of bohemianism. Dali alone, as we shall see, was willing and eager to embrace both extravagance and luxury, to allow his obsessions and later on their exhibitionist exploitation to invade his living space. The rest of them lived like doctors or academics.

The most extreme example of this rule, extreme even to the point of caricature, was the painter René Magritte. According to our mutual friend, the late Belgian poet and collagist E.L.T. Mesens, Magritte's penurious youth was spent in apartments of necessary austerity, but by the time I came to know him, comparative prosperity allowed him to buy a somewhat characterless, detached house at 97 rue des Mimosas in a respectable suburb of



Top In Magritte's bedroom, his studio, above Magritte in his living room, 1965



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COMMENTARY

Brussels, a villa guarded by a succession of small identical dogs all of which, irrespective of sex, were called "Lulu."

The yapping of "Lulu" and the chime of a two-toned bell does something to prepare one for an interior of inspired banality, less indeed than that of a doctor or academic than of a well-to-do car salesman. Georgette Magritte is extremely house-proud. Everything is polished and shining, as much today as it was during her husband's lifetime. Of Magritte's own iconography there is, apart from a few of his pictures and a bottle painted to resemble a nude, only his bowler hat and, hanging on the stairs, a tuba. For the rest there is a baby grand piano in the living room, rugs of rather garish Oriental design, silk curtains, two gilt cherubs, while on every flat surface there are collections of china birds on china twigs, and "novelty" clocks play little tunes more or less on the hour, so that for five minutes or so the house whirs and chirps like a tiny fun-fair. Magritte had no studio. He painted at an easel in a small annex to the bedroom, painted furthermore with such care that there was no need for anything under the easel to protect the carpet, while he himself worked in a dark suit and sober tie, looking like a slightly old-fashioned and punctilious bank teller.

When I questioned Mesens as to the



Magritte worked on an uncovered Oriental carpet in his studio.

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spirit behind this suburban "castle," he told me that Magritte, on principle, never interfered with his wife's taste. Nevertheless, I got the impression that this most sardonic of the Surrealists enjoyed the effect on those earnest admirers who visited him during his later years. He was a great deadpan comedian, intransigent in his "normality" most of the time which, as a result, made his very frequent and carefully judged acts of outrage appear the more forceful. Similarly the tuba on the stairs and the bottle painted to look like a nude woman and placed among the clocks and china birds carry an exaggerated charge.

In his work too, Magritte constantly relied on the panic of the ordinary. His rooms are mostly petit-bourgeois, his objects mass-produced. Two of his carpets from the rue de Mimosas are to be seen on the floor in *Personal Values*, a painting of a bedroom in which huge toilet articles have taken over. His piano, enclosed by a wedding ring, is the subject of *The Fortunate Hand*. His

wife, Georgette, is the model for almost all of his unnerving sexual speculations. Even "Lulu" in the guise of *The Civilizer* makes a solitary appearance. Yet Magritte also speculated occasionally on the Gothic castle. In *The Castle of the Pyrenees*, it is carved from the rock on which it stands, a huge boulder floating over the sea. In *Almayer's Folly*, a medieval tower is shown against a red-gold back-cloth. It has been literally "pulled up by the roots."

Magritte's cheerful and possibly careful lack of given taste was rare. Most of those associated with the movement were closer to Breton's serious negation of décor. Mesens himself lived for most of his life in a series of London apartments neutral in color certainly, but with understated "good" furniture, mostly English Regency. Here too the magnificent collection of paintings, the marvelous objects both primitive and folkloric, established that familiar ambience in which most of the Surrealists felt, in the most literal

sense, "at home."

On the other hand, when it came to public manifestations the group resorted to very elaborate means to create the kind of Surrealist "reality" one might have expected to find in their own apartments. The great exhibitions, most often staged under the direction of Marcel Duchamp, were aimed to sabotage the customary reverent approach to the display of artworks. The international exhibition held in Paris in 1938 was perhaps the most sensational and certainly created the maximum frisson. Apart from the pictures and objects there were 1,200 sacks of coal hanging from the ceiling, the floor was uneven and scattered with leaves and twigs. There was a lighted brazier, four luxurious if disheveled beds, one in each corner, and a pool surrounded by pampas grass. Several of the paintings were hung on static "revolving doors." At the opening the visitors were handed torches to examine the pictures and the lighting was kept very low, but the torches ran out, the artists complained, and for the rest of the run the illumination was turned up.

Outside in the lobby was an old taxi overgrown with ivy. Inside a steady artificial downpour of rain fell on the occupants, a goggled chauffeur, his head encased in a shark's jaws while his customer, an erotic shop-window dummy slumped in the back, provided a promenade for a number of large Burgundian snails. This was the work of Salvador Dali.

The opening was a success but largely with the very public the Surrealists, with the exception of Dali, most despised: the fashionable, the snobbish, *le tout Paris*. The problem arose because of the shift on emphasis in the movement from the poets to the painters. Initially, during the "heroic" era of the twenties, the visual arts had acted as the handmaiden of the movement. By the thirties this was no longer the case. Paintings and sculpture, unlike poetry and polemics, have a commercial value, and the Surrealist artists, despite Breton's slightly confused misgivings, earned their living from their work. It must be pointed out that both Breton and Éluard supplemented their meager earnings as writers by picture dealing.

There was also the problem of financing certain expensive manifesta-

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tions such as the publication of limited editions and films, and the move from the austerity of the early magazines with their few and smudgy illustrations toward a more luxurious format. To achieve funding compromise was a necessity. The "proletariat" were unlikely to cough up the money for such extravagant ventures.

Edward James, who paid for several numbers of *Minotaure*, the glossy, splendidly produced magazine which from 1933 on had become the Surrealists' house journal, told me that whereas the painters, of whom he was a generous patron, treated him as a friend, Breton and Eluard made it clear that for them he was no more than a rich dilettante to be made use of.

Dali joined the group in 1929 at the moment when the ideological crisis with the communists was just beginning to brew. He brought with him an imagination working at full throttle and an immense facility, but no particular commitment to any ideology beyond his own obsession. By the time



Man Ray's Paris studio/apartment, c. 1925

the break with the communists had become absolute and several of the distinguished founders of the movement had been expelled or resigned for political differences, Dali had emerged, for the public at any rate, as *the Surrealist*. For Breton it was evident that Dali's gifts, his controlled paranoia, his inspired mania, had rescued Surrealism at a moment when it

appeared to be on the edge of ideological bankruptcy. On the debit side his open social *arrivisme*, which with typically hysterical ingenuity he justified as "surrealist," offered a serious threat to the purity of the movement.

Dali alone lived in an interior similar to that of the Surrealist exhibitions. He kept his cutlery, for example, in drawers concealed in the body of an erect stuffed polar bear, a gift from Edward James that he dyed pink. Nor did he confine himself to creating his own décor. He painted a picture of an apartment that simultaneously created the illusion of Mae West's face, and although this was never realized, her lips in the form of a pink satin sofa were manufactured in a small edition and found their way into several fashionable drawing rooms.

His house in Port Lligat is his vulgar monument; a stage set in which carefully placed fetishes provide easy pickings for lazy journalists. A friend of mine told me that he once went there for lunch. The main course was lobster with chocolate sauce. The table on the terrace was elaborately set with silver candelabra. The candles were ceremoniously lit, but the flames, as it was broad daylight, were invisible. "Dali," says Edward James, "is like a comedian who ran out of jokes thirty years ago."

The war saved Surrealism from *snobbismes*. Many of the leading Surrealists spent the war years in America, where those painters who practiced automatism were to have a considerable effect on the future Abstract Expressionists. Robert Motherwell told me that Breton used to lead him and other young New York painters around the junk shops on the East Side demanding that they identify which objects were or were not Surrealist. For a time there was considerable excitement around the movement; magazines were published, exhibitions held, but it didn't "take."

After the war Breton returned to Paris and relaunched Surrealist activities, but there was no renewed danger of appropriation by the *beau monde*. Most of the geniuses of the movement had or were soon to part company to be replaced by noisy young yes-men of little talent. Surrealism, for the smart and the intellectuals, had become a "bore." The pictures were another matter. The work of the great artists



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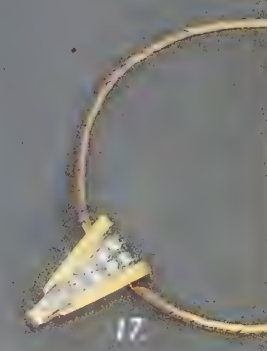
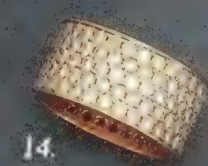
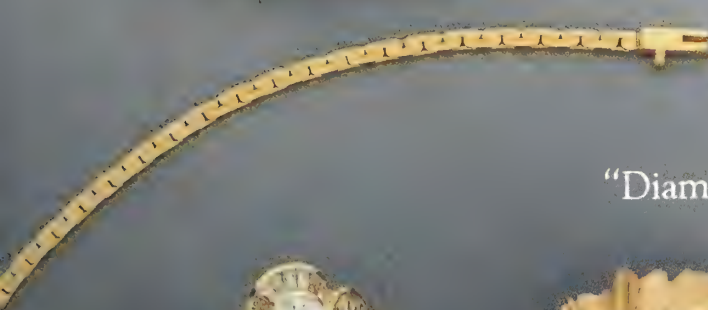
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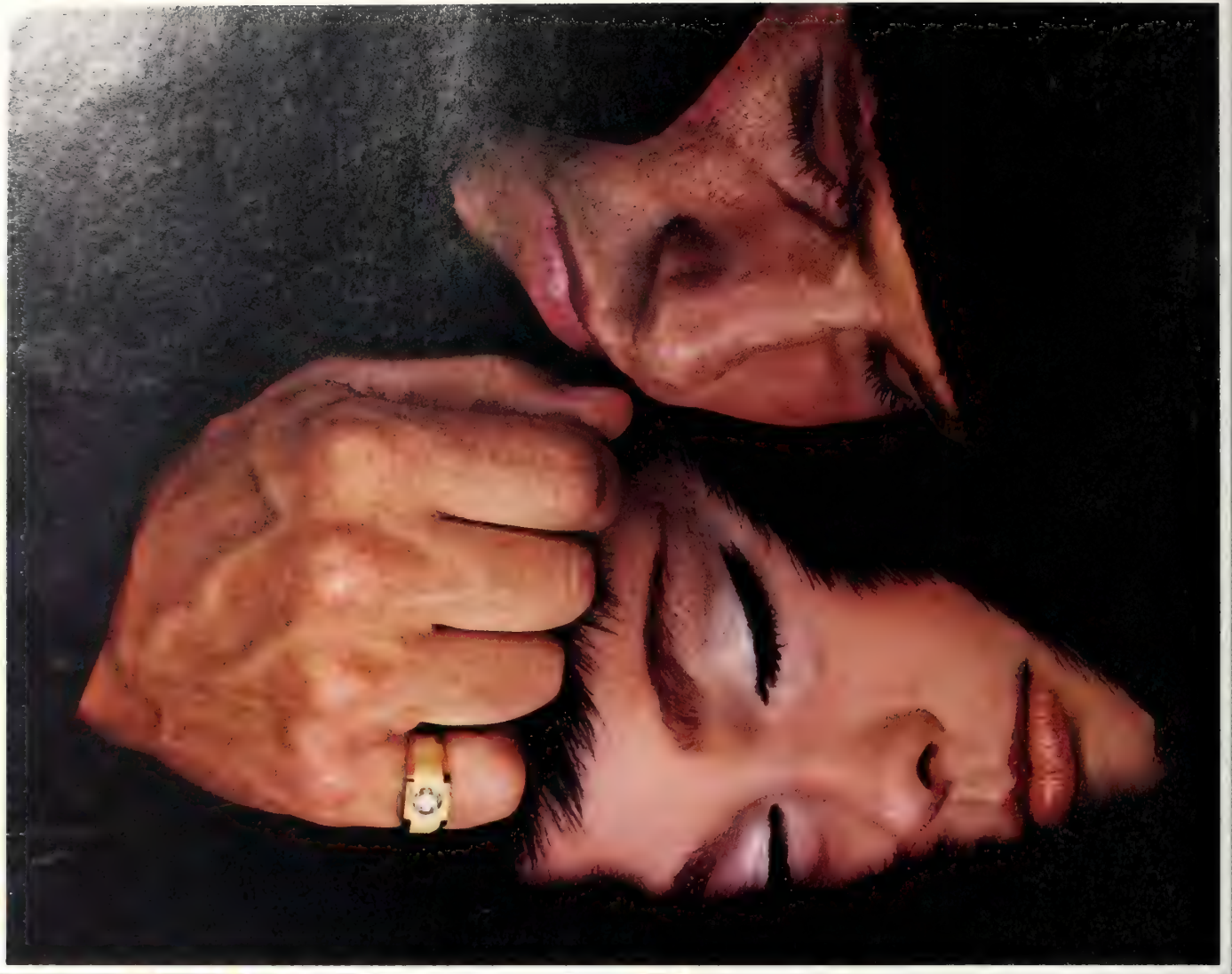
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COMMENTARY

lowly reemerged as investments or entered the museums. The revolutionary spirit that had inspired them was largely forgotten or deliberately ignored.

Official Surrealism produced no architecture and mistrusted contemporary décor as frivolous, but this was not to say that it restricted its enthusiasm to "the Gothic castle and its accessories." In Paris, during its early days, the young poets selected "Privileged Places" where they recognized the Surrealist spirit. There was the Passage de l'Opéra, the principal subject of Aragon's marvelous book *The Paris Peasant*, and soon to be pulled down. Here the Dadaists had met. Here poetry talked. Breton himself named several spots in his anti-novel *Nadja*, perhaps the purest exposition of the Surrealist life ever written. There is, to quote from the caption under one of the mysterious photographs that illustrate the book, "...the very beautiful and very useless Porte St. Denis." Max Ernst, in his collage novel *Une Semaine de Bonté*, celebrated certain corners: "La Cour de Dragon," "Le Lion de Belport," while the Buttes-Chaumont park in Montmartre with its Suicides' Bridge held a great fascination for them all.

It was Dalí who, almost alone, recognized the then-despised Art Nouveau as "edible architecture" and began the reinstatement of perhaps its greatest practitioner, Antonio Gaudí. He also, but here with markedly less enthusiasm from the rest of the group, became obsessed with the palaces and grottos of Mad King Ludwig of Bavaria...

In a jungle in Mexico, Edward James, now in his late seventies, is building an extraordinary collection of totally original concrete follies. To enable the work to continue he is forced, from time to time, to sell some of the great Dalís or other Surrealists he bought during the thirties. With no architectural training and only local labor, James's towers and columns, spanned by bridges, linked by paths, rise slowly above the voracious vegetation. The "rich dilettante" has committed himself, with a rigor of which Breton would surely be proud, to a gratuitous act of touching purity. Surrealism may have joined the Gothic castle's history, but the search for "a point of fixation" continues. □



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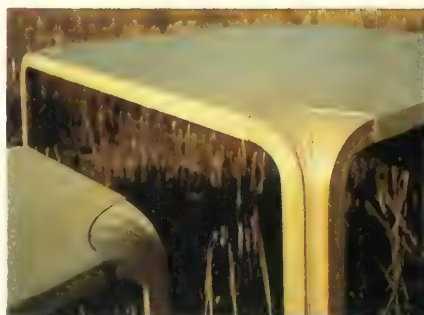
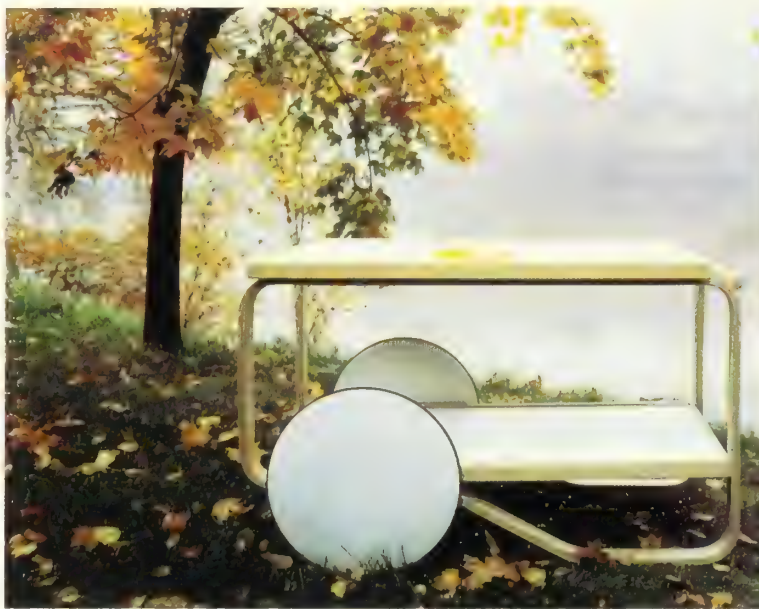
THE NATURAL

A MOMA retrospective of Alvar Aalto's furniture and glass reminds us of the sensuousness and humanity he brought to modern design

By Martin Filler

When the great Finnish architect Alvar Aalto was a visiting professor at MIT in 1947 (during the construction of his Baker House dormitory there), he followed a daily routine no doubt unique in the annals of modern architectural education. According to one of his students, now a prominent Boston architect, the master would arrive at the design studio at 9 A.M. armed with a bottle of akvavit, which he placed on a corner of his drafting table. After taking an opening shot, Aalto began to make figure studies of the nude female model present at those sessions. As the morning progressed the akvavit dwindled, and the architect, his arm fluidly capturing the model's contours, became progressively looser in his movements. By noon, the bottle was empty, the model was clothed, and he was ready to begin with architecture.

As telling as this anecdote is, all one needs to do is look at Alvar Aalto's furniture to know that it was the human form which prompted his biomorphic aesthetic. The curve was for Alvar Aalto what the right angle was for the architects of the Bauhaus. Now, at a time when much early modern design is being debunked as physically cold and spiritually sterile, the furniture and objects created by Aalto firmly contradict the notion that the masterminds of the Modern Movement were determined to make their Procrustean Bed and have us sleep in it. At his best,



Top: Aalto's teacart of 1933–35.
Above: His tables of 1954, with the fan-shaped corner motif that was one of his subtlest but most complex (and costliest) details.

Aalto produced designs that are life-affirming in the fullest sense that a man-made object can be, as logical and ageless as an egg or a well-toned body.

The passage of more than fifty years since their first manufacture finds several of Aalto's pieces—the subject of a retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art through November

27—among the most durable classics of twentieth century design, possessing a greater likelihood of still being used in the next century than most other domestic designs now in production.

Aalto's reputation since his death in 1976, at the age of 78, remains much as it had been in his lifetime: he has not faded from his profession's awareness in the mysterious way that often occurs after the close of an epochal career. Aalto remains a law unto himself, a case apart. In that respect

he most resembles that other great twentieth-century architectural titan, Frank Lloyd Wright, who had very similar beliefs in the organic nature of design and who likewise has had many followers but no true heirs.

To a large degree, Aalto's renown beyond a faithful following of architectural enthusiasts and true believers in timeless modern interior design has been limited by accidents of history as much as by impositions of geography. That the majority of Alvar Aalto's architectural works were built in his native Finland places them far from the familiar crossroads of transatlantic culture, and they are therefore known to Americans largely through photographs alone. This is much to the detriment of our understanding, for an architecture as spatially sophisticated as Aalto's prevents the printed image from doing it much justice.

Aalto's furniture, on the other hand, is of course portable, but the possibil-

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ity of its wider acceptance in the United States was interrupted by the hiatus of World War II and then largely superseded by the availability of the new American designs of Charles and Ray Eames for Herman Miller once the war was over. And while wood remained Aalto's primary material, the Eameses expanded his aesthetic with their experiments in molded fiberglass, plastic, and metal.

Aalto's pioneering role seems all the more important when one considers that significant innovation in furniture design of the sort he was responsible for has seldom been accompanied by promise of such acceptance. If any revolutionary twentieth-century furniture could be described as "user-friendly" then this is it: comfortable, practical, adaptable, and affordable, it celebrates the beauty of natural materials and yet spares its owners the tyranny of maintenance. Although traditionalists have long scoffed at the déclassé aura that clings to modern Scandinavian furniture, imaginative designers have been aware for some time of how well it mixes with period pieces.

A fine case in point is the London home of the architect James Stirling, whose own buildings show the pronounced, if greatly distilled, influence of Aalto. Stirling's turn-of-the-century house is filled with a spectacular collection of museum-quality Regency furniture. Next to his superb works by Thomas Hope, George Bullock, and George Smith he has placed a pair of Aalto's famous molded plywood Paimio armchairs of 1931. Their gracefully curving, volute-like continuous seat backs are the perfect foil for the sweeping lines of the early-nineteenth-century masterpieces Stirling keeps beside them. Painted in the original terra cotta—rather than the lackluster black of the ones still made today—the Paimio chairs take on an almost historical feeling, and serve to recall that Aalto himself was influenced most of all by the leading furniture designer of the Biedermeier period—contemporaneous with the Regency—the German inventor Michael Thonet.

It was Thonet's discoveries in bentwood and molded plywood that formed the basis for Aalto's furniture design techniques. But it was Aalto who fulfilled Thonet's dream of an all-plywood chair, which the father of

modern furniture design was never able to execute. At the time when Aalto's colleagues in Germany were transfixed by the design possibilities of bent metal tubing, he was exploring the still-unexhausted potential of the material that is one of the most plentiful natural resources of his homeland. Indeed, the Finnish woodworking tradition had been given new life during Aalto's youth in the heyday of the arts and crafts movement.

Throughout his life, Aalto retained his belief in the architect as the most qualified designer of the man-made environment. But his conception of total design was rather different from that of the generation that preceded him. Unlike Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, almost all of whose furniture and object designs were made for specific functions in specific interiors, Aalto tended to design pieces that were meant to be used interchangeably in an unlimited number of potential settings. For example, the Paimio chair, often assumed to have been made expressly for the architect's Paimio Sanatorium, was actually devised independently, even



The molded-plywood Paimio chair of 1931

though it was named for that contemporary project. Aalto's furniture thus had the virtually universal applicability of that of the International Style, but his preference for wood and fiber rather than the steel and glass of Bauhaus-influenced schemes gave his furniture a greater humanity than the elegant but cool creations of a Mies or Le Corbusier.

Starting in 1928 with his first mass-produced design for a plywood stacking chair (earlier Aalto pieces were unique, Classically influenced examples that he made for himself, his family, and friends) Aalto involved himself intimately with the manufacturing pro-

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cess, working closely on the development of new machinery that would allow plywood to be molded and bent into bolder and more structurally sound shapes. In 1935, with his first wife, Aino, and Maire Gullichsen, the heiress to a lumber and wood-pulp fortune, Aalto founded Artek, the furniture company that still makes his designs (which are distributed in this country through ICF). From then until the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Aalto produced his best designs, including the famous teacart introduced in 1935 and the stunningly dramatic chaise longue that took the bending of plywood as far as it could go both physically and compositionally.

From that period also dates Aalto's first glassware designs, including the famous free-form vase he made in 1937 for the Savoy Restaurant in Helsinki. Though of limited usefulness—it is very hard to make a few flowers look like much in it—the Savoy vase nonetheless possesses a sculptural strength that allows it to hold its own even with-

out flowers, while it never distracts from the blossoms when it is fully filled. It is among the 35 pieces of glass in the MOMA show, accompanied by an equal number of pieces of furniture and more than fifty drawings that pertain to those designs.

After World War II, Aalto's activity as a furniture designer was limited to two brief spurts, one in 1947, and the other from 1954 to 1956. From the first dates Aalto's experiments with the laminated-wood jointing technique that became a veritable obsession for him. Those branchlike bundles of plywood strips provided greater flexibility and strength in the continuous arm-and-leg elements of his postwar seating. But Aalto's wider fascination with the method is apparent from the way in which he transformed those test patterns into wall reliefs that he treated with all the seriousness of fine art.

The culmination of those experiments came in the development in 1954 of the fan-shaped corner motif that Aalto perfected for stools and ta-

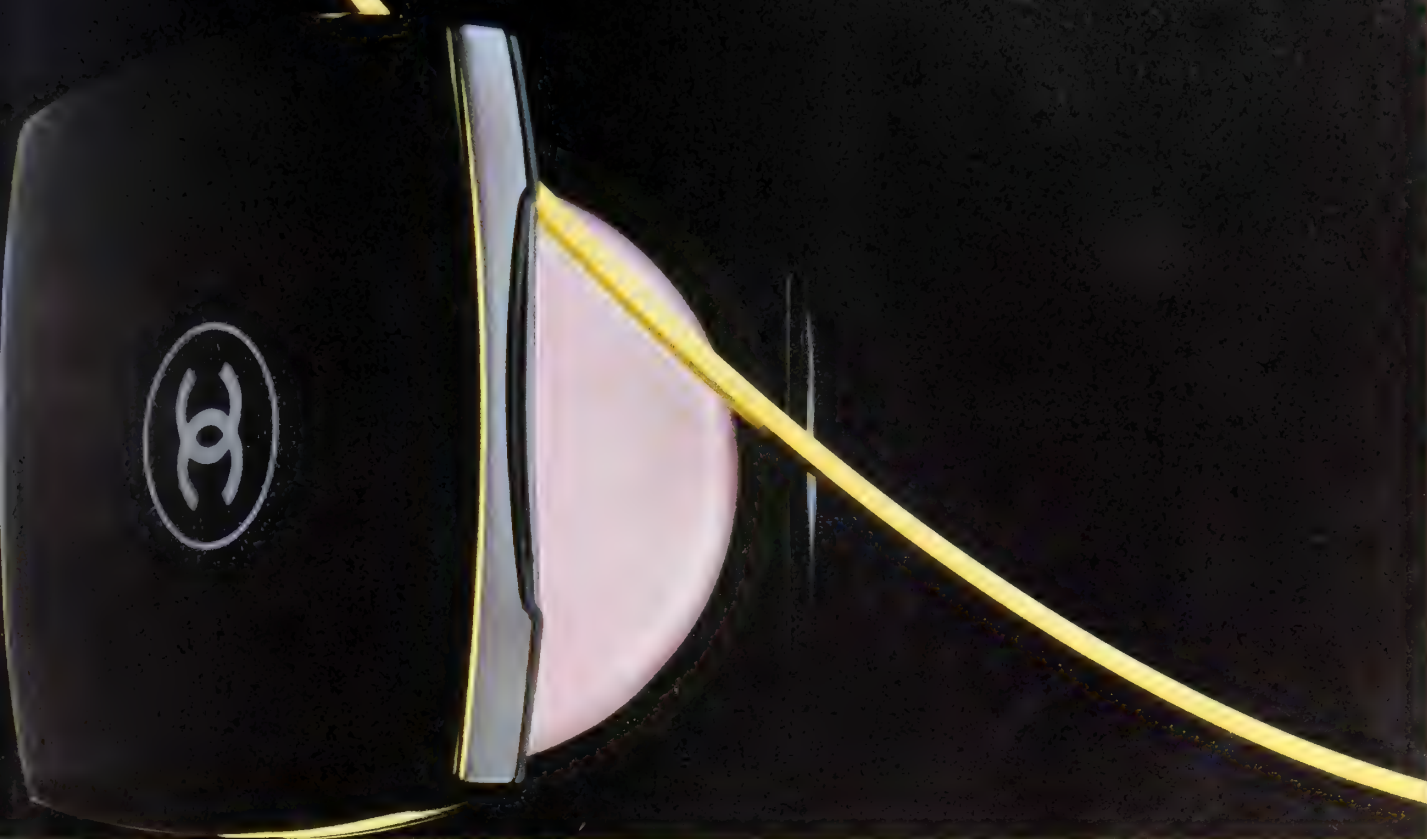
bles, which might be viewed as a summation of his attitude toward materials and form. Here Aalto makes wood do something it never does in nature, but accomplishes it in such a completely "organic" manner that we are not reminded of the contortions the wood had to be put through to attain this seemingly natural configuration. It is a triumph of technique, but one in which artifice never makes an ungainly grab for our attention, which remains firmly fixed on the familiar and comfortable qualities of the wood itself.

This one detail could stand as a metaphor for Aalto's whole approach, which eschews an obvious show of its intricacies and refinements. Its deceptive simplicity is one of its most attractive traits, and no doubt a significant factor in its enduring appeal. Alvar Aalto's surname means "wave" in Finnish, and how appropriate that seems, for his impact has been like a wave on the shore of the art of our times: strong, steady, rhythmic, but elusive, and leaving deep impressions. □

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JOURNAL

FIRST-PRIZE DRAWINGS

Old Master Drawings from the Albertina. National Gallery of Art, Washington, through Jan. 13, 1985; The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Mar. 8–May 26.

The old master drawings in Vienna's Albertina are the

most famous public collection of their kind in the world, given visibility by their isolation from all the other kinds of art on view at the Kunsthistorisches Museum nearby. Begun in 1769 by Duke Albert von Sachsen-Teschen (hence the name Albertina), it received the core of its wealth from the collection assembled by Count Giacomo Durazzo,



THE ALBERTINA COLLECTION VIENNA

an Austrian ambassador to Venice in the eighteenth century, and from the Hapsburgs' Schatzkammer. Durazzo encouraged his patrons to collect all schools and all periods, to aim for quality and range.

Thus while the German drawings from the Albertina are peerless, all major schools are well represented, as this expertly chosen selection demonstrates. The show begins with superb examples of Dürer—no fewer than ten sheets—and continues with others by Rubens, Rembrandt, Cortona, Watteau, and Greuze. It is an opportunity for intimate encounters with great art that should not be missed.

Ann Sutherland Harris



THE ALBERTINA COLLECTION VIENNA

Left: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Spring, 1565. Top: Peter Paul Rubens, Susanna Fourment, c. 1625. Below: Rembrandt van Rijn, An Elephant, 1637.



REFLECTIONS IN A SILVER EYE

If the name Karl Struss (1886–1981) doesn't ring a bell, don't feel alone. Struss's remarkable career as a still photographer in the circle of such greats as Alfred Stieglitz and Clarence White was almost completely forgotten after his migration to Hollywood



AMON CARTER MUSEUM, FORT WORTH

in 1918 to work as a cinematographer.

Happily, the situation is being remedied by Fort Worth's Amon Carter Museum, which in 1983 acquired Struss's entire photographic estate, including the richly evocative *Sails, 1930, far left, and Gloria Swanson, 1919, left.* The museum is planning a major retrospective for 1987. *Ann Priester*

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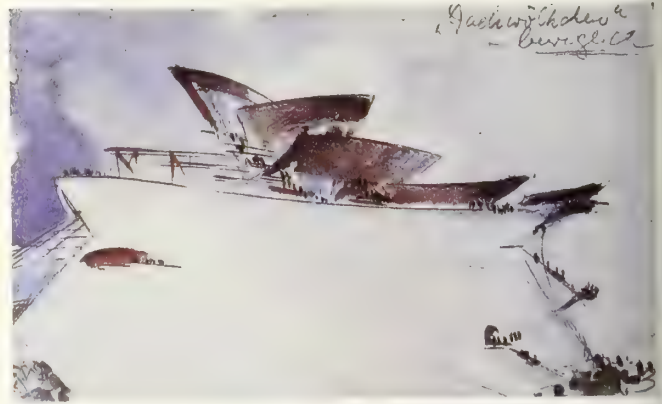
MODERN ARCHITECTURE: CLEAR VIEW, CLOUDY MESSAGE

The Adventure of Ideas: Architecture and Philosophy Since the Industrial Revolution. New National Gallery, West Berlin, through Nov. 18.

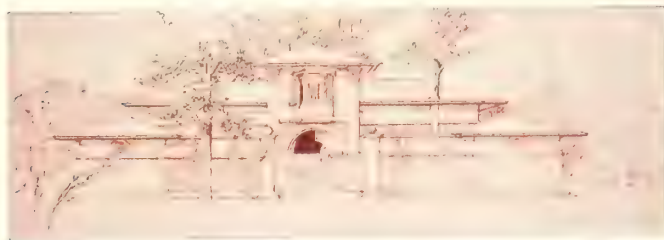
Architecture exhibitions are notorious for their inability to capture the essence of the art form within the confines of a gallery. And attempts at approximating the experience of architecture through synesthetic means—from movies to life-size mock-



Bruno Taut, project for glass "glacier" in the Alps, 1917-19.



Hans Scharoun, project for "movable roof cloudlets," 1919



Frank Lloyd Wright, Winslow stables, River Forest, Illinois, 1893



Chirico, *Intérieur métaphysique*

ups—only underscore the impossibility of substituting anything for the real thing.

Mindful of that paradox, the Italian architectural historian Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani conceived this show in terms of modern architecture as an intellectual rather than a formal development. This ambitious undertaking—which Lampugnani startlingly claims is "an overview [that] will for the first time be based on the history of ideas"—has been divided into nine rather simplistic "isms": Historicism, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Organicism, Realism, Expressionism, Traditionalism, Technologism, and Rationalism.



K.F. Schinkel, project for Orianda Palace, the Crimea, 1838

Each of these "isms" is discussed by one of the nine architectural historians and one of the nine philosophers invited by Lampugnani, including Alan Colquhoun, Kenneth Frampton, Colin Rowe, and Manfredo Tafuri. Their ideas are often original and provocative, but the overall tone of the effort is clouded by obscurantist jargon. And while it is possible to mull over the more opaque passages in the essays until enlightenment comes, it is easier to do so with the catalogue than standing in the museum, for this is one of the most daunting "book-on-the-wall" exhibitions ever mounted.

Far more rewarding (and reason enough to make a detour to visit this show) are its stunning visual riches, some five hundred architectural drawings, and a hundred paintings, photos, books, and models, by everyone from Piranesi to Portoghesi, Jefferson to Johnson, and Lutyns to Le Corbusier. Here the eye is able to penetrate where the mind cannot, providing far more understanding than the turgid texts.

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THE UNGENTLE RAIN

Acid precipitation threatens our architectural heritage no less than our lakes and forests

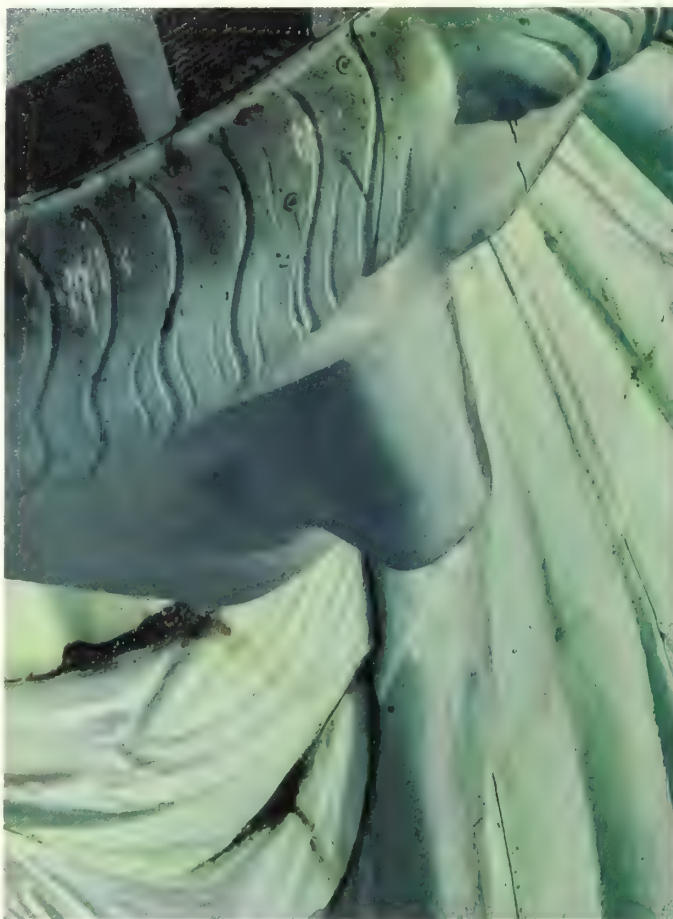
By Suzanne Winckler

"People think we just run around outside waving litmus paper."

—Keith Lewin, scientist at Brookhaven National Laboratory

One evening when I was in New York recently there was a short and inconvenient shower right at the hour of maximum transition. It drenched a lot of people caught in between places, but as rains go it was totally unmemorable. However, since I happened to be in town talking to various people about acid rain, I gave the event more than average attention. It was as if some great chemist in the sky had decided to give me a lesson. I didn't exactly *see* anything, but at least I could extrapolate. As I walked down 44th Street, getting scant coverage from my umbrella, I repeated a scenario that various scientists, engineers, art historians, and government bureaucrats in recent weeks had patiently, earnestly told me. You might call their little parable the *Woe of Gypsum*.

It goes something like this: rain falls on a marble statue. These days in many American cities rains carry a significant load of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which makes the seemingly benign liquid acidic. In addition, the statue is often already peppered with dry particles and gases of the same oxides. The moisture and the oxides go to work on the calcite in the marble to form gypsum. (Two notes: stone re-



The Statue of Liberty's wounds are caused, in part, by acid rain, which hastened the corrosion of her iron skeleton.

searchers are not in agreement about what part the nitrogen oxides play in this reaction, but they are quite sure of the role of sulfur dioxide; they are also beginning to think that the dry oxides are more nefarious than the ones dissolved in the rain, but perhaps I'm getting a little too complicated for our purposes.) The point is that the gypsum doesn't have the integrity of marble. It either washes off, whoosh,

taking with it a fine layer of the statue, or it forms a crust, usually black and warty, which in time falls off in a chunk leaving a ragged gouge. Any way you look at it, the statue is worse for wear, and the damage has accrued faster than it might under more sanguine conditions. "Normal" rain, of course, causes erosion and corrosion; the added oxides just give the rain more bite.

The issue of acid rain has bred a great deal of hyperbole, which in turn has generated enough obfuscation to darken the sun. I don't wish to cast shadows. I am not suggesting with my marble statue that the island of Manhattan is a crumbling ruin or that American cities are melting away before our eyes. They simply aren't. But certainly it is fair to look at gypsum encrustations on a statue—much as a doctor would jaundice or pallor in

a patient—and view them as a symptom of a potentially crippling ailment.

Sulfur dioxide comes mainly from the burning of coal and to a lesser extent from heating and such industrial activities as the smelting of ores. The various nitrogen oxides come largely from the combustion of fuel, in utilities and vehicles, reacting with nitrogen in the air. The Clean Air Act has set emission levels for sulfur dioxide and more recently for nitrogen oxides. Nonetheless, there are raging arguments about the future increases in these emissions. Even fairly conservative thinkers

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SOUNDING BOARD

should admit that sulfur dioxide is likely to increase (without violating the Clean Air Act) because we are burning more coal, especially in the West—as will the nitrogen oxides—because more of us will be driving.

You will notice, incidentally, that the loudest fights about sulfur dioxide occur in coal-producing and -using areas like the Ohio Valley and the East Coast, while the nitrogen oxides are the compounds of contention in places like Los Angeles, where the automobile is the economic and social lubricant without which the urban engine would grind to a halt. There are also mammoth disputes between industry (mainly power producers) and environmentalists and, more importantly, between factions in Congress about whether acid rain is a local or regional phenomenon, since accountability is likely to be a factor in financing a cure for the problem. New York, for instance, a state that is doing an admirable job trying to reduce acid rain within its own boundaries, would like to see the Ohio Valley states fork over more money to clean up air that might well be drifting New York's way.

As in all things political and regulatory, to get the solution you have to pin the blame. That is why the local versus regional question is an important one; it is also why, even though there is growing concern among politicians about acid rain, legislation is stymied at present. This spring, a Senate committee passed a bill requiring reductions in sulfur dioxide emissions over the next ten years, with polluters paying up, but floor action is not expected until late in the session, if at all. In the House, a similar bill (which dealt also with nitrogen oxides emissions) was killed in committee—by a ten-to-nine vote.

This is where the marble statue comes in. It may well offer some clues as to whether acid rain is a local problem, a regional problem, or both. Or, to say it another way, whether the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides that land on our cities come from a power plant or smelter or freeway hundreds of miles away or from a similar source on the outskirts of town. There has been a good deal of publicized research on the long-range transport of these offending oxides, one source of which are the tall stacks of coal-fired power plants. Tall stacks came into

vogue in the seventies; their purpose ironically, was environmental—to loft emissions high into the atmosphere so that they would not sully the local scene. But there is growing concern that the oxides don't all go into orbit. Some drift down instead—like invisible dry snow—close to the source of emission.



Acid rain desecrates marble by converting the calcite to gypsum.

The marble statue is also a standard against which the 77 million of us who live in cities can measure the quality of our lives. So, assuming you agree with me that this marble statue is pretty important, who is keeping an eye on it? The formal study of acid rain in the United States is now being conducted by the Interagency Task Force on Acid Precipitation. Its budget this year is \$27 million. The people under that umbrella who study such things as the formation of gypsum on marble, the durability of tombstones, and the corrosion rates of copper patina call themselves materials people. They number approximately forty and their cut of the budget is \$1.5 million. It is not enough, according to some of their ranks—"Materials have been slighted by all recent administrations," says Norbert S. Baer, professor at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University—and I would have to agree. The water and land people by comparison have a budget of about \$8.2 million. The research the materials people are



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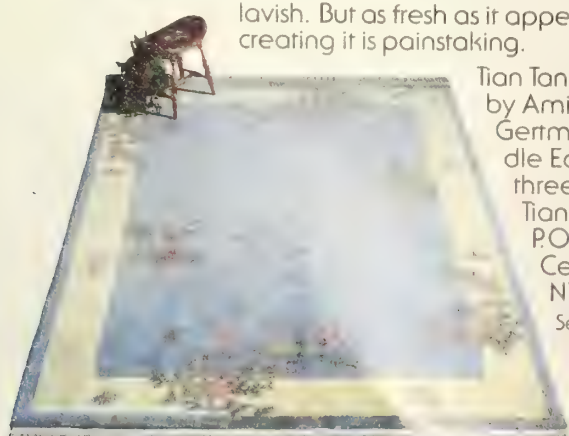
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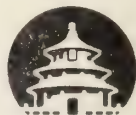
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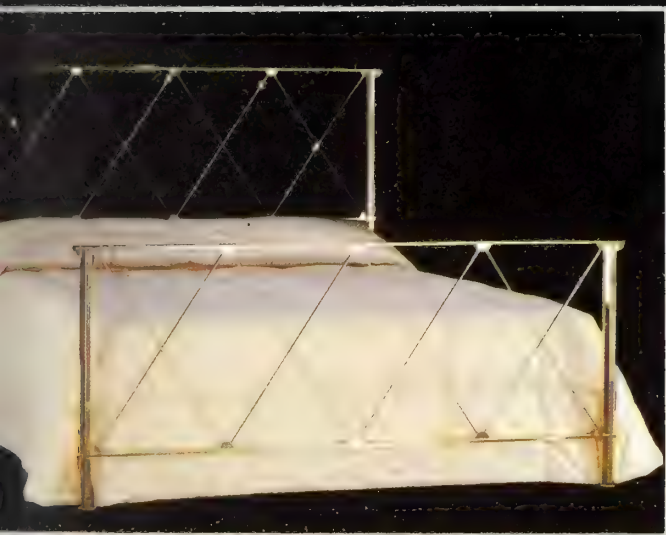
SOUNDING BOARD

doing, while not limited just to urban areas, stands to have considerable impact on our lives, from the amount we spend on exterior latex to whatever subliminal feelings we have from looking at a crusty, crumbling monumert (which, granted, is a hard one to quantify). Certainly these economic and aesthetic concerns are just as great as similar ones that pertain to our forests, rivers, and lakes.

The biologists, who have been at work since long before the Task Force was born, got a head start by following the lead of their peers in Europe, who have grown more and more alarmed at their declining forests and dead lakes. It is nonetheless odd that in an urban intensive country (where, I might add, there is considerable suspicion of nature in general and environmentalists in particular) we are really just beginning to look at acid rain vis-à-vis our buildings and monuments. Messages from abroad in the so-called material category have had considerable effect on archaeologists and art historians but hardly on the public at large. Perhaps the most poignant came only a few years ago, when Greek authorities announced that the caryatids of Erechtheum were to be removed from their pedestals and taken indoors. The lovely female figures had withstood the elements for 2,300 years, but in recent times the air in Athens had wreaked irreversible damage.

If the caryatids did not make much of an impression on us, it is in part because we are still a young country. With a few exceptions, we don't love our buildings with the same intensity that the Egyptians love the Sphinx or the Greeks love the Parthenon. And part of it is because we tend to think we can simply mend our monuments if they start to fall apart. The era of air pollution has given birth to numerous techniques (such as epoxy and acrylic treatments) for repairing stone; they have various drawbacks and, to continue the physician's theme, all of them treat the symptom, not the disease.

For a couple of years now, the materials people have been conducting some thirty projects—from monitoring the sandstone walls and air chemistry at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado to making a wide-ranging survey of all the outdoor statuary across the U.S. The Mesa Verde study,



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which will go on for ten years (nothing happens fast in acid rain research), will be of considerable interest, first, because that site is near coal-fired power plants and, second, because it is America's first entry on the international document of cultural properties called the World Heritage List.

Their most simple and elegant study, however, is the marble tombstone inventory. It strikes me as just the kind of experiment that will shed light on the question of where acid rain is coming from. In 1979 Dr. Baer and his colleagues at NYU selected 23 national cemeteries across the country: their localities ran the gamut in terms of both atmospheric conditions and proximity to cities and industry. The team examined about four thousand headstones, measuring them for height, width, and depth of the incised inscription. Those in the best condition—some still with marble sheen on them after forty or more years of exposure—were at cemeteries in Custer, Montana, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, rural settings where

the air is relatively clean and the rainfall low. Only very minor surface loss was observed at Bath, New York, and Andersonville, Georgia—rural settings with clean air where the rainfall is high. The tombstones in the worst condition were in Philadelphia and New York City—where the rain is high and on average quite acidic. More detailed studies of the air chemistries around these cemeteries are now under way, but the preliminary findings certainly look like the Woe of Gypsum.

The acid rain issue is perhaps the most complicated environmental issue to confront this country—it makes saving the whooping cranes look like child's play. The first problem is that the wafting oxides acknowledge no political boundaries. The second, and far bigger, is that freeing our air of those excess oxides will be enormously expensive. Any way you cut it, it will put a crimp in this country's shifting energy policy. We are a coal-rich nation seeking to escape from the vicissitudes of oil and gas importation. There is every

indication that we are turning to coal to solve those problems: some say that by 2000 we will be mining about sixty percent more coal than we are at present, and that is a modest projection.

The more complicated the issue, however, the more we pussyfoot. The Interagency Task Force on Acid Precipitation is concluding the fourth year of its ten-year life. If its various bodies continue to do research for that period without recommending any legislation or without Congress acting on its own, we will be right on the heels of the year 2000. The task force is proceeding very cautiously. On the one hand, I admire its objective scientific approach; on the other, I wonder how minutely must we study the problem before doing something about it. If we put trust in the acid rain findings in Europe, along with preliminary discoveries here, however, then we have to admit that the expanding use of coal will present us with large problems.

There is one monument in America that is guaranteed to move even the icest citizen, and it is the Statue of Liberty. It does not fit at all into the Woe of Gypsum category, because it is molded from copper and iron. But it has suffered injury from acid rain too. (The acid rain, combined with the salty marine air, has begun to eat away the protective patina on her copper skin. But, of greater concern to structural engineers, it has also leaked inside. Wherever the copper and iron are in contact the deleterious rain has accelerated the corrosion of her iron skeleton.) In the realm of monuments the Statue of Liberty is the most obvious example of how much Americans love brinkmanship when it comes to the environment—we felled our forests and then thought about restoring them; we killed egrets and herons for plumes to adorn our ladies' hats and then at the last minute desisted; we pushed the whooping crane and condor right to the edge of extinction and then started reeling them back; we let the Statue of Liberty slump into New York Harbor. It is joyous that we are shoring her up, but our heritage does not rest on her shoulders alone. Consider the indecipherable name and date on the marble tombstone of a Civil War soldier buried at Cypress Hills National Cemetery in Brooklyn. Our history vanishes with his inscription. □

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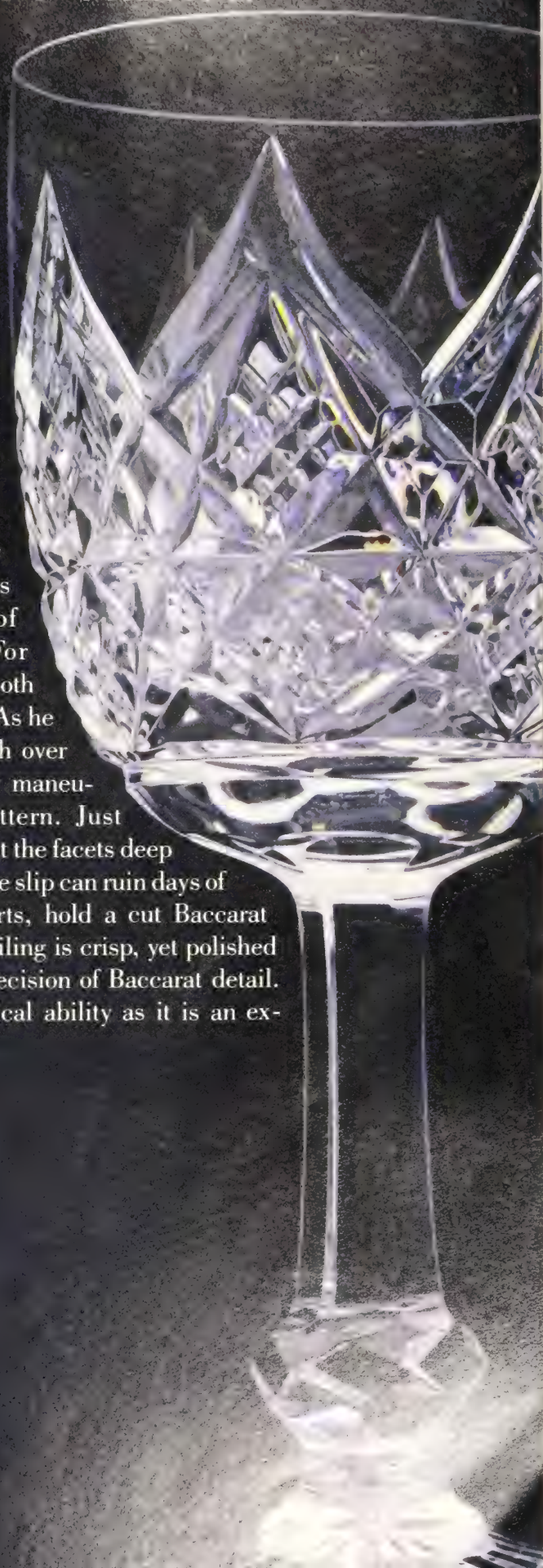
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TRYING RECIPES

Auditioning food for a new cookbook proves no way to please a guest

By Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale

"The cook was a good cook, as cooks go; and as cooks go she went," wrote Saki. The Edwardian wit could hardly have been more prophetic. Gone, indeed, are virtually all those cooks, tempestuous or docile, gifted or lackluster, starched or slovenly, who served the rich and the comfortable: those for whom "Downstairs" and "Upstairs" have become one. Cooking—now that they make their own food—has

become their passion. They have joined hands with the food freak, the health-food addict, the nostalgic traveler and—dare we say the word?—gourmet. Armed with food magazines and cookbooks, which proliferate like rabbits, they storm their kitchens, hoping to surpass the virtuoso feats of professional chefs.

When we were asked to add to this proliferation by writing a cookbook of our own, we were delighted. What a good excuse to amuse ourselves by feeding our friends. We could retest many of our culinary inventions as well as the recipes that were given us when we interviewed the great chefs of Europe. How well we remember the noted French restaurateur who tried to explain to us the difference between *la nouvelle cuisine* and *la cuisine ancienne*! "It's chiefly a question of *les liaisons*, the thickeners used in sauces," he said with a deep air. "In the old days there was too much flour. '*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*,' I called them." Then with a quizzical glance at his American visitors he added: "That's the name of



The authors buying vegetables at The Green Thumb in Water Mill, Long Island.

a film, you know."

Determined to show that we understood his little joke, we said: "And the name of the book as well."

"*Ab oui?* A book?" he said, looking very doubtful. "*C'est possible.*" Passing quickly over this illuminating cultural exchange, we went on to more serious matters.

A few days later we made an unforgettable visit to Paul Bocuse. A big, hearty, engagingly theatrical man, he offered to make the omelets his grandmother had taught him when he was a child prodigy of the kitchen. His minions, not used to the sight of *le patron* actually cooking, hovered at a respectful distance. The eggs were whisked in an instant. The butter sizzled in the pan. The mixture was stirred with a fork; the pan smartly banged, then tilted. In thirty seconds the omelet was ready.

"You must melt a spoonful of butter in the pan for *la dorure*, the gilding," he

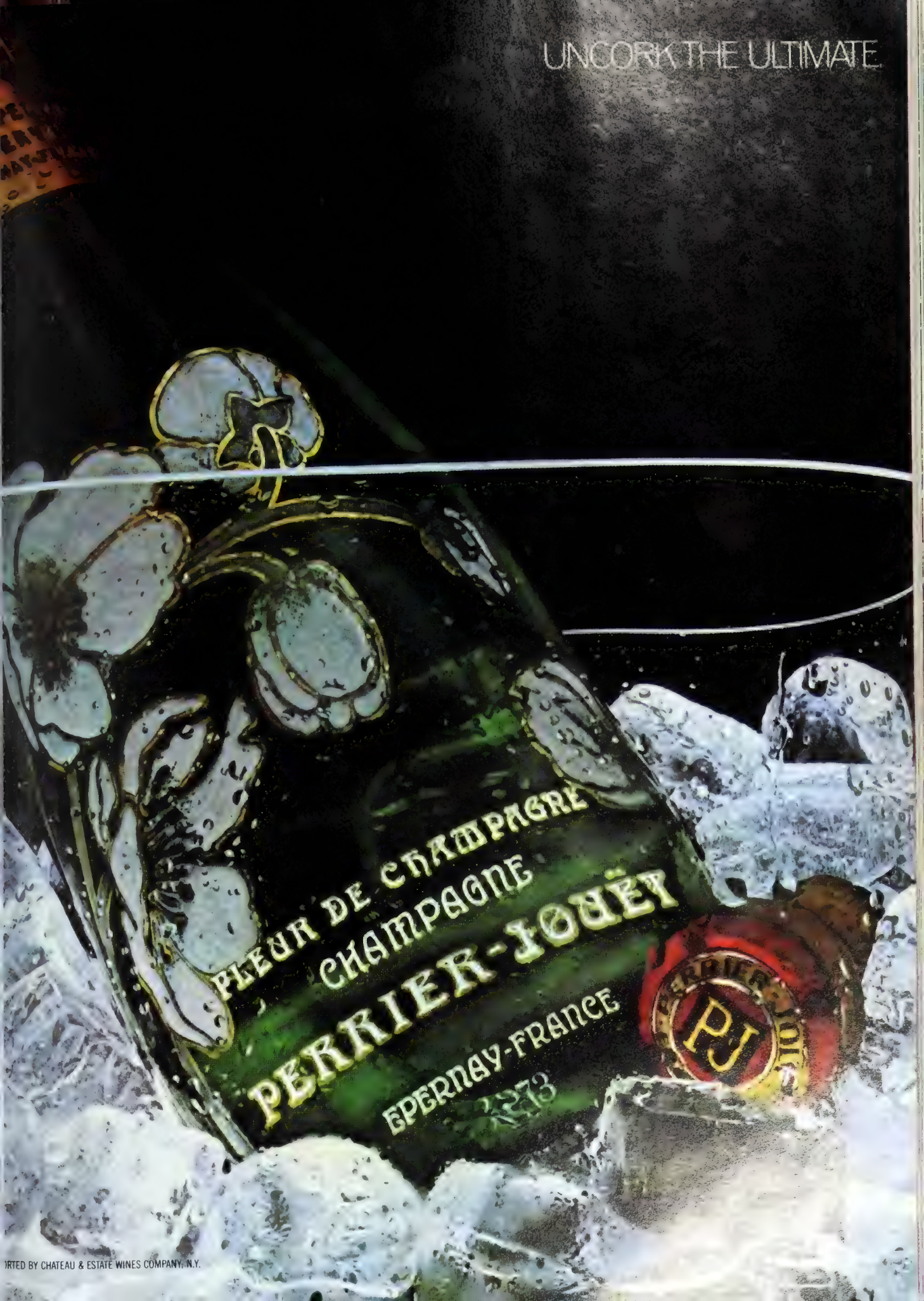
explained. "And when you turn the omelet out onto a dish, rub it with some cold butter stuck on the tip of a knife. That's *le vernissage*, the varnishing. Like a great painting in a gold frame, an omelet should be gilded and varnished. Practice makes perfect."

Even as he was telling us exactly how it should be done, the man considered by many to be the greatest chef in the world

found his omelets stubbornly sticking to the pan. He had trouble turning them out, and when he did they were far from perfect. With an uneasy glance at his numerous *sous-chefs*, who had discreetly lowered their eyes, he muttered: "*Merde alors!* I'm out of practice! It's been a long time since I've actually made an omelet." But then, miracle of miracles, Bocuse turned disaster into triumph as only a truly great chef can. He quickly covered each somewhat ragged omelet with a linen towel, patted it deftly, then whipped off the towel to reveal the most perfect-looking omelets imaginable. And the most delicious! His grandmother would have been proud of him.

As our book began to take shape our friends bombarded us with the inevitable questions. Does it have a theme? A gimmick? Are the recipes easy or complicated? Salt-free, *nouvelle*, or local? Vegetarian or ethnic? None of these, was our answer. We were simply going to write about the food that they had professed to enjoy, at our table—

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AT THE TABLE

in a word, the home-cooking of Gold and Fizdale. Irrepressible hosts, we could not imagine testing and retesting countless recipes without inviting them to sample the results. If a dish had them shouting bravo, or better still, asking for the recipe, it was included in our book. If there were no requests for seconds, it was out.

Of course there were frustrating moments. As soon as we told our dinner guests that we were writing a cookbook, even those who normally arrived unbelievably late would turn up inexcusably early to watch each step of the preparation. Now nothing disturbs us more than people hanging about when we cook. It is rather like trying to meditate in the subway. And while our country kitchen is large enough to hold a table for twelve and a grand piano, it did seem rather small when eight or ten people crowded in, drinks in hand, to watch us in operation. Their favorite vantage point was leaning on the stove or sink; their preferred pastime, opening the refrigerator to see what was in

it; their constant refrain: "What can we do to help?"

Our reply: "Would you open the wine?" seemed to bore them. They dawdled over their drinks. They fixed themselves another round. They stuck their fingers in the pots. They tasted. There was too much pepper for Jules, too little salt for Jim. But it was never until the moment of truth, when the *beurre blanc* or some equally delicate maneuver demanded all our concentration, that a last-minute appeal for the corkscrew was finally heard—invariably followed by: "I can't get this one to work. Don't you have a better one?"

When everything was ready and we asked our guests to take their places at table, there was the troubled friend who lingered behind to say that his wife had just left him the day after he'd broken off with the mistress he'd promised to give up six months earlier! And what was he supposed to do now? Our peevish "Why don't you just go to the table," was met by a reproachful

look that would have been more appropriate for Caesar's last glance at Brutus. In the confusion all thought of writing down the precise amounts of tarragon and chopped shallots was abandoned. We could only delude ourselves into thinking we would remember what we'd done in the morning. But when morning came it was only too evident that we must cook the whole meal again (with no helpful friends present we could write everything down carefully) and give the food to the maid.

"How did your husband like the *Veau Catalan aux Marrons Secs*?" we asked the next day. "Oh, just fine. He wondered what it was." When we explained the intricacies of poaching the dried chestnuts in saffron-scented consommé and finding exactly the right Spanish *chorizos*, she looked more si-bylline than usual. "The only thing my husband really likes is steak and potatoes. But that's okay. As long as he's got his ketchup and his pickles he'll eat practically anything."



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AT THE TABLE

Still, hers was a more tolerant attitude than that of the French diplomat and his wife who came to one of our "testing" dinners later that week. "There is nothing we do not eat," they told us when we invited them to our kitchen-laboratory, "after all, we have lived in every part of the world." Reassured by the prospect of feeding such cosmopolitan guinea pigs, we prepared what we naïvely thought was a perfect menu. Bay scallops in pastry shells, their pastry initials serving as edible place cards, would surely amuse them. To follow, an elaborate *blanquette* of lobster tails in steamed cucumber boats and mushroom caps stuffed with puréed fennel. Even the beets in the beet and arugula salad had been slowly baked to ensure maximum flavor.

To gild the lily we had prepared our favorite orange tart, a time-consuming task but well worth the effort. The orange segments, carefully trimmed of all traces of membrane and pith; the rind, finely julienned and glazed in a Cointreau syrup; the freshly baked crisp sugar crust lined with toasted chopped hazelnuts—all would be assembled at the last minute so that each ingredient retained its textural integrity.

As we sat down Héloïse said: "I thought of calling you this morning to tell you that we are both allergic to shellfish but Abélard thought it unnecessary."

"It does pose a bit of a problem," we confessed, whisking away the scallops and turning off the oven where the lobster was keeping warm, "but we can offer you an omelet, some salad, and a rather nice dessert."

"Our doctor does not permit us to eat eggs. *Trop de cholestérol*, you know," said Abélard, while Héloïse muttered gloomily: "We gave up desserts years ago."

All evidence of our hours of preparation was quickly removed. Our guests seemed fairly content to have *spaghetti al burro* and salad, although Héloïse rather ostentatiously left her beets on the plate. They refused coffee—they never touched it—and left quite early, headed, no doubt, for the nearest hamburger joint. As they departed, they said with faultless diplomacy: "We are sure your cookbook will be a great success. Everything you make sounds so original." □

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WHAT REVIVALS REVEAL

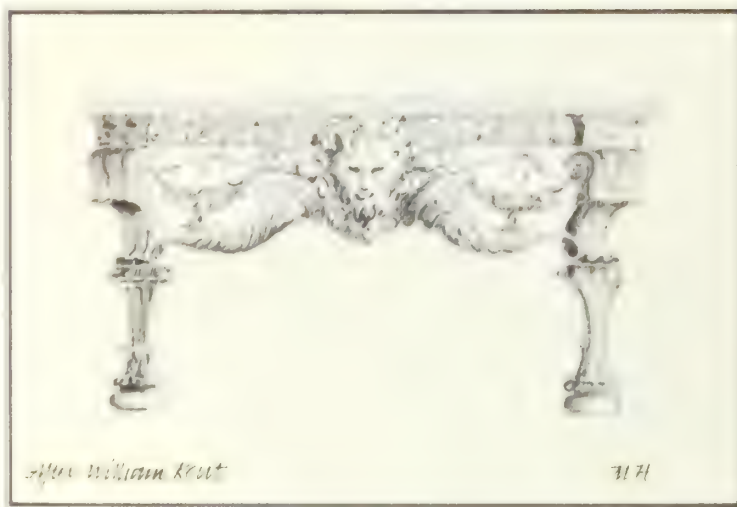
Every time it reappears, the Classical tradition teaches us something new

By Mark Hampton

Decoration, like architecture, has been enlivened with great regularity by revivals of a classicizing nature. To deal with all of them, in fact even to list all of them, is well beyond the scope of these paragraphs. But several of them have influenced subsequent generations of architects and designers and have actually changed the way we see things.

Palladio is a household word. He must be one of the most famous architects in history. In the sixteenth century he designed a number of buildings that to this day are a source of inspiration and reference to architects and designers everywhere. It is always fascinating to contemplate the achievement of Palladio and the gigantic effect he has had over the past four hundred years. The beauty of his buildings is easy to perceive. Less easy for us to weigh is his dazzling originality and boldness and the impact these qualities had on his contemporaries, an impact that must have been enormous. He was, for instance, the first architect to take what looks like the portico of a Roman temple and put it on the front of a house. This device alone has supplied architects with a seemingly inexhaustible source of ideas. One hundred years later (it is easy to forget how close in time they were), Inigo Jones applied some of his new knowledge about Palladio to buildings and additions to buildings in seventeenth-century England. A century after that, a whole community of architects and decorators had turned their passion for Palladio into a strict school of architecture. I

cannot think of anything as long-lasting as that movement. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, Pompeii and Herculaneum had been exposed to view, and another electrifying wave of Classicism was charging through drafting rooms and drawing



Design representative of William Kent's furniture for Palladian houses

rooms. Again, what made the new Classical Revival so vigorous was not its ability to draw on detailed archaeological references. It was the originality and the brilliant reapplication of the new material that inspired professionals and their clients forever after. Robert Adam, after all, lent his name to a style just as Palladio had done. In addition to Adam and his family, there were endless architects who worked in the same style. Originality was not at an end either. Sir John Soane's unique vision resulted in a body of work that, like Palladio's, drew on sources similar to those of his contemporaries but that were amazingly original and that helped pave the way for still another classical mania—the Greek Revival. By the 1840s, every farming town in America, not to mention major cities,

had a bank or a house or a church that was a tiny replica of the Parthenon.

Starting in the eighteenth century revival architects added a twist to their work that has left us with an extra heritage, one that has a practical as well as a decorative use. They designed and made furniture. I might add that some of them designed almost anything they could get their hands on, from watch fobs to carriages. Classical Revival furniture designed by architects, especially when it was designed for a particular spot in a specific room, takes on a whole interest that furniture intended for mass production often lacks. Not that the designs in the famous cabinetmaker's manuals are boring; there is a difference, however, in concept, and the marvelous

thing about a lot of this architect-designed furniture is that it has a boldness of scale and ornamentation that places it in a decorative category all its own. Although it was designed to be seen *en suite* with closely related architectural details, this big, assertive furniture is paradoxically, often perfect in twentieth-century rooms, especially rooms that lack the very architectural details that inspired it in the first place. The tables, cabinets, pedestals, and urns that began to appear in the 1720s are so packed with architectural references that they can help fill the characterless spaces that are such a problem in newly built apartments and houses.

Palladian houses of the sixteenth century were, of course, filled with Renaissance furniture. When the Georgian followers of Palladio were

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ON DECORATING

faced with the problem of furnishing their houses, they turned to Italianate motifs for inspiration, and the result was often original to the point of bizarreness. And it was almost always wonderfully rich and complicated. William Kent (1685–1748) was a “painter, architect, and the father of modern gardening,” in Horace Walpole’s words. The furniture he designed as well as the furniture he inspired has a lush quality that gives any room an atmosphere of luxury. It is also often rather eccentric to our eyes. His gigantic console tables are composed of scrolls and swags and masks and shells and even complete figures carved in the round, sitting on the stretchers not in order to support the tops but apparently just to take a rest. Surfaces are covered with superb carving. His chairs and settees, rarer than his tables, have great foliate motifs that wrap around the legs and backs and sometimes simply become the legs. At other times, the better part of a loin will be pressed into service in order to hold up the seat of a chair.

Kent’s more conservative furniture—mahogany rather than paint or gilt, and smaller in scale—consists of a wealth of secretaries and bookcases that have, as their chief ornamentation, pediments and columns and pilasters. Occasionally, a cabinet may be a scaled-down version of an almost complete building, starting with a rusticated base, and ending with a pedimented attic story resting on a complete entablature with minutely carved columns. The great appeal of this furniture lies not only in its beauty per se but also in its perfect scaling: a small secretary is short as well as narrow and its ornamentation is equally reduced in size. Details on small pieces are minute.

Robert Adam (1728–92) was the son of a Scottish architect. He was clearly a genius in the realm of drawing and designing. In the 1750s he went to Rome. For the next three years, he traveled and studied and made copious notebooks of drawings. His book on Diocletian’s palace in Spalato, in what is now Yugoslavia, was the result of this tour. So was the inspiration for the rest of his life’s work. From the time he returned to England and set up shop in London in 1758, until his death 34 years later, he created designs for furniture in a Neoclassical style that have continued to inspire furniture makers

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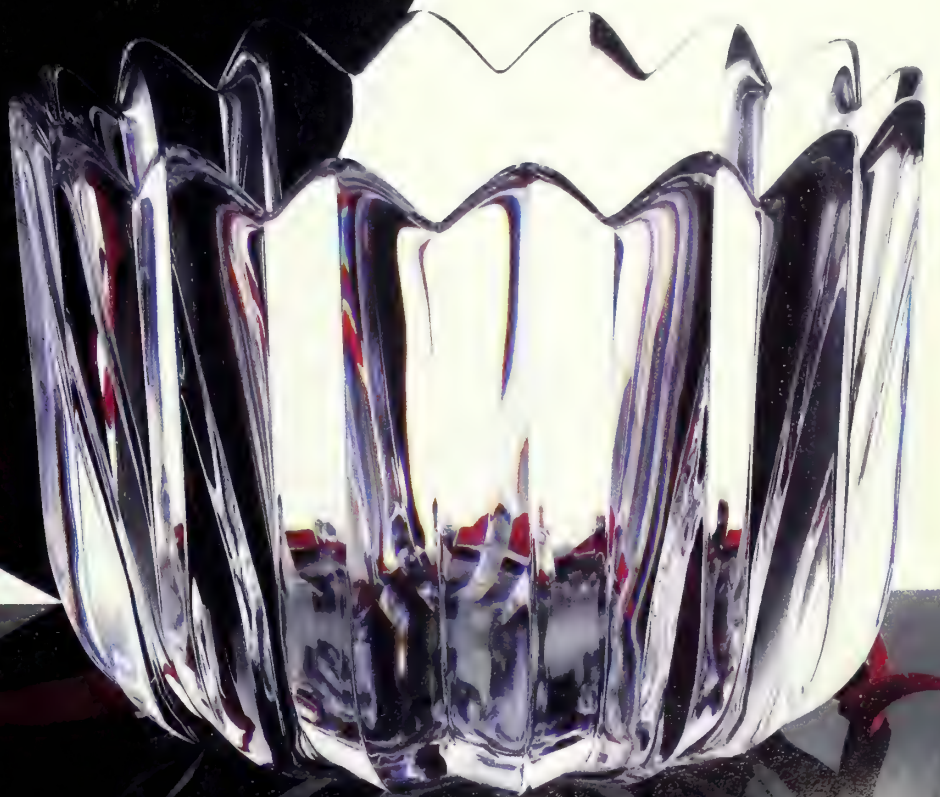
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with few interruptions ever since. The thoroughness of Adam's architectural conceptions is remarkable. A house designed by him gives, from the moment your foot touches the step and your hand grasps the iron railing, the impression of a complete integration of decoration and architecture. The balusters of the railing you hold, the lanterns overhead, the doorknob and the carving around the door are all composed from the same design lexicon used for the architecture itself. Once inside, you find that this application of design motifs continues throughout. I do not mean to imply that I find it monotonous, although some do, of course. That, however, is not the point. The effect that Adam had on furniture design is what interests us and what is responsible for the world's great supply of Adam-style furniture.

Try, if you can, to forget the connotations that the words "Adam Style" usually bring to mind—the dinky plaster-of-Paris medallions and swags pasted on mass-produced mantels, or Wedgwood plaques incorporated into sconces. The Age of Plastic has to be put aside for a minute. Think instead of the big tables decorated with beautifully carved rams' heads and acanthus leaves. Lanterns with swags of bronze bellflowers and leafy palmettes. Pedestals and urns painted and carved with dentils, eggs and darts, and more beautiful fluting. All the same motifs cover mirrors and chairs as well, and most of this enormous body of furniture is perfectly useful in our own rooms today. That, finally, is the point with all this architectural, Neoclassical furniture—the fact that it is so easy to use in such a variety of decorative backgrounds.

Two common categories of rooms are familiar to us all. One is the watered-down Georgian Revival room, whether it is a hall, a living room, or a dining room. It exists everywhere. Houses and apartment buildings built over the past eighty years are full of rooms, often decently proportioned, usually with ceilings that are a little too low, and for the most part lacking any interesting architectural detail. The other common category, and one that will probably continue far into the future, is the newly built room with simply no architectural detail whatsoever. Using overscale furniture and decorative elements is not treacherous. It just requires a little advance planning. You obviously need an empty wall, and that wall should have a certain centrality about it. In theory, you should also not have already bought a piece of furniture for the wall in question. We are not talking about pieces that can just be scooted around anywhere. Large entrance halls provide any number of possibilities. A big table, a pair of pedestals, a mirror or two. Mirrors in halls give particular pleasure because of the frequent lack of windows. This is especially true of apartment houses. There is, of course, the extra advantage of being able to smooth your hair or straighten your tie. The same big table that you could use in a large hall would also provide a dramatic focal point in a living room, opposite the fireplace for example, or between a pair of windows. Instead of putting a sofa on the obvious long wall, consider using an imposing piece of real furniture. If there is no fireplace, all the more reason to start the design of the room around something big and rather grand. And if your room is really huge, anchor the whole thing down with a center table or a library table, as many of the great eighteenth-century desks were called. Funnily enough, the excessive richness that frightens so many people where rococo furniture is concerned is not a problem

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with Neoclassical furniture. And Kent-style furniture, although very rich, has a muscular quality that prevents it from looking too precious.

Equally flexible are large bookcases. I stress the flexibility of this furniture due to the fact that people often shy away from one piece or another because they are afraid to buy something that would be a problem in a future room. Bookcases, however, belong in any number of rooms. How they ever got turned into china cupboards, I will never know. Filled with books, they lend great atmosphere to any hall or living room, to say nothing of an anonymous room that you want to turn into a library. If you must line them with silk and fill them with dessert plates, so be it. They still give height and scale to a large wall.

Collections of contemporary art and sculpture are not a difficulty, either, when combined with large-scale, architectural furniture. A great side table standing under a large modern canvas



Classical anchor for a modern space: a carpet designed by Robert Adam in a living room decorated by Mica Ertegun of Mac II.

looks comfortable with a piece of sculpture on it or a large vase of flowers. Or nothing. A small table needs, in order to justify its existence in a room, something on it. Large, sculptural tables, however, lead lives of their own. One was recently in a room hung entirely with twentieth-century pictures. On one large wall, there was a very big—probably eighty inches long—mahogany side table with a thick white marble top and deep apron carved with typical Adamesque paterae and fluting. A Marquise grille hung over the table and a Calde stable stood on top of it. Flanking it were a pair of rather tall pedestals, also decorated with fluting and paterae and still in their old paint. On the pedestal were a pair of Regency lamps in the form of standing Grecian ladies. The whole arrangement was both beautiful and interesting as well as being somewhat original without straining one's credulity.

Carpets were another fabulous creation of Neoclassical designers. They were filled with the same motifs that were used on furniture of the same period, and as we all know they were frequently designed to echo the plasterwork on the ceilings of the rooms they were intended for. The orderly, rather geometric arrangement of their patterns once again suits them for rooms of a contemporary nature. The coloring of these carpets is often refreshingly vivid, but at the same time the colors are so plentiful that you will find them very unconfining vis-à-vis the selection of materials and paint colors.

As the Post-Modernist style develops before our very eyes, it is rather exciting to contemplate what might be in store for us. More architects seem to be returning to the delights of the past for inspiration and taking up designing furniture. Meanwhile, as yet another movement inspired by Neoclassicism gains in popularity, those of us who long to live with antiques can look forward to new ways to use them and new surroundings in which to see them. Finally, it is wonderfully encouraging to be reminded of the fact that the world of design is never static. There are always at least two alternatives to the present. One is the past, and the other is the future. □

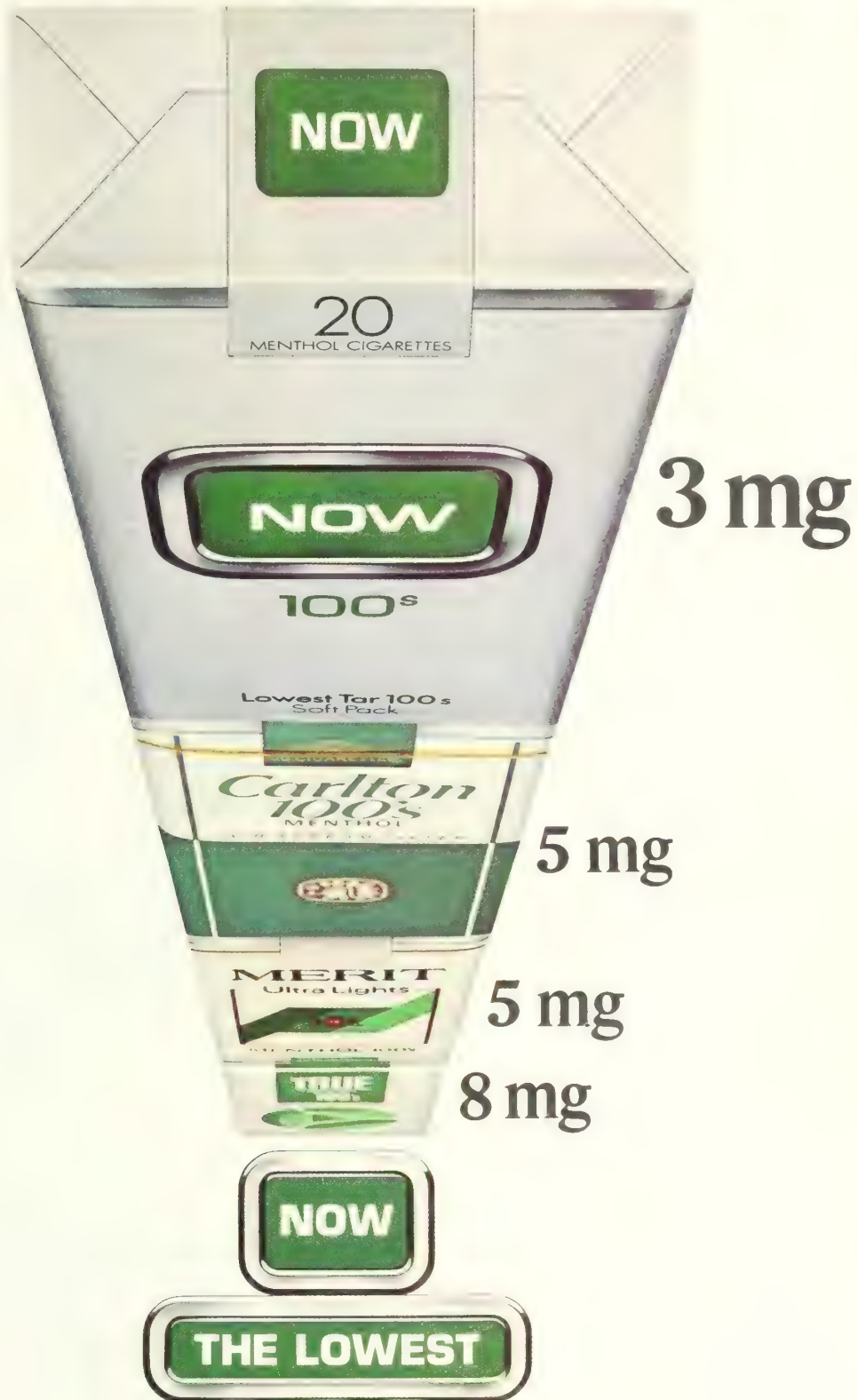
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Light on the Place des Vosges

BY CHRISTINA DE LIAGRE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID MASSEY

Making the rounds of concierges in Paris to find a place to live has solved more than one housing dilemma. But walking into the Place des Vosges and finding something available—in fact one of the most spectacular apartments on the entire square—borders on the miraculous.

Though back in 1964, when Gaston Berthelot stepped into the picture, *l'étage noble* at the top of the seventeenth-century Mansart staircase appeared to be anything but that. There was no enfilade to be seen, no endless vista of rooms through double sets of double doors. What had once been a hypnotic succession of spacious chambers—the private quarters of the duc de Chaulnes—had become a rabbit warren of storage rooms for *souvenirs de Paris*—miniature chamber pots with the Eiffel Tower painted at the bottom. This had been the grandest residence of them all, the Hôtel de Chaulnes, run by a staff of 169, not to mention additional labor provided by a team of donkeys—whose daily go-round in the courtyard pumped water up to fountains on the first floor.

After centuries of disrepair (nobility left the area in the eighteenth century to move to the faubourgs St. Germain and St. Honoré), it was still a gamble whether the Place des Vosges would again become what it once was: one of the



Jules Hardouin-Mansart staircase leads to Gaston Berthelot's *étage noble* of 1707. *Opposite:* The antechamber, with its original truffled floor, where Berthelot paints.

most fashionable sites in town and the architectural showpiece of the Marais district. (It was in the Marais that the typical *hôtel particulier* or French city mansion began to appear, flanked by entrance court and geometrical garden, with its distinctive stonework, wrought iron, high windows, and sweeping staircases.)

Staking a claim in such an uncertain quarter was clearly in keeping with Berthelot's pioneer spirit. In the sixties, as a young stylist he fast became one of France's most notable exports to the new world of New York, where he was artistic director for the House of Dior. Returning to Paris triumphant—summoned to take over the House of Chanel after Mademoiselle died—he later opted to answer another call from within: painting full time in his light-filled apartment. "There has also always been time for Tunisia," says Berthelot, whose other, seaside life in Hammamet is the source of many of his inspirations.

Here, on the Right Bank, in the center of Paris, one gets the eerie feeling of being halfway to Tunisia—"like Palermo, or someplace less obvious," he adds. "It's bringing the south up north. That was the idea of the Place des Vosges really. There was Hispano-mania at the period of Louis XIII—everyone threw Spanish words into the conversation. The Place des Vosges is Spain arriving by way of the







In the second reception room, a Restoration table sits under five chandeliers hanging from Louis XIV period ceiling. The architect's table is Louis XVI secrétaire à deux corps, the horsehair chair near the Louis XVI table is a Louis XVI chair, the cabinet is a Louis XVI cabinet.



A painting by Berthelot is flanked by Napoleon III oil lamps from a street market in Aix, on Neopolitan church furniture passing as consoles. In between the amaryllis is a modern Murano imitation of a classical urn. Torso is plaster from *Ateliers du Louvre*.

north, from Holland really—because the style of using bricks comes from Holland and Holland was Spanish and the Queen of France was Spanish.”

Southern exposure is the keynote in Gaston Berthelot’s seemingly endless enfilade of rooms. “I think of this as an eighteenth-century *maison solaire*,” says Berthelot, whose Breton blue eyes match his faded jeans. “It’s like a greenhouse, facing south this way. Even in the winter there is no need to turn on the heat until late in the afternoon. That is why they built these six-meter-high ceilings. Even if it’s not sunny, the radiation works because of

the high windows.”

The first room is now Berthelot’s studio. (“It was originally a sort of public room where hangers-on waited for handouts and favors,” he points out with an accent from the Charles Boyer school of English.) There are no curtains. Carved wood shutters, all original, serve the same purpose—shutting cold out and privacy in. Wanting the room to be austere in feeling, Berthelot has created a look that is elegant but rustic, with slipcovered Louis XIII chairs and a deer’s head over the door adding “a squirely air.” “Like a country château,” he continues. “Not a



Berthelot's paints, rags, and books are on the Napoleon III desk. Plaster column is marbled to match baseboards and *ver de mer* of mantel. Lantern is one of two made in New York after sketches by Berthelot. Cast-iron vases Médicis on mantel with lights in them were used on tombs.

grand one, it should be considered sort of *nouveau pauvre!*"

Moving into the second reception room ("it's an entrance too and should look like the one where you let in more important people") the tones are darker, cozier. The walls are now red ocher instead of yellow, explained by a desire "to bring the outside in."

The colors of the houses in the south of France, and the palaces in Italy and Spain—faded from the sun and washed in the rain—are the hues that Berthelot wanted to capture in his rooms.

A summer-house feeling is every-

where in large part due to sheeting (half cotton, half linen) thrown over most of the furniture. The sheeting has created a unity of style out of pieces described by Berthelot as a "hodgepodge of different periods—some good, some not so good.

"I first hit on the idea of using sheeting as a way to protect original needlepoint on a pair of Louis XIII chairs. I'm afraid I'm not up to Joan Crawford. She always had everything covered in clear plastic!"

Berthelot's haphazard accumulation of furniture over the years—literally (Text continued on page 245)





Another view of second reception room, *opposite*, with stools or *tabourets de duchesse* covered in sheeting. *Top left*: A 19th-century terra-cotta bust of Madame de Lomballe, Marie Antoinette's *confidante* who was beheaded on the neighboring rue du Pas de la Mule. *Top right*: Reclining bull crèche figure. *Above*: On the Louis-Philippe *secrétaire* are a pair of Florentine alabaster obelisks, vase Médicis painted beige and filled with Tunisian ceramic fruit, 1921 American candlesticks, and a tiny bust of Schubert.



A view of the *petit salon*, where behind a court stool sit Tunisian faïence ducks and a 17th-century *fontaine* used for wine on a demilune cherrywood country table.

Opposite: Louis XVI trumeau with Louis XV appliques against a *faux marbre chintz* from Mira-X.



THE HOUSE WITHIN

Architect George Woo
adds many layers of form
and function to a
thirties Texas colonial

BY ELAINE GREENE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BALTHAZAR KORAB



The principal view from the open-air patio and pool, *right*, is the surrounding three-wing house, its original core seen as the large red mass in the center. *Left*: In this color-coded house, red was chosen for the social spaces, including the stair in the new entry.







A play balcony, *opposite*, adjoins son Alex's bedroom in the old part of the house. Alex and friends are trained not to climb, but throwing toys overboard is irresistible. *Above:* Inside looking out to the short wing that leads to

George Woo's office. *Above right:* Bar and counter against the old cottage's back wall help hosts entertain at poolside ten months of the year. Insulating glass walls face north and east; ceiling fans assist air conditioning.

With the patience often required of someone married to an architect, Elizabeth Woo lived for almost a decade in the all-white rooms her husband designed, using the Mies and Breuer furniture he chose. And when the couple visited other young architects, they gathered in rooms she found "almost identical." George Woo smilingly acknowledges these hardships of the past.

The white style persisted during the Woos' tenure in a New York City brownstone and during their first years in a small thirties colonial-garrison revival house in a comfortable suburban enclave near downtown Dallas, where George Woo's job with I.M. Pei & Partners had taken them. They bought the adequate but ordinary cottage for its agreeable, mature neighborhood, its huge front-yard oak tree, and its 175-foot-deep lot, which held great promise for future expansion.

Expansion time came with the arrival of the Woos' young son, and Liz Woo's patience was rewarded when her husband designated her his client. Her special requirements were two. She said, "I want color, color to make us feel happy, no more sophisticated white." And as a nature-loving California native who works all day in a viewless room marketing computers, she said, "I want to see green leaves and sky and weather all the time that I am inside the house." This her husband accomplished and he even gave her the moon, which they can watch from its rising to its setting.

Woo added 4,000 square feet to the 1,400 he began with, and he did it without violating the original design as seen from the street. To the three-bay, two-and-a-half-story structure with center entry, he added two more bays on the right side. Re-



Standing on the stair to the top floor, which is devoted to storage and drafting rooms, one sees how the grid works inside and out. At right are the old upstairs windows and an edge of Alex's balcony. *Right:* The new dining room occupies the old living room's space. Wall of old fireplace was punched through to also serve the adjoining new living room. Table designed by the architect. The Woos collect rubbings of ancient Chinese carved stone calligraphy.





增方節對十
酒以廣之

燕香暖注
花酒膳必





George Woo and his associates work at the end of the long wing farthest from the street, *left*. The space is designed to become a visiting grandparents' suite when the office moves downtown. *Below*: The street façade, with the much-admired oak. *Right*: The new living room containing the couple's newlywed furniture is small because patio and family/music rooms are utilized far more. Papier-mâché pear by Ming Fay, a New York friend.

placing the original center door with a window matching the two that flanked it, the architect placed the new entrance in the addition, recessed four and a half feet behind the plane of the old façade. He leads the eye to the door with the only bold note seen by a passer-by: a curved wall of glass block that only hints at the surprises within.

Entering the house is, in the words of Dallas architecture critic David Dillon, the "equivalent of cracking a geode." The door closes behind; the sun-baked street and modest façade are forgotten in an explosive interior that is simultaneously cool, brilliant, soaring, sheltering, straight-edged, swelling, old, new.

The plan is a C-shape with right-angle corners, the old house incorporated into the bottom leg. The "C" embraces a large open-air patio with pool, flanked on the fourth side by a tall cedar fence behind a garden border.

The old house still functions: kitchen and small dining room as renovated when the Woos first moved in; old living room made into a new dining room, which a new living room and entry hall adjoin. Upstairs, the three old bedrooms remain, two of them opening to a new children's play balcony over the new living room. The balcony's grand-piano form is one of the important curved masses that contrast

(Text continued on page 258)









POLISHED PAVILION

Waldo Fernandez took the big view when he designed his small hillside retreat

BY MARGARET MORSE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
RUSSELL MACMASTERS

Around a sandstone table designed by Fernandez stand antique chinoiserie bamboo chairs, echoed by living bamboos in huge jars. A Roman portrait head presides, stationed between mirrored bath and kitchen. Cantilevered staircase is seen from behind, its chrome handrail hidden from view. The steps are sandstone boxes, sand-filled to sound comfortably solid when climbed.



By profession Waldo Fernandez decorates large houses and creates oversized furniture for his Los Angeles firm, Waldo's Designs, but at home he has developed a preference for living small. He found a breathtaking place to display his private style: a narrow strip of land with a high sweeping view of Los Angeles. A small house stood on the site and Fernandez stripped it down to the skeleton to build his way. He placed the pool on the same long axis as the house on a cypress-planted terrace that reminds guests of Provence. The shoebox-shaped structure is all of three major rooms—a dining room downstairs, media room and master bedroom above. Big windows open the long wall facing the city and the side wall overlooking the garden but the poolside façade with its pair of narrow doors is as mysterious as an ancient tomb. A few choice pieces furnish the rooms.

Sandstone floor tile and smooth wall finishes—stucco outside, plaster within—give an austere grandeur to the small house. At night the distant lights of Los Angeles sparkle below, bringing to mind architect Charles Moore's contention that a plot of land seems only as small as its view. □ *Editor: Joyce MacRae*



A full level below the house, a loggia, *opposite above*, is shaded by the pool deck.

Above: A fierce painting by Basquiat shakes up the serene dining room. *Opposite below:* Another calculated contrast is the juxtaposition of chased frame and gilded console (both Venetian) with uncut geodes and Japanese crackleware.

Right: The architecture of Luis Barragán inspired the stark house and swimming pool, which ends in whirlpool bath. The building contractor was Anders Swanstrom; the source for the contemporary furniture, Waldo's Designs.



IF YOU KNEW SUZY...



Her seductive New York apartment reflects the glamorous world she chronicles

BY STEVEN M. L. ARONSON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY FELICIANO

Aileen Mehle, left, wearing a Pauline Trigère in a portrait by Eric Boman, lies among the tasseled cushions on the day bed at the far end of the drawing room, once her ballroom of the house. Opposite: The place in the drawing room where everyone sits, opposite the large crystal chandelier. Needlepoint rug was made in Portugal especially for the room.

Ask her to pick a week—a typical week, any one out of fifty-two. Last week, next week. Next year, last year.

“Well, Sunday I’m going to a black-tie dinner for Philip Johnson at the Four Seasons that Jacqueline Onassis is co-chairing for the Municipal Art Society; then Monday there’s the Saint Laurent dinner at the Metropolitan Museum to benefit its Costume Institute; there’s cocktails the next day at Nancy and Hank Luce’s, and that’s

also the “Night of One Hundred Dinners” benefit for the New York Public Library, and the one I’m going to is at the Knickerbocker Club where Mica Ertegun, Chessy Rayner, and Annette Reed—the Three Graces—are giving a dinner dance, black-tie, very festive, *la-dee-da*; then the next day, which would be Wednesday, I have to go to a special board meeting of Revlon, where I’m the only woman on the board, and after that there’s a cocktail party at the William A. M. Burdens’, which I’ll have to



leave at 6:15 to go to the Spanish Institute for a very small private reception for King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia of Spain, and then Mr. and Mrs. Prentis Cobb Hale are giving a dinner at Le Cirque for Henry McIlhenny of the Philadelphia McIlhennys; on Thursday the R. Thornton Wilsons are having a cocktail party at their apartment on Sutton Place, and then there's a dinner for Yves Saint Laurent at Mortimer's given by Vicomtesse Jacqueline de Ribes or, should I say, by Jacqueline, Vicomtesse de Ribes, who as you know is in town for all the festivities; and then the next night Mary Lasker is giving a dinner dance at La Grenouille in honor of Baron and Baroness Guy de Rothschild. And now we're through Friday."

These are the duties she is expected to perform every night during an average week, emphasizes the blue-eyed, ash-blond, exquisitely feminine presence whose working clothes are evening gowns. Who *is* this woman working in the glamour mines, positively toiling in the shafts of shameless plenty?

Her name is Aileen Mehle, but she is known to millions simply as "Suzy," the world's premier society columnist. She doesn't think of herself as a social arbiter in the old sense of the term, like Ward McAllister, whose definitive list of society, the "Four Hundred" (actually it numbered little more than three hundred, including himself), earned him the sobriquet "Mr. Make-a-Lister." Or like Maury Paul, the first Cholly Knickerbocker, who coined the term "Café Society," inventing a world so *recherché* that it satisfied the dreams not only of shopgirls and other outsiders but of society itself.

"I'm definitely not an arbiter," Aileen Mehle insists. "I'm an editor, basically. I edit before I even start my column. If I think somebody's out, I just don't put them in." Today, of course, society is free-form, and Suzy writes not (*Text continued on page 242*)

The drawing room's 19th-century paneling and 18th-century fireplace were imported from France by the Sloane family, who built the house around 1914.









A round table set for two, which, when not used for dining, has flowers and objects on it. Plates, glasses, and serving dishes are from James Robinson, James II, and Earle D. Vandekar; napkins from Frette.

A POET'S PLACE IN PROVENCE

BY
SIR STEPHEN SPENDER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DENNIS STOCK



To run in a new car, my wife Natasha and I set off in the early summer of 1960 to explore the southwestern corner of Provence. We spent our second evening at a hotel in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, overlooking the reeds and willows of the bank of the Rhône opposite Avignon. Across the moving dark waters of the river we could see, golden by floodlight, the walls and towers of the Palais des Papes. It was the Tennysonian dusk that first made us fall in love with Provence.

Long before this a friend had told me that owing to the postwar movement of the population from partly derelict rural





areas into the towns in that part of France, it was possible to buy houses abandoned and falling into ruin, even whole villages, for what is called a "song." The French were pleased at the idea of foreign visitors putting back the stones of their ruins. Natasha and I scarcely thought about this, assuming that, as usual, we had arrived too late. This proved indeed almost the case when, three years later, on what was now an annual tour of Provence, she pointed out to me a ruin standing at the edge of a corkscrew bend halfway up the hillside



Sir Stephen and Lady Spender with the table set for lunch at their *mas*, *center*, near St. Rémy.

near the village of Mausane-les-Alpilles, with its enormous view down the valley and across the plain to Arles and far beyond. This was the dream ruin she would like to have, she said. We found it to be unobtainable on account of the complexities of French laws of inheritance—the *Code Napoléon*—under which family property is left to all descendants, who have equal shares in it. One small patch of land may belong to ten or twelve or more heirs, one of whose where-
(Text continued on page 220)





LESSONS OF A LIFETIME

Jamie and Fernanda Niven's Long Island house reflects
a tradition of attractive country living

BY NANCY RICHARDSON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN RADKAI

A view into the garden, *above*, which consists of the remains of an old apple orchard, lawn cut by two fat crescent-shaped borders, big old maple and willow trees, 40-year-old rhododendrons, and a walled pool garden. *Opposite*: Downstairs sitting room and Tippy the cat. *Right*: In the front hall a library table, with a cotton table skirt: Sea Coral, Cowtan & Tout. Flowered "needlework" rug, Stark Carpet.







The Nivens' main sitting room gets its punch from a Lee Jofa big-flowered chintz and English watercolors in black Regency frames. Some of the upholstered chairs are Victorian models that have been reupholstered. Over the mantel: *Woman in a Yellow* by Paul Marc; *Red* in brown, pink, and blue from Patterson, Flynn and Martin.



Chintz in the Nivens' master bedroom, *right*, was brought back from Colefax and Fowler in London. Walls and floor are both pale blue against which the chintz, black lacquer, and papier-mâché furniture stand out. *Above left*: Blue-and-white porcelain, sisal rug, Colefax chintz set the theme for the dining room. French chairs were made at Artistic Frame, New York, because Jamie Niven did not want to sit on rickety old ones. *Left*: Lunch on the brick terrace.



What's going on in Jamie and Fernanda Niven's house on Long Island is much more than the sum of its pleasant parts. On one hand it is a pretty shingled farmhouse that Fernanda first encountered as a child when her family rented it for a few summers. The house came on the market several years ago and the Nivens bought it immediately. All over again Fernanda loved its lack of symmetry, the watery apple green of the shutters and shingled roof, a roominess and—for all the lack of pretension—the fact that it was a real house and not a beach cottage. On the other hand it is—because of the life the Nivens lead—rather a bellwether of fashionable taste in the eighties.

In the sixties and seventies decorators and amateurs alike were inspired by—in particular—houses Billy Baldwin did for the Harding Lawrences—especially La Fiorentina in the south of France—rooms Albert Hadley did for the John Hay Whitneys on Long Island, a dining

room—among other things—that Stéphane Boudin did for Olive Bailey in Nassau—and anything Nancy Lancaster or Sister Parish did for themselves. Though none of these houses looked in the least alike, the impact of their good looks was to define—more or less—what was thought of then as fashionable resort and country decoration. Their sophistication lay not so much in the architecture, collections, and arrangements, though those were often important, but rather in the pace of the life, the variety of the houseguests, the profusion of flowers in the garden, the nearness of the sea, the reassuring baking heat of a reliable sun.

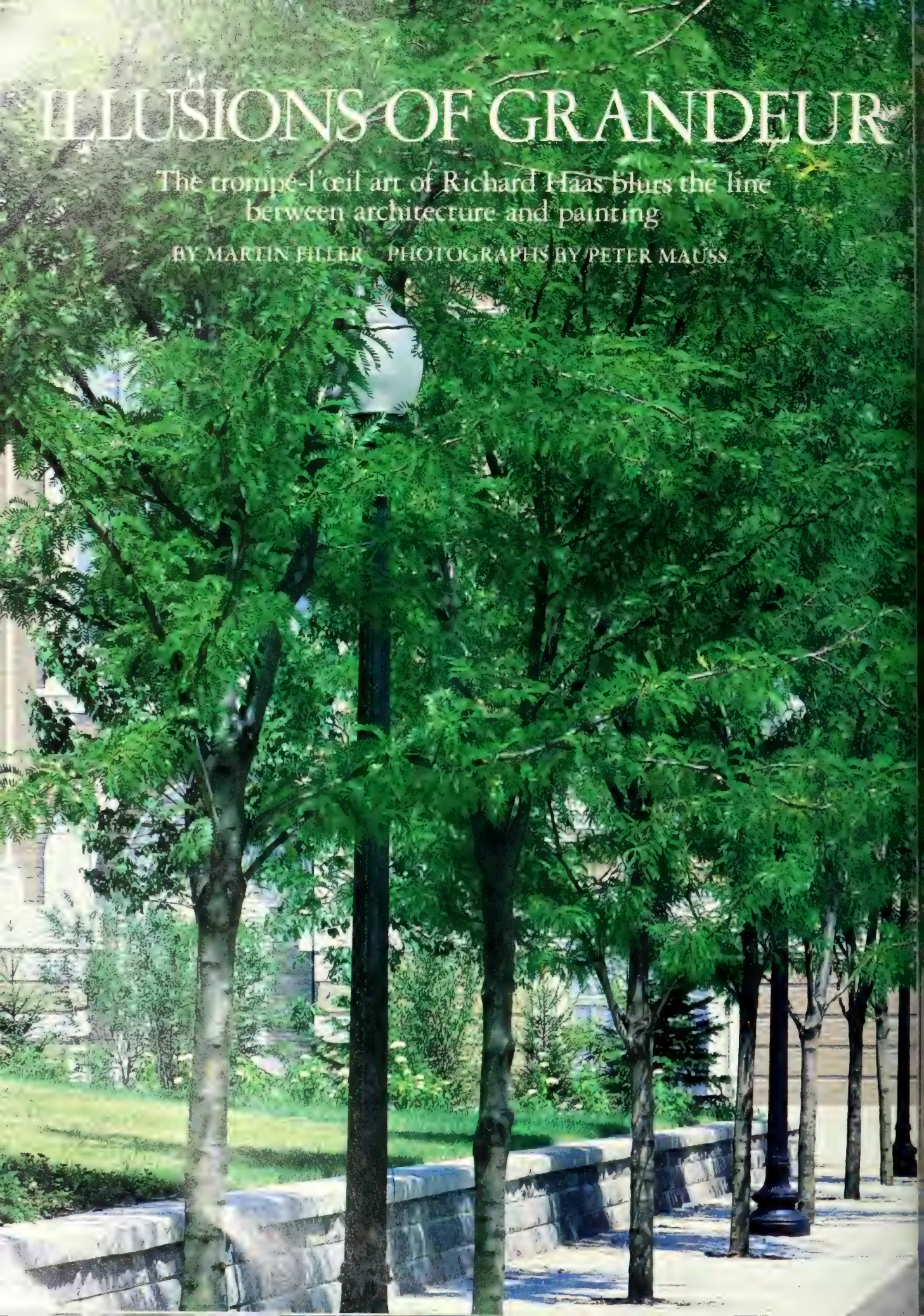
In the eighties Fernanda Niven's generation is very aware of what went on in the last twenty years while enjoying the evolution of those rules into something that's still in the process of being defined. What is well-established, however, is a persistent trend toward shopping the past for ideas. Some of *(Text continued on page 258)*



ILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

The trompe-l'œil art of Richard Haas blurs the line
between architecture and painting

BY MARTIN HILLER PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER MAUSS





**SITE FOR
SORE EYES**

This Haas mural on a blank wall of a transformer station in New Brunswick, New Jersey, was commissioned by Johnson & Johnson in 1950. The mural depicts a grand, arched hallway with a checkered floor and a fountain. The mural is partially obscured by a row of lush green trees in the foreground. Two people are walking away from the viewer on a path that runs alongside the trees and the mural.



LARRY WILLIAMS

Though he was seldom seen, his presence permeated the town, giving it a certain mystery and sense of belonging to a larger world." So wrote Richard Haas about Frank Lloyd Wright, his childhood idol and the most famous citizen of Haas's birthplace, Spring Green, Wisconsin. But he might just as well have been alluding to the effect his own work has had on communities across America over the past ten years. Haas is the artist best known for his illusionistic outdoor murals, which he has virtually transformed as an art form for our time by taking the enigma inherent in trompe-l'oeil and expanding it to the urban scale.

For a decade now his

fake cast-iron façade on the corner of Prince and Greene streets in New York has been a SoHo landmark, while his cut-away view of a Classical cupola on a blank wall of the Boston Architectural Center has caused countless double takes on the nearby Fitzgerald Expressway. In Milwaukee, Galveston, Chicago, and Fort Worth, his unfailingly imaginative schemes have become distinctive and yet integral parts of the civic fabric.

But the art of Richard Haas goes far beyond the intriguing trickery and upgrading of eyesores that is an essential part of its public appeal. His work is part history lesson, part plea for preservation, part homage to the past, and wholly the expression of a very con-

FRIENDLY FAUX

Above: Richard Haas photographed in his Manhattan studio by Larry Williams, with one of the Art Deco-style chairs he designed for an installation at New York's Brooke Alexander Gallery, *right*. A tour-de-force of faux finishes, it is the artist's affectionate and highly inventive homage to the vigorous Zig-Zag Modernism of the twenties.





temporary outlook. If there is an American artist who perfectly captures the predominant mood of this moment—the tension between our simultaneous fascination with the past and our unavoidable awareness of an all-too-precarious future—it is Richard Haas. He has painted himself a unique niche in the American scene.

Haas has come of artistic age during a period in which the worlds of art and architecture have been wracked by controversy over the role of representation, the central issue in the revolt against abstraction and minimalism in painting and the rejection of the International Style in architecture. Haas has resolved those conflicts in his art with considerably greater success than many of his colleagues in either art form. His experiments with historical form and ornament, for example, have a coherence that has eluded most Post-Modern architects (whose penchant for revivalism and eclecticism Haas anticipated years before they made it fashionable), whereas his deft handling of complex surface pattern makes the work of some of the so-called Pattern Painters seem rather shallow by comparison.

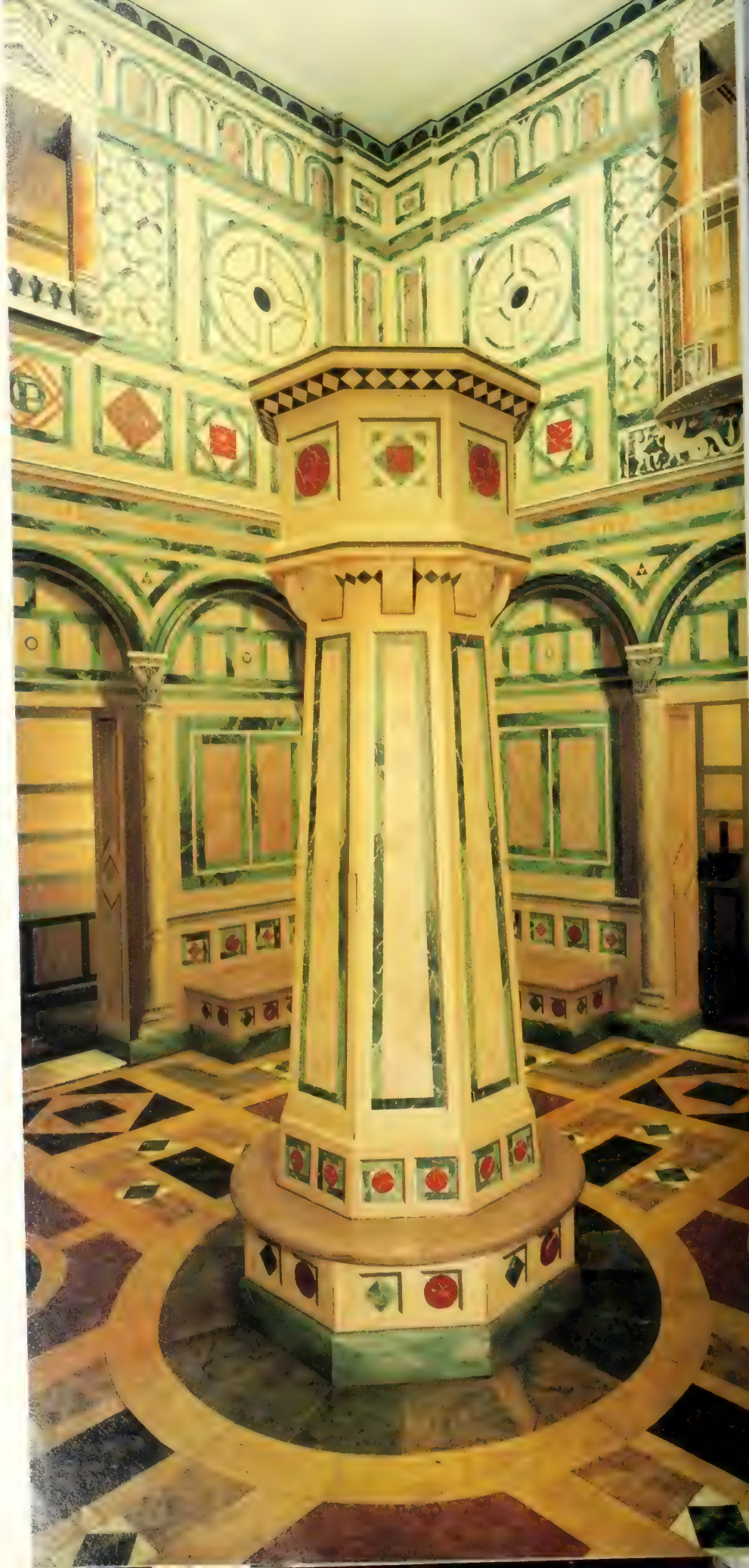
At the same time, Haas

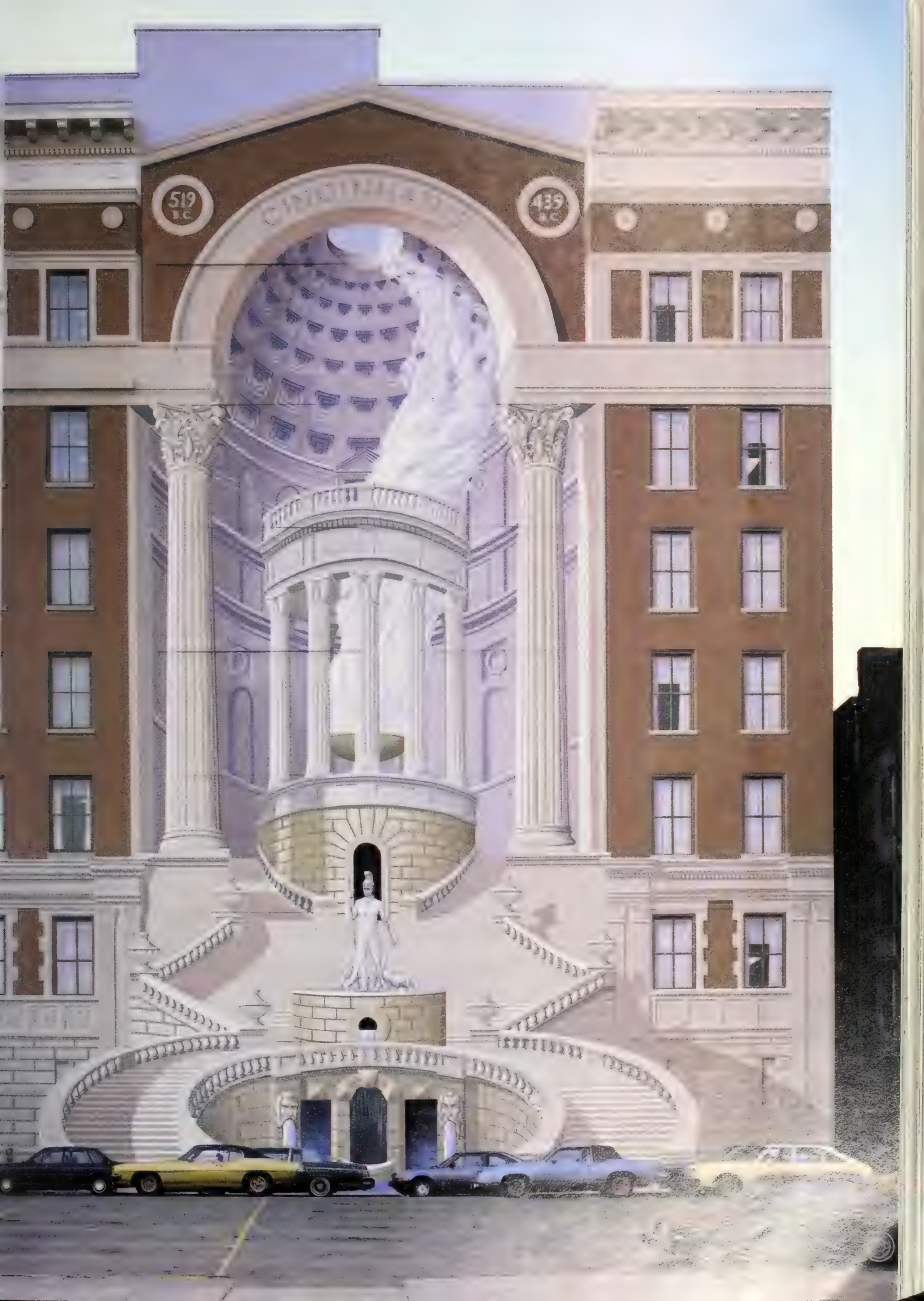
ALL HIS MARBLES

Right: Haas's lobby for a modern apartment building in Chicago is based on the Romanesque church of San Miniato in Florence.

FALSE HEROICS

Far right: On a side wall of the Kroger Co.'s annex in Cincinnati, a fantasy inspired by Piranesi pays tribute to Cincinnatus, the ancient Roman farmer-warrior for whom the city is named.





has been able to attract one of the most broadly based constituencies in art today, achieving a high degree of recognition from critics while enjoying noteworthy popularity among a public that still might not know his name.

It is unusual for an artist whose work is so seemingly conservative on the one hand and yet so genuinely inventive on the other to win the approval of both specialist and layman. But Richard Haas has broken that taste barrier as completely as he has the rigid definition of what is the proper purview of the artist and the architect in our society.

The art of Richard Haas is as genial, unpedantic, and accessible as the man who creates it. But like his work, the artist commands a greater store of knowledge than one might initially suspect. Like the best Neoclassicists of the eighteenth century, Haas knows too much to use it in an obvious or derivative manner. His designs have a way of seeming exactly like something we think we've seen before, until we look at his sources and realize that more often than not they are merely the departure points for his particular brand of inspired invention.

Take, for instance, his spectacular new mural on an annex of the Kroger Co.'s headquarters complex in Cincinnati. Intrigued by the origin of the city's name (from the Roman patriot Cincinnatus, who took up arms with great bravery in time of war but returned to being a farmer in time of peace, inspiration for the Society of the Cincinnati after the Revolutionary War) Haas turned to one of his favorite artists, the eighteenth-

century Italian master Giovanni Battista Piranesi, for an appropriate model.

From the *Prima Parte* of 1743 (the earliest published works of the great engraver) he chose an architectural fantasy of a cofered, oculus-lit dome with a baroque billow of incense wafting upward.

mirror-image of the banal existing architecture of the building to flank the niche of Cincinnatus.

The result is vintage Haas. Instead of trying to make this ordinary office building seem as though it were standing in the Roman Forum, Haas celebrates the contradictions

dition that he ascribed so eloquently to Frank Lloyd Wright.

When Richard Haas was born in 1936 near Taliesin, Wright was at the euphoric onset of his so-called Second Career, the amazing (to everyone but him) reversal of fortune that returned him to the peak of creative power and public recognition. For Haas it was rather like growing up in Versailles in the days of Louis XIV, for Wright was no less a cynosure of local attention.

Haas's father—an immigrant German butcher with whom the Wrights often ran up long-unpaid tabs—looked on his neighbor not as a living legend but rather as an improvident poseur. His son Richard, however, fell under the spell of the genius of the place, and as a young man he began designing imaginary structures in the manner of FLLW. His uncle George Haas was the Taliesin stonemason, and when Richard was nineteen he went to work for him at the architect's hill-top manor.

Even then it was clear that the young man's primary interest was in painting rather than architecture, and the apprentice was pressed into service to help make the decorations for a Venetian-style fête, one of the theme parties in which the Master delighted. But Wright was near the end of his long life and long past even his late prime; the lesson that Richard Haas took from Taliesin was primarily that of the importance of an independent vision.

He then began to study painting at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and his early works bore a strong resemblance (*Text continued on page 238*)



RESPONSIVE READING

Above: In The New York Public Library's Periodical Reading Room, fourteen Haas paintings trace the architectural history of New York publishing houses.

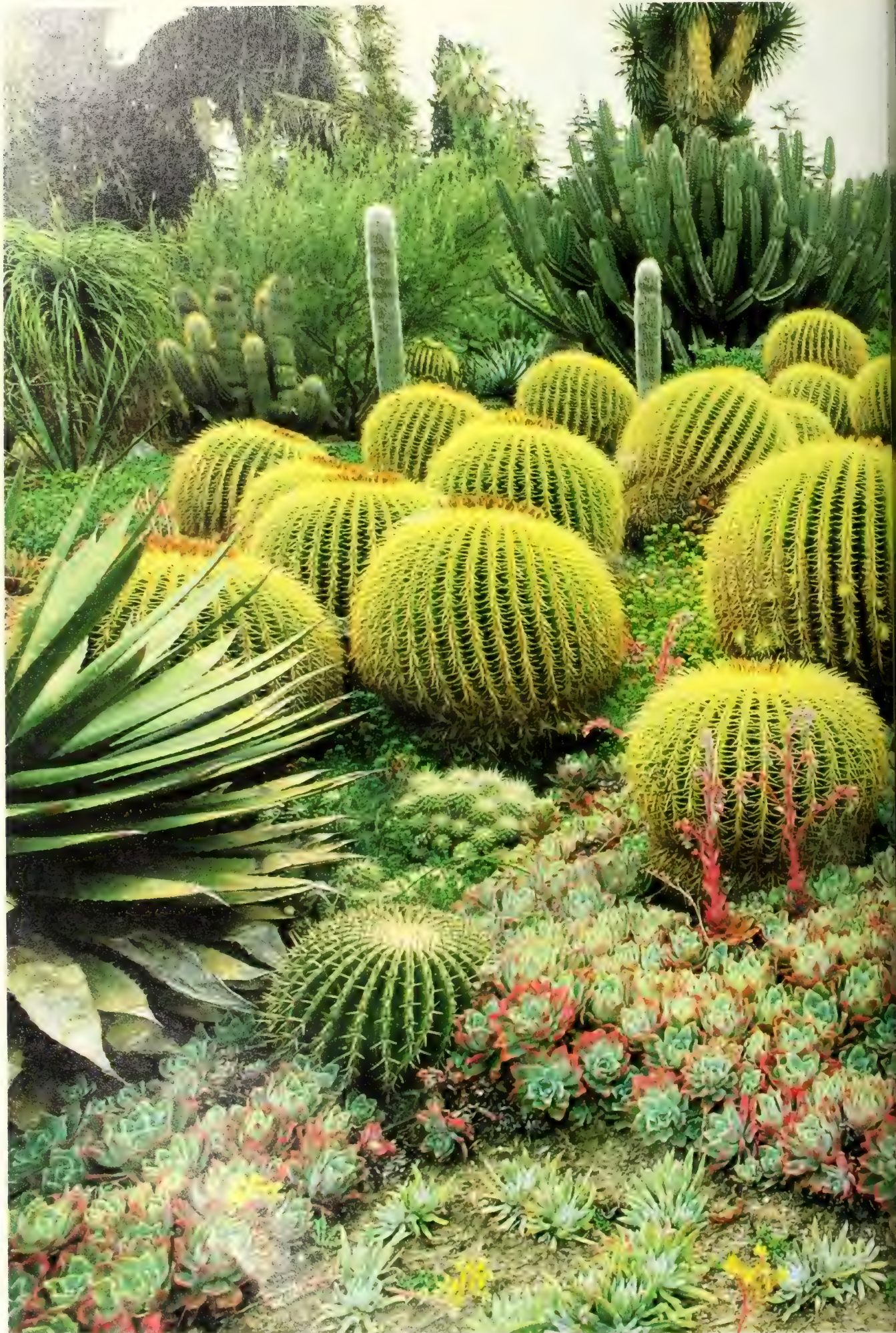
A HIGHER COURT

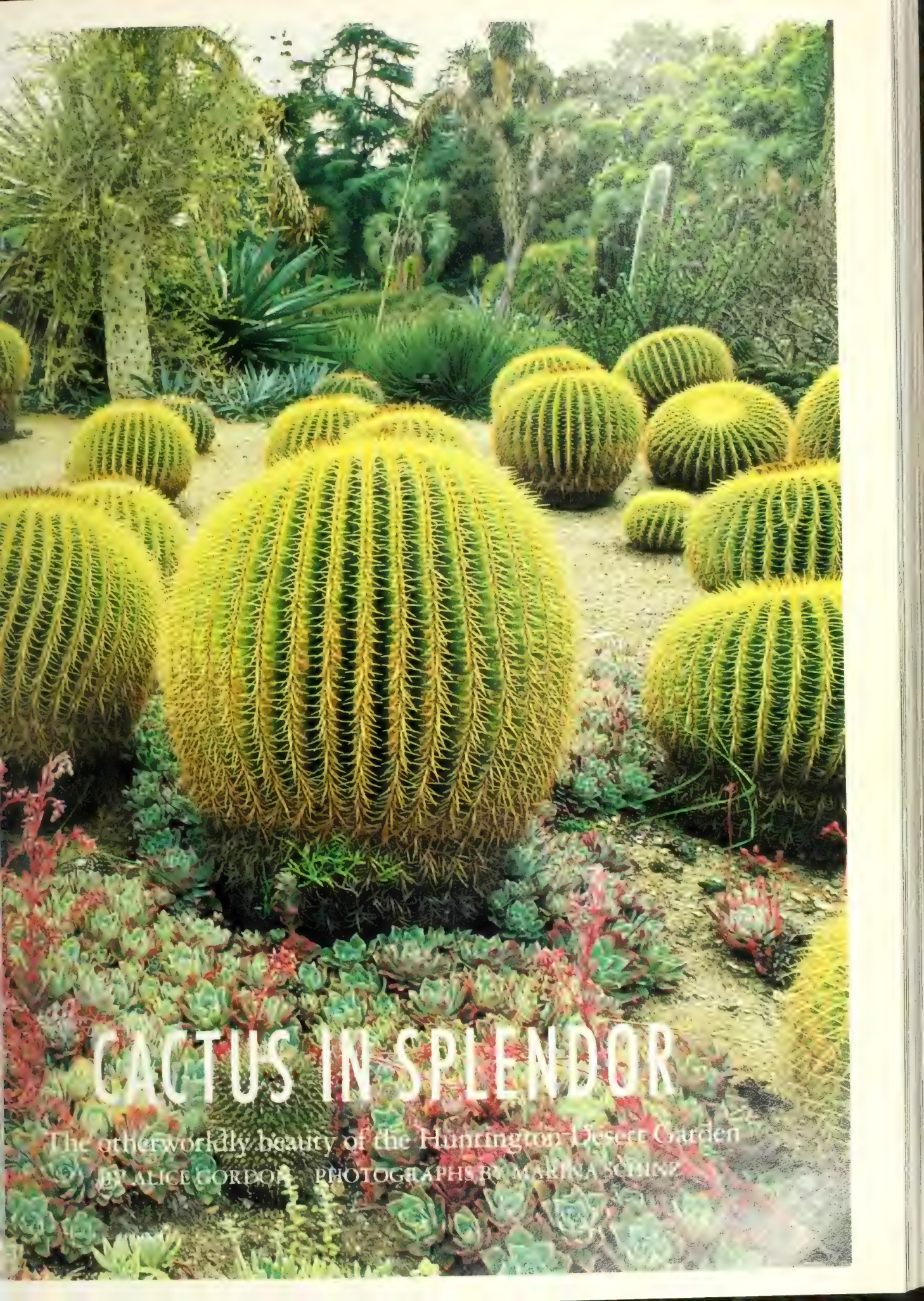
Opposite: The grim air shaft of New York's Alwyn Court apartments was transformed into a dignified atrium with a design that mimics the building's ornate stone façade.

This, much modified, became the central motif of his scheme, to which he added other Classical elements—a pair of curving stairways and a statue of the ancient hero—as well as an astonishingly lifelike

of his mural's placement in a dull Ohio downtown. Thus he has at once established an unforgettable image in the mind's eye of his viewers and evoked the same sense of mystery and connection to a larger tra-







CACTUS IN SPLENDOR

The otherworldly beauty of the Huntington Desert Garden
BY ALICE GORDON PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARINA SCHINE





Fifty-year-old golden barrel cacti (*Echinocactus grusonii*), *preceding pages*, form one of the Desert Garden's most spectacular displays. *Opposite*: Plants from Baja California include creeping devil cacti (*Machaerocereus eruca*), siemprevivas (*Dudleya brittonii*) on rocks, boojums (*Fouquieria columnaris*) in background. *Above*: Growing down to path, *Portulacaria afra* (left), *Acanthocereus pentagonus* 'Monstrosus'. Tall blooms: *Aloe* spp.

Jim Dice, the curator of the Huntington Desert Garden in San Marino, California, reminded me that vis-à-vis beauty, cacti present a perception problem. For all the people who are attracted to them, he said, there are just as many who have "no desire for any affiliation whatsoever with cacti." Thinking about this while walking through the garden, I flashed on the *Twilight Zone* episode about a young woman who we earthling TV viewers thought was very pretty but who fell far short of her own planet's frankly porcine standard of beauty and was therefore exiled to a place where other "ugly" people like herself lived. What that other place was to her planet, I thought, the Huntington Desert Garden could be to our world of plants. For example, compared to the *Aeonium arboreum* 'Zwartkop', which approximates an outsized black-enamel zinnia, a rose is plain at best.

There exists no real desert environment like the one at the Huntington Library/Art Gallery/Botanical Gardens, which is, of course, one rea-

son it's such a thrill to explore. The garden is a triumph of shamelessly sensuous landscaping, twelve acres crammed with tough, voluptuous plants from all over the world, some native to climates tropical as well as arid. There are twenty thousand individuals from 2,500 species to look at, and they make up forty percent of all the plants in the ten theme gardens that spread over the Huntington's 207 acres.

From the tiny pincushion cacti on the rockery walk to the towering dragon tree, most of the plants in the Desert Garden are weird-looking because they also look like things other than themselves. Some, such as the lithops family, known as "living stones," blatantly mimic their surroundings. Others seem to take the serious business of adapting to a hostile environment with a sense of humor: one plant looks like a green balloon sculpture, another a piece of salted fish, another a deer's antlers studded with pompons. A ground cover resembles a spilled bag of lime jellybeans, another, a child's upward-reaching fingers, (*Continued on page 250*)



Barrel cacti (*Echinocactus ingens*) nestle in a luxurious bed of brilliant blue senecio (*Senecio Mandraliscae*).



A fantastic profusion of serpentlike cacti (*Trichocereus thelegonus*) from northwestern Argentina.





Mr. Huntington has one of the world's largest collections of African aloes, here mixed with columnar cacti and golden barrel cacti. Looming in the background is a gargantuan South American cereus (*Cereus* sp.).

BUENOS AIRES PIED-À-TERRE

Designer Juan Pablo Molyneux
creates an opulent setting for his wife and himself

PHOTOGRAPHS BY OBERTO GILI

The apartment of many moods is entered through a bare, gleaming foyer, *this page*, with marble floor and lacquered walls. Pine column is new; German caryatid bracket is old. *Opposite:* Dark-brown velvet walls, red-and-gold coffered ceiling. Molyneux achieves this low view within a small area









The entry is white and bare, the library is dark and velvety, the dining room is hard and glittering. "I like defined spaces," the apartment's owner and designer, Juan Pablo Molyneux, explains, "even in a place that is small."

When the Chilean-born designer decided to live and work in New York as well as Buenos Aires, he and his wife, Pilar, moved from a vast apartment in Buenos Aires to a pied-à-terre in an old French-style building in that city's most fashionable neighborhood.

The neighborhood was one of the apartment's attractions, and so was the height of the rooms. Another advantage turned out to be the very poor condition of the existing interior surfaces, which Molyneux felt gave him license to tear down every room partition and build anew.

Within the empty shell, the designer developed a completely different floor plan and enriched it with luxurious decorative detail. He paved his front rooms with white marble, coffered two of the ceilings in Renaissance style, and topped all the major doorways with traditional arches, which frame interior vistas. Another bit of indoor scenery-making was the conversion of an outside balcony into a greenhouse viewed from several rooms.

Molyneux's broad taste, unified by a preference for the formal, spans many centuries and draws upon many styles. With this stock in trade, his practice now spans two continents. □ *By Elaine Greene. Editor: Kaaren Parker Gray*

On living-room walls, a tiny-patterned fabric designed by Molyneux. Also his design: the seating, the marble-and-Lucite coffee table.



Juan Pablo Molyneux enlarged his tiny dining room, *opposite*, whose 4-by-4-foot hexagonal mahogany table almost fills it, by making it "a mirrored box" with a strict no-color palette. Regency chairs are lacquered and gilded. Paintings are 16th-century Dutch; chandelier is English. *Above:* From the living room, through one of a pair of symmetrically placed archways, is seen the balcony-turned-greenhouse. *Below:* The velvet-lined bedroom was designed for tranquility. Behind mirrors is a wall of closets.

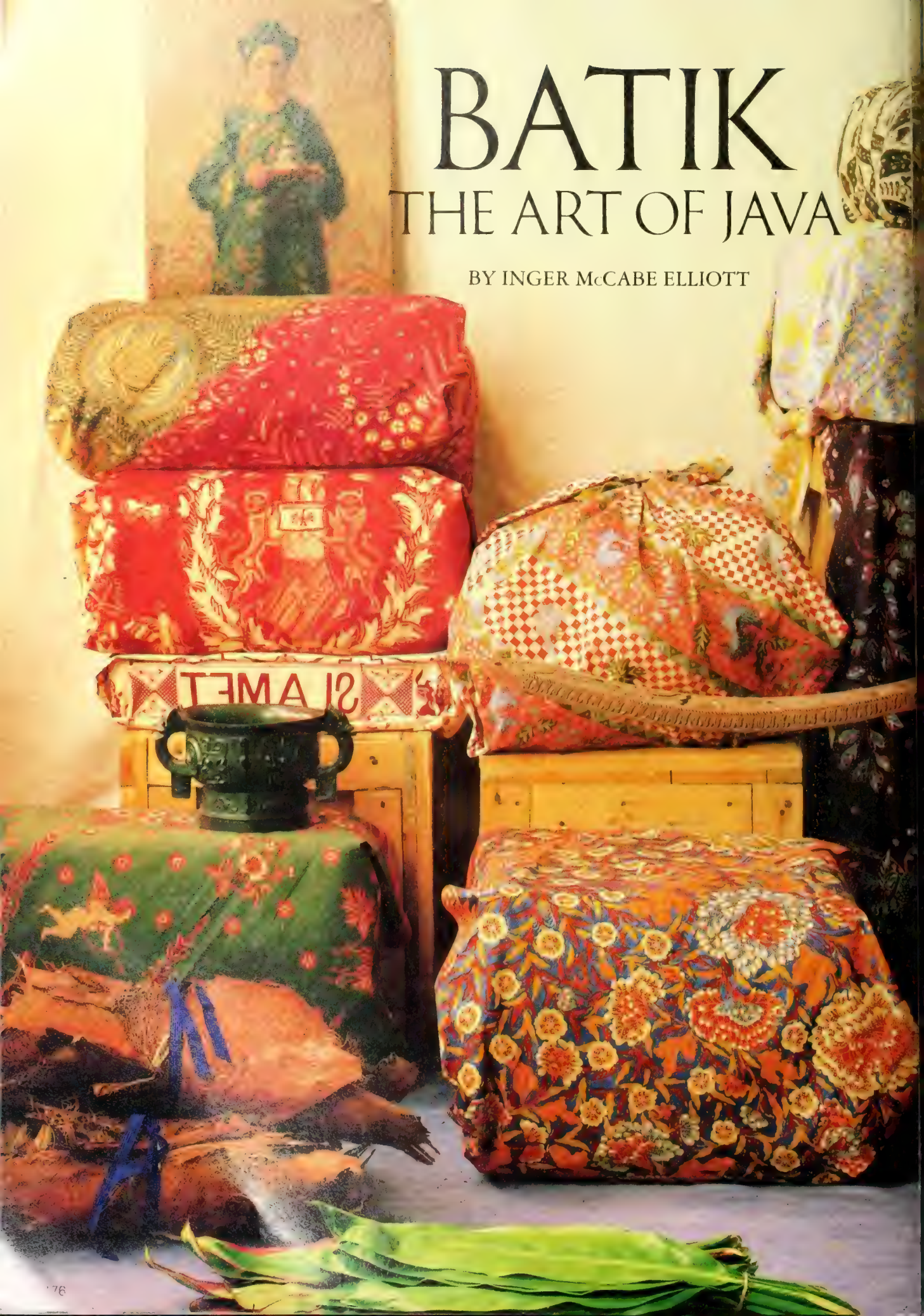


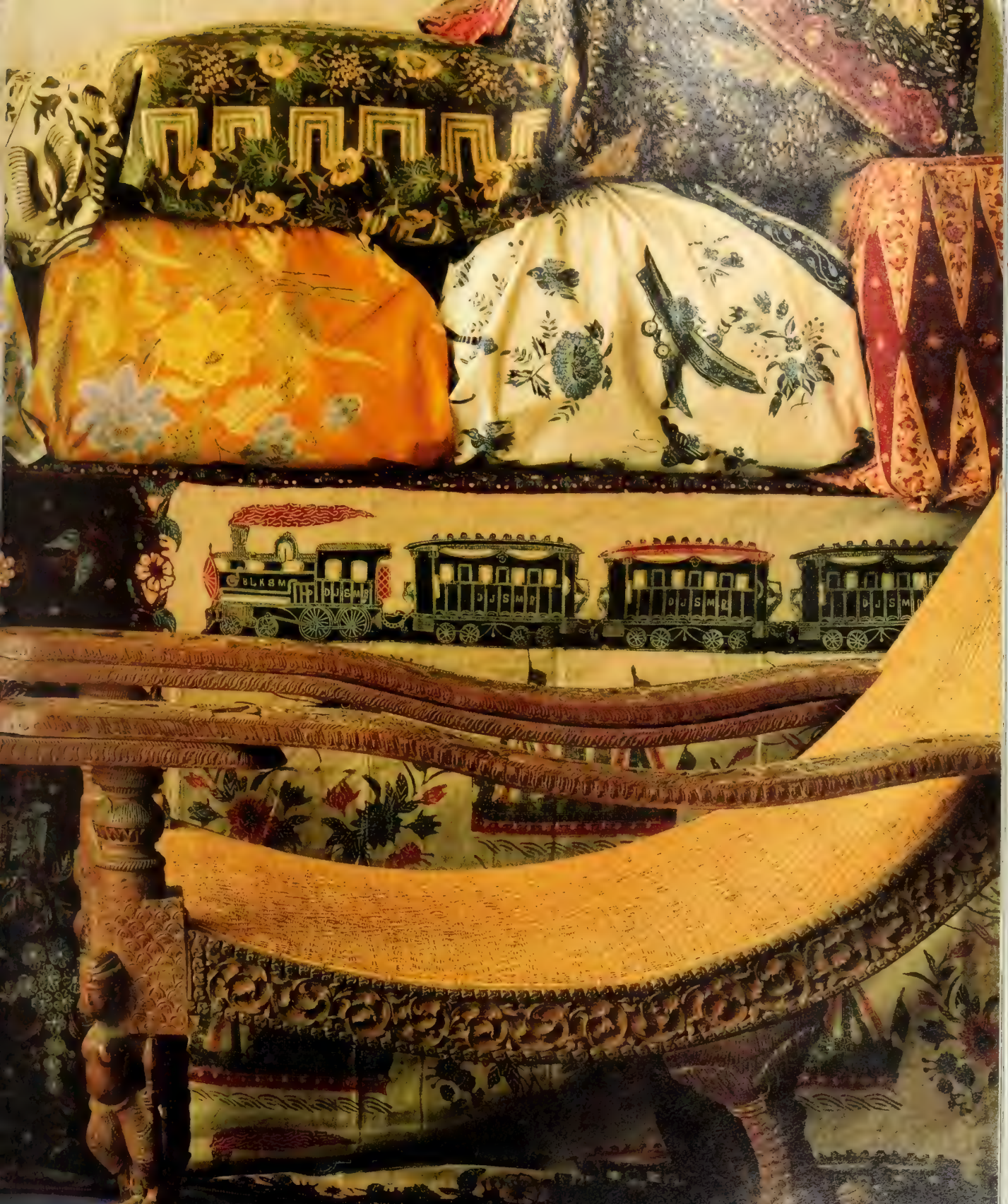


BATIK

THE ART OF JAVA

BY INGER McCABE ELLIOTT





Reminiscent of a colonial trading post, a scene designed especially for House & Garden by Patrick Naggar of Didier Aaron and photographed by Oberto Gili is filled with a variety of one-of-a-kind batiks from the turn of the century. The 19th-century French painting by Jost, Indo-Portuguese chair, and 19th-century Japanese bronze vase from Didier Aaron, New York. All batik from the collection of Inger McCabe Elliott, New York, with the exception of the cinnabar and coral piece, far right of picture, which is from the collection of Jonathan Hope, London.



Rich in color and complex in pattern, distinctive batiks created along the north coast of Java are the subject of a fascinating new book and a traveling exhibition now at the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.

For hundreds of years the Javanese coast has lain at a crossroads of trade, near the course sailed by Marco Polo, Magellan, Sir Francis Drake, and St. Francis Xavier. It is even probable, although as yet unproved, that the Javanese themselves sailed to other parts of Asia as early as the pre-Christian era. Later, trade brought with it a succession of religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam—and successive waves of colonization. Each of these influences left its imprint on the culture of Java and on its finest art form, batik.

The roots of batik are ancient, everywhere, and difficult to trace. No one knows exactly where and when people first began to apply wax, vegetable paste, paraffin, or even mud to cloth that would then resist a dye. But it was on the islands of Java and nearby Madura that batik emerged as one of the great art forms of Asia. Batik is

known to have existed in China, Japan, India, Thailand, East Turkestan, Europe, and Africa, and it may have developed simultaneously in several of these areas. Some scholars believe that the process originated in India and was later brought to Egypt. Whatever the case, in A.D. 70, in his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder told of Egyptians applying designs to cloth in a manner similar to the batik process. The method was known seven hundred years later in China. Scholars have ascertained that batik found in Japan was Chinese, made during the Tang Dynasty.

Thus, batik was already an ancient tradition by the time the earliest historical evidence of Javanese work appeared in the sixteenth century. Records from the coast of Malabar in 1516 suggest the painted cloth for export may have been batiked. The first known mention of *Javanese* batik occurs two years later, in 1518, when the word



Used to cover the head of a bridal couple during the marriage ceremony, the *selendang*, *above*, patterned in Arabic calligraphy, demonstrates the impact of the Moslem non-representational tradition on batik design.

Overleaf, left: Detail of a sarong batik from Pekalongan, circa 1900, shows the signature of the designer, E.V. Zuylen. From the collection of Jacques Gadbois. *Overleaf, right:* Javanese dancer or *Ronggong* wearing a sarong under sashes used in intricate dance movements with hips, arms, and hands. Lithograph by Lemerancier after E. Hardouin.

tulis, a tool used for batik making, appeared; the term survives today to specify the finest hand-drawn batik. One hundred years later the word *baték* actually appeared in an inventory of goods sent to Sumatra.

Before cotton is batiked, it must be prepared to receive wax and dyes. Sometimes it is boiled to remove sizing or stiffness in the fibers. After boiling, the cloth is treated with oil and lye to give it a base color and to prepare the fibers to receive the dyes; rinsed in yet another bath and while still wet, folded. Placed on a wooden baseboard, the cloth is then beaten with a mallet, to soften the fibers and enable the material to absorb wax.

After the baths and the beating, a design is applied by pencil to the prepared fabric. The cloth is then ready to receive its first waxing, known as *ngrengreng*.

Hand-drawn batik is called *tulis*, after the Javanese for

"writing." Combining the finest designs with the best cottons, *tulis* is the most time-consuming, expensive, and highly prized batik. The basic tool is the *canting* (also spelled *tjanting*), with which liquid wax is drawn on cloth.

The *canting* works much like a fountain pen. It has a bamboo or reed handle, about six inches long, with a small, thin copper cup from which a tiny pipe protrudes. (Copper is used for both cup and pipe because it conducts heat and keeps the wax warm and fluid.) A woman holds the *canting* by its bamboo handle, scooping up the heated wax and blowing through the tip of the pipe to keep the wax fluid. Then using the *canting's* pipe as a pen, she draws the design (Text continued on page 246)



Luz



THE HAGMANS AT HOME



NANCY ELLISON, SYGMA

Designed by Alie Chang Paul, their Malibu house is a million miles from Dallas

BY GABRIELLE WINKEL PHOTOGRAPHS BY OBERTO GILI





Maj and Larry Hagman, *preceding pages, left*, in what they fondly call their "barefoot house." *Preceding pages, right*:

Larry's flag collection seen from the beach. The Hagman flag, second from left, is a gift from actor David Wayne and bears a Latin motto that means "Life is a feast."

Left: The handle on the front door is a copper Mayan-style fish, its eye the keyhole. It was made by craftsman George Martin. *Right*: The living-room coffee table, like many wood pieces here, was made by a friend, furniture designer Tom Braverman. All fireplaces were hand-sculpted by Maj Hagman. The project architect was J. Scott Carter.

Larry Hagman may be the only person who has ever come to the defense of J.R. Ewing, the *Dallas* villain who has fascinated television viewers for years. "I don't think he's so mean. He's just taking care of business and looking after his family." The two men do have that in common: Hagman has virtually made a business of being J.R. on the small screen and in magazine ads and product endorsements, but not at the expense of his thirty-year, two-child marriage. When it comes to domestic life there is a world of difference between the two men.

Actor Larry Hagman and his Swedish-born designer wife, Maj, live a life as full as the Ewings', but one without the backroom trickery and living-room acrimony over oil wells, inheritances, and amours that are daily fare for the Ewings. Instead the Hagmans live amiably, entertaining their grown children and his *Dallas* co-stars, enjoying their pool, spa, and video equipment, and traveling for filming and fun.

The Hagmans have lived on the Malibu beach for about eighteen years, also maintaining houses in Santa Fe and Mexico. Two years ago, they wanted to renovate their wood house in Malibu but learned that dry rot, termites, and wiring problems were so

bad it was more sensible to build a new one. With architectural designer Alie Chang Paul they rebuilt, following their original remodeling plan but adding many new elements. Recalling the couple's travels, the house combines the whitewashed masonry walls of a Greek farmhouse, the exposed cedar beams of a Spanish Colonial ranch.

They placed the house around the 10-by-10-foot L-shaped Jacuzzi spa that Maj designed years before. In the big, simple rooms, stucco walls curve to create shelves, niches, and seats, and there are eight fireplaces hand-sculpted by Maj, who inspired the project foreman's admiring comment, "When I met you I threw away my level." A 14½-by-14½-foot skylight over the stairway brightens and opens the entire house.

Both Hagmans want their house and their life to get "simpler and simpler and simpler." Simplicity to them means easy maintenance and minimal worry. Maj says, "We tried to cut out anything that made life hard. Life usually has edges: something bothers you but you just can't pinpoint it. Too many objects—that's one edge that we have eliminated." So they did not cover the new walls with works of art from the old house. Instead they culled:







When foreman Dan Lira went to Santa Fe to get the feel of another Haggman house, he came back with the forked log now standing in the living room, seen *this page*. The wood sculpture of a sleeping baby is instinctively caressed by visitors. *Opposite*: The array of books and the Haggmans' favorite antique rug add pattern to the living room. Brick floors throughout the house are warmed by solar-heated water running through copper pipes.

paintings by their son-in-law, Brian Blount, by friend Barton Lidice Benes, and two works by luminaries of the theater—a gladiolus by Beatrice Lillie, and a yellow rose by Henry Fonda commissioned in the late forties by Hagman's mother, Mary Martin, when she played in *South Pacific* and Fonda was Mr. Roberts.

Simplicity is the key, "but I still want my toys," says Larry. They include hydraulic beds, a cappuccino maker, a stereo system that brings music to beach and bedroom, TV screens large and small, indoors and at poolside, and a store-display, much-larger-than-life Swiss army knife that opens and closes.

Gadgets notwithstanding, tranquil-



ity fills the Hagman house—especially on Sundays when there are mimosas and Sunday papers by the pool and Bach cantatas fill the air and Larry doesn't say a word. "Larry lost his voice twelve years ago and he had to be quiet for two days. He discovered it was a discipline and a pleasure and he kept it up. People tell him more when he's silent, too," Maj explains. This is a tactic J.R. might profit by. □

Editor: Joyce MacRae

Video-screen controls double as a table in the ocean-viewing "tea-house room," *right*. Painting by Adrian Wortzel. *Above*: The wife of actor Carroll O'Connor convinced Maj to buy this five-legged English men's-club chair when she said its price was "only a case of wine."









Larry hangs his hats under the big skylight on a saguaro cactus carved in wood, *above*. *Opposite*: The ladder in the master bedroom leads to a loft where the Hagmans exercise. The bed coverings are part of Maj's antique linen collection. *Church in Taos* is a work by the Hagmans' son-in-law, Brian Blount.





JOAN MITCHELL: ART AND LIFE AT VÉTHEUIL

BY LINDA NOCHLIN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT FRESON



Joan Mitchell, *top*, in the octagonal tower dining room at Vétheuil which dates from 1840. *Above*: A view of the town of Vétheuil on the Seine. *Opposite*: *La Grande Vallée, II*, 1983, oil on canvas, collection of Paula and Gerard Lennard, in the show of Joan Mitchell's work at Xavier Fourcade, November 29–January 5.



It's the blue gate," said the taxi driver as he let me off at Joan Mitchell's address on the rue Claude-Monet at Vétheuil. As instructed, I pushed against the gate forcefully. It swung open with a gentle rheumatic creak, and suddenly I was in another world: private, cool, darkly green, and with just that enticing, and particularly French, sense of mystery that in houses and gardens, as in people, suggests an interesting past. Rough stone pots of marigolds marked off an ivy-shrouded niche with two shady pathways ascending on either side of it. As I trudged up to the house, the silence was so complete, the foliage so dense that it was hard to believe that Paris was only forty minutes away, that Vétheuil was in fact, as my Michelin described it, part of the "Environs de Paris."

Suddenly, the pathway opened out onto an ample terrace, shade surrendered to brilliant light, but a light intercepted and dappled at its heart by the outstretched leafage of an enormous tree. To the right, a fourteenth-century cloister-portico served as an improvised woodshed. From this enchanted spot, directly



beneath my gaze, the Seine slowly curled its way through the countryside, winding through a landscape of embracing curves, slow-moving barges, and languid golden fields, enlivened by the occasional staccato touch of red-tiled roofs. Across the river, uneven stands of poplars, rigid as sentries on duty, marked off the miniature houses of Lavacourt from the bluish hills beyond. It was a view that suggested peace and permanence; indeed, a view not very different from the one that Claude Monet had looked out on when he had lived in the gardener's cottage below, on the street now named in his honor, more than a hundred years ago.

Walking across the terrace, I opened the French doors into a large, airy room with a high, wood-beamed ceiling, a grand fireplace, and, surprisingly, an oculus decorated with wrought-iron tracery offering a (Text continued on page 226)

The Billiard Room, *opposite*, in the older part of the house. *Top*: *Untitled*, 1983, pastel on paper, Xavier Fourcade, Inc. *Above*: The fields just outside Vetheuil.



A view of Joan Mitchell's house on the hill, *top*, with gardener's cottage, once the house of Monet, below it. *Above*: *La Grand Vallée, VII*, 1983, oil on canvas, collection of Gérard Pons-Seguín, Paris. *Right*: The 14th-century cloister portico is used as a potting shed. *Opposite*: The linden on the terrace overlooking the Seine







A view of the lake at West Wycombe and the island with the Temple of Music, c. 1765, by Nicholas Revett, based on Temple of Vesta in Rome; it was formerly used as a theater and for *fêtes champêtres*.

SECRETS OF WEST WYCOMBE

the fascinating country seat of the dashing founder of the Hell-Fire Club

BY SIR JOHN PLUMB
PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANÇOIS HALARD





The double colonnaded South Front of West Wycombe, *above*, built after 1754. *Opposite*: A bust of Joseph Borgnis sits by the main staircase of mahogany with satinwood inlay; Borgnis, who painted the frescoes along stairs about 1750, arrived from Craveggia near Milan at the invitation of the first Sir Francis Dashwood and stayed with his family at West Wycombe for twenty years.

West Wycombe astonishes all who visit this small, carefully preserved Chiltern village. The great golden globe beckons for miles, perched high above the Church of St. Lawrence which dominates the village, and crowning an escarpment that brings to its worshipers vistas of hill and dale and beechwood unsurpassed by any parish church in Britain. As visitors toil to the top of the winding road that leads to the church, they can rest on a terrace by the notorious caves of the Hell-Fire Club with their gingerbread Gothic façade; caves which have caught the erotic imagination of generations and so embroidered the legend of the first Sir Francis Dashwood who, the scoffers of legend would have it, quarried them because he wanted to build a road up the hill. Or was that the reason?

Were there orgies in the cave? Were there orgies too at Medmenham, a medieval abbey by the Thames which Sir Francis rented, for fishing parties, the scoffers say? The legend is of lecheries, the same lecheries that Cleland described in *Fanny Hill*, of men dressed as monks and whores as nuns locked in ritualistic copulation. Rumor embroiders, of course, with garish colors and deliberate exaggeration, but it is rare indeed for rumor to be without any basis at all. And, how strange to garnish a quarry with an ecclesiastical façade or to have oneself painted, as Sir Francis did, in monkish robes—for no reason at all.

Leaving aside for a moment the private life of Sir Francis Dashwood, who built the church and the house and laid out the garden with its many lakes and follies, West Wycombe could claim the respect and admiration of all who visit it even had its creator been a bishop of impeccable character. West Wycombe, however, has been lucky in the Dashwoods. They were very rich Turkey

merchants in the seventeenth century, and in addition to the estates at West Wycombe they possessed large properties at Necton in Lincolnshire, which mercifully they preferred in the nineteenth century when they were not pioneering sheep runs in New Zealand. So for over a century West Wycombe was left alone, decaying a little, but preserving all that had been created by Sir Francis and his stepbrother, Sir John, who succeeded him. Hard times forced the present Sir Francis Dashwood's father to make over the property to the National Trust but post-war inflation made his endowment of diminishing use in preserving, let alone restoring, this unique property. Fortunately the present Sir Francis makes fortunes with ease and is obsessively devoted to West Wycombe, which has risen phoenixlike in all its original beauty. Temples have been restored; the beautiful eighteenth-century colors glisten on the walls of the house; marble floors have been revealed, furniture, chandeliers, antique vases, and pictures tracked down and restored. At present the great vista, designed by the original Sir Francis, is being reconstructed, as it runs through a great wood and needs a dramatic obelisk at its point of perspective—no light task. Ten more years and the genius and the restless but decisive energy of the present Sir Francis will have restored house and garden to its full eighteenth-century beauty and significance.

The house, the garden, the church are immediately impressive in their beauty, but they are full of symbols and ambiguities as well. They express the character and interests of one man as few houses and gardens do. And it helps one's enjoyment of West Wycombe if one is aware of both the character of the first Sir Francis and the world in which he moved. (Text continued on page 216)





Detail of Music Saloon,
this page. Dining room, *opposite*,
restored to original grandeur with
ceiling based on design taken
from sepulcher at Palmyra.
Portraits, left to right: the first
Sir Francis Dashwood as
Pope Pontius VII by Adrien
Carpentiers, and as Postmaster-
General by Nathaniel Dance.







Landscape views of West Wycombe in 1764 by William Hannan, Scottish cabinetmaker, and ancestral portraits hang in the Red Drawing Room, *opposite, above*; over fireplace is a painting commemorating the founding of the Dilettanti Society. *Far left*: The Temple of Apollo, also called the "cockpit," as cockfights took place in sand pit beneath the arch. *Left*: A chestnut by the lake. *Above*: In the library, Roman statues sit on mantelpiece and above it hang portraits of Vere, Earl of Westmorland, and members of his family. *Right*: A portrait of the first Sir Francis Dashwood in the Dining Room as "Il Faquin Dashwood Pasha" in the costume of Divan Club, which he founded for friends who, like himself, had visited Ottoman Empire. The ladies who belonged, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, were called "Sultanas."





The Dashwood mausoleum, built by the Oxford stonemason John Bastard and based on Constantine's Arch in Rome.






Original floor of Portland and red Wilderness stone in the Marble Hall, *above*, was uncovered in 1964. A fine marble bust by Michael Rysbrack and early-18th-century longcase clock by John-Samuel Agar frame door leading to Yellow Saloon. *Left*: The cascade designed by Revett in 1760 with Sleeping Nymph after one on Capitoline Hill, Rome, represents the neck of a swan whose shape the lake echoes. *Opposite, above*: A Venus de Milo flanked by paintings after Rubens in the Blue Drawing Room, once the breakfast room where Benjamin Franklin played his King of Prussia hoax on guests. *Right*: The Temple of Venus sits on a hill and represents the tummy of an erotic folly whose legs are divided by the Venus Parlor below; inside is a large brick cave. The 42 erotic statues that used to be on the hill disappeared in 1750. *Far right*: The Temple of Music.





The Dashwood mausoleum and 13th-century church with tower rebuilt in 1751, inspired by Palladio's Customs House in Venice, the nave in 1763 after the Temple of the Sun at Palmyra. *Opposite:* Tapestries made by Josse de Vos, circa 1710, are reflected in a mirror in this State Dressing Room made for George III; a bit of ceiling made by Hannan based on those in Vatican loggia is also visible.





A mix of antique Roman and 18th-century busts stare out from the ground floor of the Double Colonnade derived from the Palazzo Chiericati in Vicenza. Frescoes on ceiling and at each end by Borgnis.



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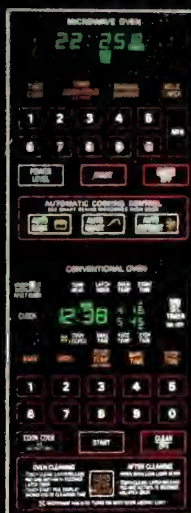


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SECRETS OF WEST WYCOMBE

(Continued from page 200) Sir Francis's family had just ceased to be *nouveau riche* and he had the self-confidence of his mother's aristocratic family, a confidence fortified by the national mood. Born in 1708, Sir Francis grew up in a very prosperous, very ebullient Britain which was beginning to sense the expanding power that was to lead it in the nineteenth century to world dominion. The young aristocrats were rich but like the Vanderbilts, the Fricks, and the Astors of the early twentieth century, they felt provincial when faced with the sophisticated arts of France and Italy; in architecture, painting, and sculpture, in music and opera they felt ignorant and jejune, and to remedy these shortcomings the rich British devised the Grand Tour for their offspring.

Sir Francis took greatly to travel—he went as far as Russia and visited Greece as well as Italy; and to Italy itself he went not once but several times. He bought pictures, studied architecture, learned the languages. He was ravished by antiquity, especially Greek, yet also entranced by rococo decoration. He was typical of the youth of his age in another way. The British were crazy about clubs. Some, like the Freemasons, started in 1719, were grand, formal, and highly organized; others like the artists' Roman Club a mere five or six friends of Arthur Pond who met to talk about classical antiquities and get drunk. On his return to England after his Grand Tour Sir Francis started the Society of Dilettanti for men of like tastes. The Society had its painter, George Knapp, who immortalized the members in fancy dress and whose portraits still hang at Brooks's Club in London. Sir Francis remained its moving spirit. The Society was devoted to art; it was theatrical in its ritual and dress; it partook in all aspects of the sensuous and sensual life. There was, however, an overridingly serious purpose to the dilettanti: to promote the knowledge and appreciation of Greek and Roman art and to improve the practice of art in Britain. This intellectual commitment was as much a part of Sir Francis's character as his sensual pleasures.

The Grand Tour, however, made



The Temple of Winds, near the house, used for storage of ice.

most young aristocrats unhappy with their family homes. An earlier generation than Sir Francis's had begun to rebuild their houses—the Devonshires at Chatsworth, Sir Robert Walpole at Houghton; the great Vanbrugh houses at Blenheim and Castle Howard had only recently been finished. When Sir Francis set about West Wycombe, he was doing very much what a rich young aristocrat of his generation was expected to do. The finished product, however, was unlike anything else that Britain knew.

There are two major architectural triumphs at West Wycombe—the church and the house—but both incorporate older buildings. Sir Francis, unlike many of his contemporaries, had considerable piety toward the past. In the great Palladian church which he built—the first Palladian parish church in England—he incorporated the remains of the late medieval tower in the building. Similarly the house contains the shell of the house built by his father in Queen Anne's day, but it remains a buried piety.

The most dramatic aspect of West Wycombe—the great double colonnade of the South Front—totally changed the house. It created a huge terrace, unique in England, made even more spacious by the frescoes on the end walls. Stretching away is a rising hill that underlines the sense of theater that one feels immediately on stepping onto the terrace: it was a perfect place for the long English summer eve-

nings—ample room for music, for charades, or for sauntering and flirting. In a sense the double colonnade was a Palladian pastiche even though a most original one. The last development of the house was toward the end of Sir Francis's era and was equally unusual—the careful and accurate reconstruction of the Temple of Bacchus at Telos on the West Front. No one before had constructed such a replica. And it also marks one of the first essays in Neoclassicism in English country-house building. Remarkably it was not really a part of the house but the last of the garden temples. It was opened with a procession of “Bacchanals, Priests, Priestesses, Pan, fauns, satyrs, Silenus, etc., all in proper habits and wreathed with vine leaves. They made sacrifice to the statue of Bacchus that is still there and then returned to the garden for more music and frolics.”

Frolics, indeed; the garden, the most elaborate of the eighteenth century that expresses the wanton genius of one man, abounds with visual delectations of every kind. From a hot-air balloon, the lakes and canals created by the damming of the river Wye form the shape of the swan with outstretched neck and legs, a swan shape that was in Sir Francis's day probably visible from the golden ball of the church where he sat and drank “Divine Milk Punch” and sang “blasphemous songs” with his friends. The swan was intended to recall the wanton sport of Leda. Upon the island of the lake he built the Temple of Music, beautiful and inviting for music or dalliance and marvelously discreet, for it could only be reached by one of the miniature warships with which Sir Francis adorned his lake. On the way to the Music Temple, however, one could pause at the Parlor of Venus, whose deliberate eroticism left no one in doubt of its purpose or intent. Its entrance was as entirely feminine as its shape. More discreet was the Temple of the Winds, a charming Palladian folly for long English summer evenings of music, wine, and flirtation. Or the Temple of Apollo made for a different sport: it contained a cockpit and yet it may have had other purposes, for the motto of the Hell-Fire Club, *Liberati Amicitiaeque Sac* (Sacred to Liberty

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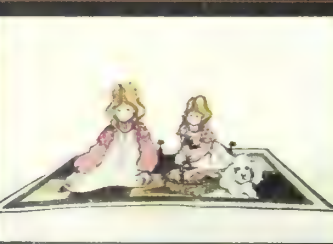
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and Friendship), is inscribed in a panel over its arch.

However, the most striking feature of the garden is its obvious theatricality: it was meant for processions, for dancers, for dryads, fauns, satyrs, and nymphs performing rituals and elaborate ceremonial. It also provided a splendid back-cloth suitable for statements of patriotism and noble sentiment, with miniature warships blazing away on the lake destroying the French with whom during Sir Francis's day Britain was so frequently at war. The garden created a theatrical background to a theatrical house.

The house provided a number of platforms for dramatic appearances, for music, for charades, for fancy dress rituals of every kind. Even the entrance to the library, regarded by most architectural historians as an amateur mistake because there is a difference in level created by the height of the saloon on the ground floor, is so used. The difference in level is overcome by a double flight of steps leading to a small platform that runs in front of the library doors—a perfect arrangement for a dramatic entrance in costume or for a local Emma Hamilton to strike Grecian attitudes.

The great terrace on the south front and the east and west porticoes were in a sense stages, always waiting for a performance. But there were more secret places still—up a small staircase at the eastern end of the house was the Masonic lodge, reached by a narrow staircase at the foot of which was a large dressing-up room—the pegs for costumes still remain; the lodge is large, the decoration partly Masonic symbols in the ceiling plaster and partly “egg and dart” dado, but with a difference—the eggs are quite suggestive of buttocks and the dart has an unusual shape and liveliness. There is an arch in the south wall and beyond that two further dressing-up rooms, doubtless for the robing of the dignitaries of the lodge. And, of course, the room may have been used for rites of a more intimate nature.

It would be totally wrong, however, to think that West Wycombe and its park, or indeed the notorious caves or the strange parish church were the work of a wild libertine, so besotted with the flesh and its pleasures that he had to make everything that he

planned and built with scarcely disguised symbols of sensuality. Nor was he the trivial, drink-sodden youth whom Horace Walpole maligned. Dashwood certainly had a passion for art and architecture, for the theater and for costume, but he was a highly intelligent man of independent views. No wonder Benjamin Franklin became a close friend, indeed a collaborator; together they produced a *Revised Book of Common Prayer* for the Church of England, which had a profound influence on drawing up the *American Episcopal Prayer Book* after the separation of the two countries. They tried, too, to bring about a reunification of the two countries in 1770. Warm friends in politics, Franklin visited Dashwood and thought West Wycombe “a Paradise.” Franklin, after all, was likely to respond to Dashwood's strong masculine and sensual tastes which, contrary to popular belief, do not inhibit a taste for art and beauty. Both took great delight in the instinctive life of man. Dashwood was as liberal in politics as in life and it is fitting that the great statue of William Penn which adorned his park is now in Philadelphia.

The young aristocracy of Dashwood's day had been freed from the guilts and soul-searchings of the seventeenth century that had haunted rakes such as the Earl of Rochester. Sir Francis was not alone in expressing the new freedom in his lifestyle or even in his house and garden. What is unique is the survival of as much of his work. The little that was added to it by his stepbrother, Sir John Dashwood-King, himself a Knight of Sir Francis of Wycombe, and a monk of Medmenham merely embellished what Sir Francis created, with discreet temples and follies for further pleasures in the garden. All have lasted and survived sufficiently for the present Sir Francis to resurrect one of England's greatest and most original eighteenth-century gardens.

At a more scholarly level, West Wycombe makes a profound statement about the Enlightenment and its expression. Franklin adored it and so would Diderot have done; it breathes the freedom of living and earthly joy, which is what the Enlightenment was all about. □

Editor: Beatrice Monti della Corte

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A POET'S PLACE IN PROVENCE

(Continued from page 147) abouts is unknown, or who may refuse to agree with the others to sell; some such person owned the central slice of this ruin, and maybe a bit of the air above it.

We drove on. Round a final bend at the end of the corkscrew, on the far side of the hill, the road straightened out and ran along a flat valley or narrow plain with the mountains in the distance ahead of us and on either side. To our right were fields with a few scattered olive trees, *cannes de Provence* (a kind of bamboo characteristic of the area), and a lot of sunburnt grass, thistles, weeds, scrub. We soon came to a dirt track leading past a ruin which was the mere broken shell of a small, long-abandoned farmhouse, of the kind called here a *mas*. The ruin consisted of about six crumbling and broken-down walls. There was no sign of a roof except for a single decaying beam, bare to the winds. A rampant fig tree, blackberries, elderberry, ivy, and nettles were growing up inside the walls out of floors which were earth and stones.

We explored these remains of a farmhouse, one wing of which was where the family had lived, the other, at a slightly lower level, the *bergerie*, home of sheep and goats huddled up that close to their owners. The back of the farmhouse consisted of one wall running the whole length of it, windowless, and now ivy-mantled. This has protected the human and animal occupants of the *mas* from the prevailing north wind, the mistral. It is the mistral and not just the painter's madness which causes cypresses in Van Gogh's paintings to look like green-black whirling, writhing madmen. For this part of Provence is Van Gogh country with strata of rocks running parallel, overlapping each other, like waves hewn out of stone, foliage like knots of living flame, deep-blue or burning-yellow skies flecked with whitest cloud, and fields of stubble prickly as a peasant's unshaved cheek.

From the front of the ruin (where we were to construct a terrace) we looked across a small field which had once been a vineyard, with, at the far end, a hedge consisting of wild-cherry trees, *cannes de Provence*, and shrubs. Be-



Sir Stephen Spender in front of the cozy living-room fireplace.

yond the hedge there was a steep bank descending into an olive orchard; and, beyond the orchard, a little valley with a gully running through the bottom. And from this valley across an apricot orchard, the mountainside rose steeply through stone and scrub and many wild flowers to a skyline of rocks, jagged, straight and curling, carved out by the centennial mistral to a profile as elegant, when seen from our terrace, as the scroll of an old violin. Our view up to this skyline is of a screen of pine trees in front of a screen of rock, beyond that, another screen of pine trees, and beyond them, the farthest screen of rock. Slightly theatrical, it seems the work of some master stage designer, like a Chinese or Japanese watercolor of just such a rocky landscape.

Although "our mountain," as we were already beginning to call it, seemed quite far away, actually it takes only about half an hour's walk from "our house" to reach the farthest ridge, culminating in a crest the shape of a cock's comb. Standing there on the skyline, there is the great surprise. The mountainside drops almost vertically down to the immense plain. Between us and the sea there are no more mountains, except for the final outthrust of ours, stretching across the plain like a vast dragon's tail and finally disappearing into it, where no doubt it continues for a bit, extending underground.

Ours was, we discovered, the only ruin in the district which it was still possible to buy. Although lying only three miles equidistant from the villages of Mouries and Maussane—in-

deed, only five miles from Baumanière—one of the starriest of three-star restaurants in France—at the famous historic site of Les Baux, on its great fortified rock—many people seemed to think that we had chosen a house in a very remote area. Nevertheless, as soon as we could arrange to do so, we bought it, with the little field in front, for approximately five hundred dollars. Natasha christened our ruin Mas de St. Jerome; our landscape reminded her of some Italian primitive of St. Jerome in his hermitage, sitting or standing in a rocky desert. We immediately approached the local builder, M. Lopez, a charming man with smiling eyes and an alert expression on his lined tanned features under his black beret. Like many people in that part of Provence, M. Lopez is half French, half Spanish, or Catalan. He made at this time a special business of restoring ruins. Essentially, the art of restoration is to pick up the stones one by one from where they are scattered (some of ours had been torn apart during the war when the Germans used this ruin for target practice) and to put them back where they had first been put in 1816 when, some numbers carved on a stone informed us, the *mas* had been built.

Natasha, who is a musician, did all the planning of the architecture; she worked proportions out on squared paper. I think that being a musician must have helped her divide a given space into intervals.

The traditional Provençal style we admired was the use of building material which belonged to the landscape: the rough-hewn stones of unequal sizes cemented into walls in the style called the *pierres apparentes*, the pale dried-rose-colored roof tiles, and the cut slabs of honey-colored stone for the chimney piece in our living room, and for the door frames and embrasures of windows. In my view, the most beautiful feature of the house is the floor tiles, made at an *artisanat* near Apt—square in the living room, hexagonal in the kitchen, interlocking clover patterns in the bedrooms in the *bergerie*. In the dining room the tiles come from Vallauris, where Picasso had his pottery made. They are a highly enameled



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A POET'S PLACE IN PROVENCE

blood red, quite unlike the other tiles, which retain their clay texture. In fact, we had the idea of them from Château Mouton, where our friend Pauline de Rothschild had used them in a white, red, and gold corridor. They strike a note of luxuriousness which some might find incongruous in our modest house.

To get the tiles established so that they do not become stained or dirtied, they need to be waxed over a period of several weeks during which time Natasha was, it seemed to me, forever shoeing me away from wherever in the kitchen or living room I happened to be standing. I see now that the shoeing was worthwhile, for the tiles have a mirroring gleam within their dappled pink-brown-gold, like that of tiles in an interior painted by Vermeer.

The ingenious patterns of interlocking tiles derive from ancient Roman designs, as do the forms of our Provençal pottery—plates and bowls and kitchen earthenware in yellow ocher or a deep ivy green. We have a wonderful double-handled glossy black cup, used for serving sauces—often the local sweet vanilla sauces—of a design like that of cups found in Etruscan tombs. For at every point in Provence one touches on ancient Rome—not just in the many ruins like those of the Triumphal Arch on the outskirts of St. Rémy, and the Roman arena and Roman Theater at Arles, but in the cooking utensils, indeed the very stones.

The results of Natasha's juggling with spaces to put within already given areas were four bedrooms, the kitchen, the dining room (both smaller than we would really have liked, owing to structural walls of great thickness), a large downstairs living and music room, where the *bergerie* had been, with a great arched window from ceiling to floor and across almost the whole width of the room, looking out on the view of the garden in the foreground and mountain skyline in the background; and, upstairs in the main part of the house, my workroom with two windows that look across the same view. From here, at this elevation, the view seems different from the way it looks through the living-room win-

dow, a kind of exaltation of it.

Natasha's great passion was for planning the garden, perhaps because making the desert flower presented such a challenge. First, the soil had to be improved, by planting vetch and plowing it in, for three years. Then the garden, like the house, had to be protected from the mistral. We planted a row of knee-high cypresses along one side of a field adjoining the one in front of the house. They are now over twenty feet high and writhe madly in the Van Gogh wind, but the garden below them is sheltered.

Natasha's idea was to place between us and our mountain background a foreground melting into the surrounding nature, introducing into it some more cultivated plants, many of them transported from England. Those with which we succeeded best were potentilla, cistus, santolinas, and many sorts of species buddleia. Immediately in front of the row of cypresses, Natasha constructed a walk of white flowering shrubs and oleanders, on one side of which we put stone seats. This path leads to an enclosed square with a wall and garden seat at the back shaded by four umbrella pines, one at each corner. We placed in the center an urn of terra cotta which our friend David Plante, the young American novelist, had, in a fit of wild enthusiasm, copied from a postcard he had seen of a Mycenaean urn in the British Museum. His first and almost last essay in pottery. It is quite beautiful.

Natasha laid out the garden during several years when we had almost no water except some collected from rainfall on the roof, into a cistern. Now that we have made a new well, her ambitions are getting a bit out of hand. She plans to have, next year, a rectangular herb garden with a fountain in the middle, and more trees and shrubs of the kind that can only be found in English nurseries transported, with their health certificates attached, when we go to pick our olive harvest in the fall. Some roses do spectacularly well in the Provençal climate and the limy soil; for example, La Follette, which blooms in early April and, blooming later, Filipes Kiftsgate, Brunoni La Mortola, and the

Cherokee rose which we planted with nostalgic memories of wonderful gardens we have seen in South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee.

Provence is, above all, the seasons and the weather. The mistral is liable to blow during all seasons, but most of all in the winter. The weather goes on being beautiful up until Christmas or early January. The summer can be very hot, especially in July and the first part of August. Already in the second half of August, and still more in September, there are intimations of autumn: an extraordinary stillness and clarity as though every rock and every leaf were enclosed in crystal which, in contrast with the oppressive summer airlessness, has a touch of ice in it, an extraordinary cool purity. The season of olive picking, which traditionally starts on All Saints' Day, is usually beautiful, for in Provence there is slanting sunlight at a time when Tuscany, as well as England, is gray and wet. Christmas, too, is brilliant, luncheon out on the terrace, evenings by a log fire in the living room. January and February can sometimes be biting cold and windy, but even then there can be bright days, anticipating spring. One thing about the mistral is that it brings clear skies and sunshine, blowing away all clouds. It makes the tubular stems and scimitar-shaped leaves of the *cannes de Provence* and the greenish-gray sky-mirroring olive trees glisten like spun glass.

Already in January there is almond blossom, followed by early iris, jasmine, and mimosa. In late March there are yellow Canary Bird roses, wild periwinkles growing at the edge of the little driveway behind the house, bearded iris in the front garden, and then the opulent La Follette roses. Soon after, the cherries and apricots start blossoming in orchards which are carpeted with yellow marigolds. In May the cherries begin to ripen and soon it is a race against time to eat or boil and bottle them before they fall from the trees. This happens again in June and July with the apricots which, besides being eaten raw, have to be made into jam, chutney sauce, or apricot cheese, all within a few weeks. We are grateful if the apricot season is not too good.

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A POET'S PLACE IN PROVENCE

While I rather dread the hottest days of summer, they are redeemed for me by the darting small lizards and the occasional dragonish bright copper-green large ones: still more by the butterflies which gather to the buddleias and lavender: many varieties of swallowtails, fritillaries, peacocks, marble blacks, and—very rare today though common enough when I was a child—the scarlet-and-black red admirals. Most of all I am enchanted by the miraculous hummingbird moths exactly like the minutest of real hummingbirds, which hover with whirring propellerlike wings in front of lavender and dart into the depths of flowers with long tubular proboscises.

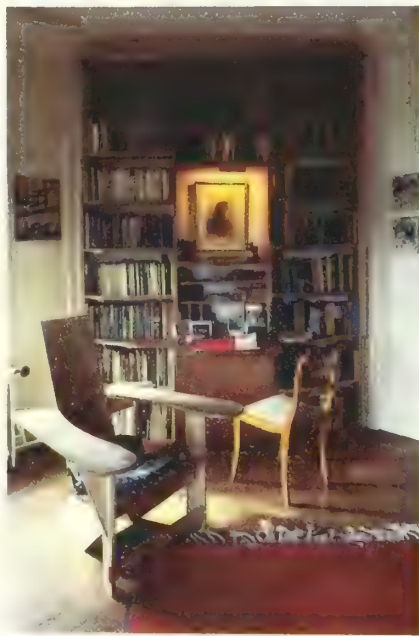
It took us about two years to build our house, doing so during the months each year when we were in Provence, and far longer—between seven and fifteen years—to get amenities such as electricity, the telephone, and plenty of water. I suspect that there is something about building a ruin which impresses itself on one's memory even more than building a brand new house from scratch. One struggles with the form imposed by the given structure like a child struggling with parental influence. Every stage of the conflict becomes imprinted on one's soul. I feel I know St. Jerome like my own life history, and Natasha, since she did all the work, must feel this even more than I

do. There is also something about the excessive weather, dramatic landscape, above all the mistral, which makes one feel that the house is like a life that one has planted here in a landscape sometimes welcoming, sometimes alien—like St. Jerome in his hermitage in the rocky desert. Or, to change the metaphor, one can feel during the mistral, which turns all the vegetation into green waves and streaming branches, that the house is a ship with a very cozy interior and cabin windows looking out onto a roaring ocean. At those times I find the contrast here between indoors and outdoors, my quiet study and my view, calm or stormy, from my window, inspiring. □

JOAN MITCHELL: ART AND LIFE AT VÉTHEUIL

(Continued from page 195) glimpse of the terraced garden beyond. A rather beautiful Provincial table and heavy, carved chest stood against the long wall of this room, called the Billiard Room because of the presence of a billiard table, at present weighed down with sheet music, books, and a few suitcases. Suddenly, the silence erupted into a wild cacophony of barking. Taking my courage, and my suitcase, in my hands, I advanced toward a green door at the head of a staircase at the far end of the room, opened the door, and walked forward. Iva, the German shepherd, and her two daughters, Marion and Madaleine, came bounding toward me, giving mixed signals, tails wagging but still barking furiously. Then, just as suddenly, the noise subsided, the canine sea parted, and Joan appeared at the end of the corridor; we embraced. I had arrived.

Three days earlier, in Paris, at Joan Mitchell's most recent exhibition at the Galerie Jean Fournier, I had been struck, as I always am at Mitchell's shows, by the extraordinary range of expressive variation this artist manages to achieve within an *oeuvre* marked by such unmistakable stylistic unity. Certainly the strongest and most consis-



In the library, chair after Bugatti design and an early Matisse over the desk.

tent painter of her generation of Abstract Expressionists, Mitchell's recent paintings daringly play out that dangerous but exhilarating game of chaos versus order that marks the best abstract art of our time. The Fournier exhibition, which included both individual canvases and diptychs, is enti-

tled "La Grande Vallée." This phrase constitutes a reference to a state of feeling rather than the description of a specific place. It is at once an evocation of childhood memory and adult loss; simultaneously it suggests the devastating yet illuminating passage of time as it effects art and nature. For Mitchell, such titles often grow out of the work-process itself, constituting the painter's own emotional reaction to her creation rather than preceding its existence. Yet it is hard to dissociate Mitchell's paintings from the world of nature; indeed, her canvases are potent evocations of the landscape experience, suggesting the scenic without ever imitating it. At their best, her canvases can be understood as metaphors of the natural world, in which the energy of organic growth makes its perpetual assault on the underlying structure of natural order.

Light plays a major role in this process of landscape evocation. In the most striking diptych in the recent show, brilliant slashing and curving strokes of luminous yellow, glowing orange, and blazing red pigment played against the intense blues and greens at the bottom of the canvases to create a dazzling effect, as though the

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paintings were giving off the noontday radiance of sun on water and foliage. Mitchell never paints to the edge, and this strategy serves at once to destroy any semblance of representation and to maintain the integrity of the flat white support as the positive space of art, not the negative one of illusion.

The density of the paint structure also serves to remind us that for this artist, the act of painting is rooted in the nature of the materials. For Mitchell, the medium is always oil—thick, viscous, infinitely malleable; never dry, inert, synthetic paint. The range of texture may run from the thinnest wash to

the heaviest impasto, an impasto inflected with a whole range of thicknesses and subttextures.

Sitting with Joan in the lovely, rambling garden behind the house, we talk about her life and her art. She began splitting her time between France and the United States in 1955, and moved her studio from Paris to Vétheuil in 1969. Although she maintains that she feels at home nowhere—and I believe her—paradoxically, this place is marked by her presence, shaped to a remarkable degree by her way of life. It is a life dedicated, in the most stringent way possible, to the creation of art.

Joan Mitchell is, on her own terms, an extraordinarily disciplined artist. She doesn't get up until after noon and goes to bed at four or five in the morning: her working time is late afternoon and the night. For recreation, she gardens—sometimes weeding at night with the outdoor lights on; reads, watches television, listens to music, which she loves, feeds the dogs promptly at 5:30 every evening. Typically, there will be an afternoon period of working: either actual painting, looking over a canvas in progress, or checking the work of the previous night against the daylight. "If it works in daylight, it will work in artificial light," she says. It takes her about two months to complete a painting, and, although she sometimes works on several canvases at a time, she basically concentrates on only one.

As we walk through the garden to the studio, I ask her, "How do you start a painting?" realizing that this is a naïve question, but really wanting to know. Joan laughs, and half jokingly, half seriously replies that sometimes it's simply that she happens to have a lot of one color—say, blue—and she decides to start with that. Or sometimes it's a photograph; or sometimes, something from the garden: recently sunflowers, especially dying sunflowers; or sometimes, it's simply what she describes as "color-feelings" from the garden, rather than the inspiration of any particular flower or image. At other times, she gets involved in the space of the river or the sky, or, she corrects herself, "space-feelings," the way the blueness of the sky comes through the trees, for instance. In the process of painting, though, the original image that started the work is enormously changed. "Once I start, the painting is telling *me* what to do. It takes over. Sometimes I have the feeling I didn't paint it. That's when I'm really working; when I forget myself."

We enter the spacious studio, where the diptych Mitchell is presently working on leans against the wall. Nearby is a rainbow agglomeration of muffin tins that serves her as a palette, and cans holding brushes soaking in turpentine. Color goes onto the canvas with a brush. The palette knife is used only to remove paint from the canvas. Mitchell works on diptychs—two-part paintings—or quadriptychs—four-part

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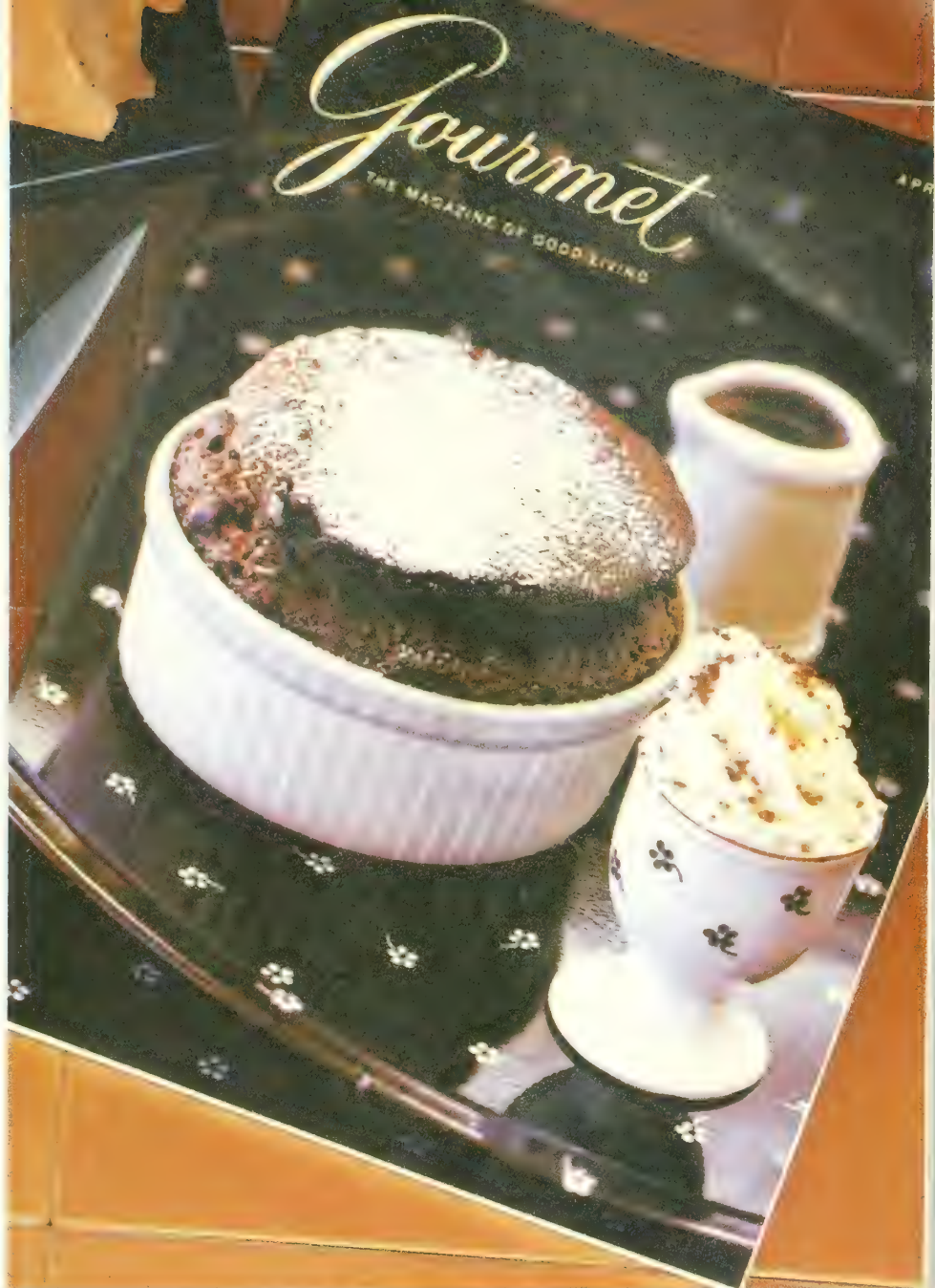
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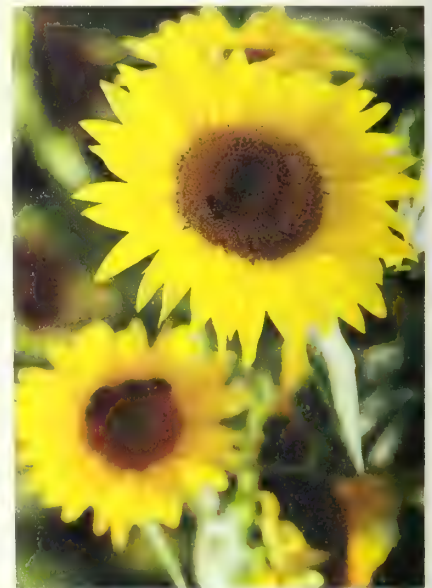
JOAN MITCHELL

ones—to increase the scale of her paintings. In the case of the diptychs, she works on both canvases as a unit, but nevertheless, “feels their twoness” in the process. Edges are always important for her, empty space arrived at with a sense of finality.

“How do you decide when a painting is finished?”

“When *it* decides,” Joan Mitchell answers. Often in a painting, she says, there’s some element that you want to save and you go with it; but exactly that thing you wanted to save may ultimately have to be destroyed. “You never know until the end.”

We walk back to the house through the garden, brilliant with its yellow co-reopsis, its purple violets, the fuzzy pink of valerian, the smooth, deep rose of petunias; rich blue salvia, white carnations and bright red vervains make a



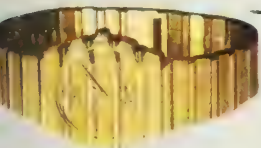
Colors of local flowers have influenced Mitchell’s palette.

kind of tricolor effect. Lower down, closer to the house are stalks of morning-glory—blue-violet and pale blue—and bluets. The bright orange of marigolds mingles with the slightly muted tone of African daisies. Joan and her friend and helper, the young composer Gisèle Barreaux, laughingly come to my assistance in my floral ignorance, trying to translate the French names into English.

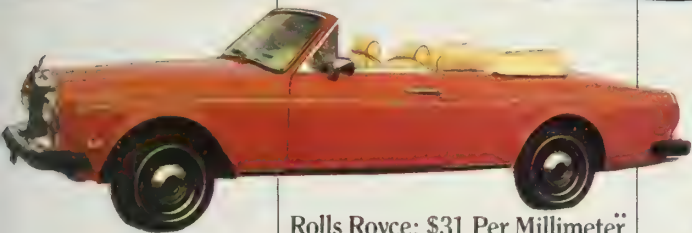
We move over to the more formal “white tie” garden, as Joan calls it, with its neat circle of yucca and peonies in the center. Beyond this is an ample



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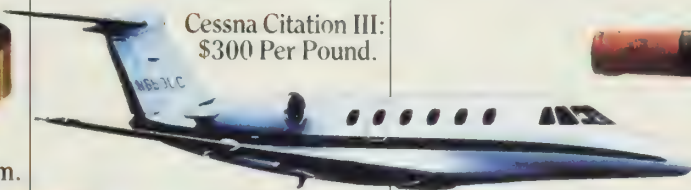


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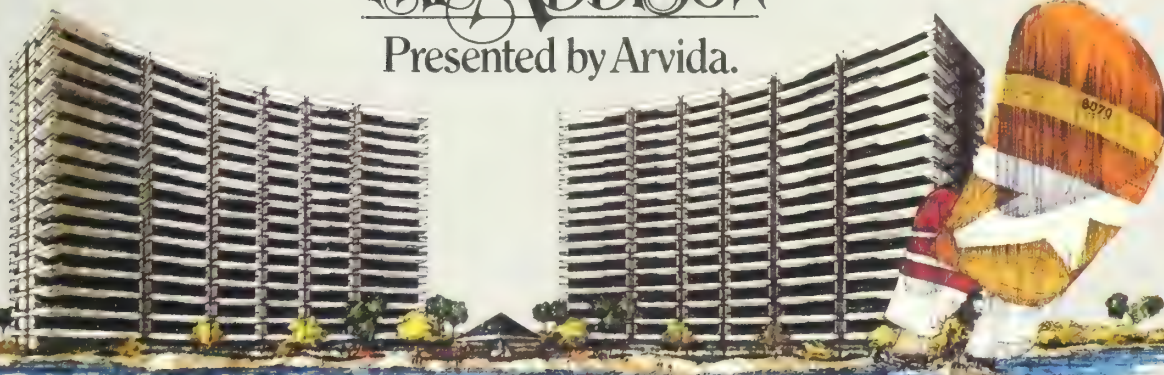
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vegetable garden, with precise rows of squash, beans, tomatoes, and American corn. Monet painted the poppy fields behind the vegetable garden, but the fields have now been transformed into a cemetery. From the vegetable garden one has a splendid view of the little Gothic church of Vétheuil, towering protectively over the houses of the village, a motif cherished by Monet and perhaps serving him as a miniature predecessor for his later *Rouen Cathedral* series. The property also includes a small orchard, mainly old apple trees with roses growing around them. It is here that Gisèle has her piano in a tiny studio embroidered with mimosa over the doorway, made fragrant by a honeysuckle vine clinging to the wall nearby. Violet campanulas and enormous orange poppies mingle in the border of the orchard, and the light here is truly extraordinary: an ever-shifting transparency of silver and gold.

In the big house at Vétheuil, it is the views from the windows that inevitably draw one's attention, both in the din-

ing room and sitting rooms on the main floor, furnished with Spartan yet satisfying utilitarianism; and in the most interesting and articulated room in the house, the octagonal library on the second floor of the tower, which has windows on four sides, books from floor to ceiling—art books, novels, poetry—a gun collection, and a large TV set. A Matisse charcoal drawing of a nude over the desk, and a beautiful little de Kooning pastel sketch for *Woman* hangs opposite the Matisse, next to dog photographs and some fine, severe, anonymous nineteenth-century family portraits—from Cincinnati, on her mother's side, Joan tells me.

"Is the river important for your work?" I ask this American transplant from Chicago, this woman who established a major reputation in New York during the fifties, and of whom a recent review (merely one in a series of rave notices responding to her Paris show) in the *International Herald Tribune* declares: "Joan Mitchell is one of the most important contemporary

painters living and working in France." I am looking out at the Seine, and of course thinking of Monet who painted it, the countryside around Vétheuil, and the town itself many times over in the years between 1878 and 1881. A bronze plaque marks the faded orange stucco cottage with bright green shutters directly beneath us, from the windows of which Monet could look out at a view of the Seine almost, if not exactly, identical to the one we had this afternoon. "Certainly," says Joan, "the river is a big item of awareness." But then again, she adds, she has always loved water, lived near it. As a child it was Lake Michigan; and then there was the view she had when she lived on the Brooklyn side of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1947, just on the site of the present River Café—those meant a lot too. Once more, Mitchell brings home the fact that her work can never be understood in terms of the simple "inspiration" provided by a single element—not even the river. Although her painting has often been compared to that of Monet, usually with the benign aim of elevating it to the pantheon of great Modernist creators, it seems to me that the comparison is ultimately a misleading one. Rather, what is significant is the *difference* between what Mitchell and Monet, living in the same spot but with different backgrounds and in unassimilable moments in history, created when they looked at the landscape before them. Monet's paintings at Vétheuil were, in fact, nothing like Mitchell's. Painted at a time of major crisis in his personal and professional life, brought to a climax by the death of his wife, Camille, in 1879, they are most memorably harsh, wintry scenes, painted with a livid, neutral palette in broken angular brush strokes: representations of the breakup of ice floes on the river, which are "Débâcles" in both the literal and the expressive, figurative sense of the term. In the spring of 1879, he wrote from Vétheuil: "I am absolutely discouraged, neither seeing, nor hoping for any future!"

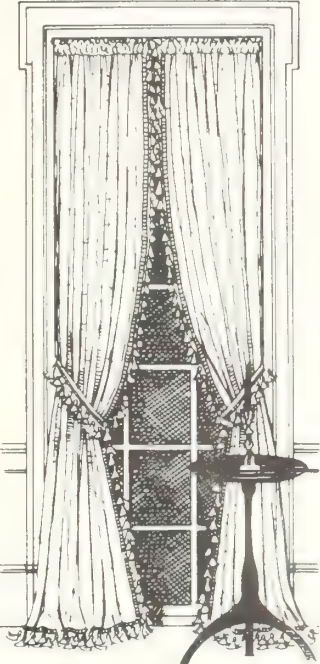
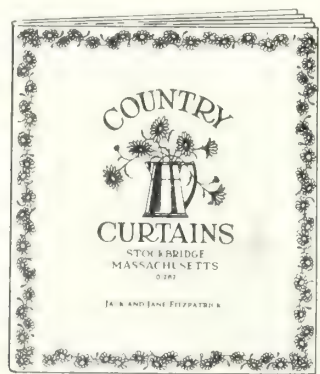
In Mitchell's canvases, the brilliant colors, which evoke but never imitate the flowers, grass, trees, and water of the place, the powerful and delicate brushwork, and the moving riskiness of her pictorial vision are all her own; they belong unmistakably to the latter

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part of the twentieth century. If there is anything that the two artists may share, looking out at the river peaceably winding its way through the landscape near Vétueil with a century between them, it is something less tangible than a similar motif or a common style, something harder to locate or to put

into words, but nevertheless essential to the creation of truly innovative art. Perhaps it is that combination of inner discipline and energy which makes the artist rise up like a phoenix from adversity, pushing onward, like the river, in the day-to-day business of making paintings. □ *Editor: Karen Lee Grant*

ILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

(Continued from page 160) to one after another of the leading lights of the then-ascendant Abstract Expressionist movement. Haas himself was well aware that something wasn't right. "I found the look of Abstract Expressionism," Haas later recalled, "but never really 'felt' it." Instead, he eventually moved toward representational art, first constructing small diorama boxes based on interiors from the paintings of van Eyck and Vermeer. The fact that his new direction was more fulfilling to him than prevailing art-world practice led to profound feelings of conflict. "I couldn't justify my boxes in the avant garde . . . but I was having a hell of a good time making them. . . . [I was] a Jekyll and Hyde artist. It was almost as if I had been a modernist abstractionist by day and a private realist by night."

The decisive turn came when Haas commenced on his first studies of cast-iron façades in SoHo in 1969, a year after he had begun renting a loft there, which he used during his breaks from teaching art at Bennington College in Vermont. Those drawings and etchings show his now-familiar style almost fully evolved. In each, the artist's decisive visual editing and cropping gives the image a compositional originality that transcends mere copying. Haas's lifelong interest in building design found new expression in what thereafter became his primary subject matter: architecture.

Haas continued to make boxes—including *Frank Lloyd Wright in His Spring Green Studio* and *Gertrude Stein in Her Dining Room*—but soon came to the inevitable next step of tackling full-scale interiors. He began, sensibly enough, on the walls of his own Greene Street studio, painting trompe-l'oeil

detailing around a fireplace and windows, adding a cornice of sham dentils, and winding up with the single most spectacular stroke: a false perspective of the view that would be visible from the studio if a rectangular portion of the outer wall were ripped away.

Just down the street, his slightly earlier Prince and Greene Street mural (part of the memorable City Walls program) was attracting the attention of the art world at large as curators, collectors, and the idly curious made the



Motifs inspired by Louis Sullivan and other Chicago School architects transform a banal apartment tower in that city.

rounds of the galleries in the neighborhood that had become the new center for avant-garde art in New York. But it was also visible to the truck drivers, porters, and factory personnel who worked there. This was the first instance of what has become an important factor in the art of Richard Haas: it

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is seen as often by people who don't follow art as by the cognoscenti.

As a case in point, two of his current commissions—immense schemes for warehouses in St. Louis and Chicago, both adjacent to busy freeways—will be viewed by literally millions of people each week. Of course, many who are confronted by one of Haas's trompe-l'oeil tours de force are not aware that its surfaces are actually painted rather than carved in stone or cast in concrete. But that is both the conundrum and the confirmation of his art, which above all tries to break down what this artist sees as the artificial boundaries between architecture, painting, and sculpture.

Haas is challenged by the changing circumstances of his artistic process. Although his outdoor murals from the start have been executed by professional billboard painters working from his detailed maquettes and color specifications, for quite some time the development of those designs remained in his hands alone. Now, though, that his volume of work has exceeded what even the most diligent artist could be expected to handle by himself, Haas oversees a large workshop of assistants who carry out the huge amount of detail work that goes into each of his projects. His participation has become increasingly conceptual and managerial, as he orchestrates his staff in a way that has ironically come to resemble more the office practice of an architect than the studio of a modern painter.

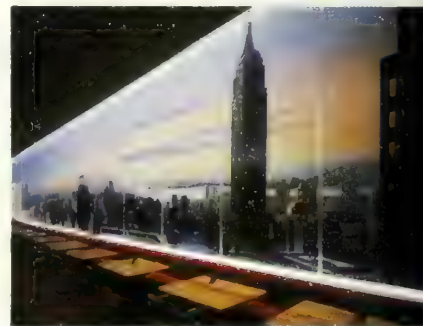
Thus at the age of 48, Richard Haas finds himself faced with the paradoxical problems of success. "Over the past four or five years," he explains, "seventy to eighty percent of my activity has come from commissions. I once spent only half my time on commissions and the other half doing whatever I wanted to, but I find that I now have to take sabbaticals from myself. That's what I'm learning to do—to create free time to change, to grow, and to introduce new ideas."

One of his favorite ways of doing so is through travel, and in recent years he has made extensive trips to the Near East, Far East, and India with his wife, the sculptor Katherine Sokolnikoff. It was his wanderings as a young man through Bavaria, the Tyrol, and along the Ligurian Coast of Italy that first opened Haas's eyes to the rich tradi-

tion of trompe-l'oeil painted architecture. But if the application of what he has seen lately in more exotic cultures has thus far not been as visible in his work as those early influences, it is certain that the impressions made on him by Karnak or Fatehpur Sikri will not be lost, for virtually every exceptional structure that he sees becomes grist for his unceasing visual mill.

Much attention has been directed lately toward affecting a closer working relationship between artists and architects. Regrettably, most of those efforts—epitomized by the generally dismal outcome of the artist/architect pairings in The Architectural League of New York's 1981 "Collaboration" show—have been little more than shotgun marriages. In truth, Richard Haas working alone can make a far more satisfying synthesis of the arts than most tandems in which one participant or the other is constantly striving to gain the upper hand.

Even though Haas has already at-



Top: A sham panorama in the basement cafeteria of the Philip Morris Building in New York. Above: Haas's Times Square tower at left was recently demolished.

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ILLUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

tained his aim of unity with virtually unparalleled success, he still dreams of a closer integration, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the "total art work" that has been the elusive goal of creators over the centuries. Given his experience, enthusiasm, and essential equanimity, it is quite possible that Haas will eventually be able to reforge the coalition

among artist, architect, and artisan.

Whether or not he will be able to bring about his concert of the media, it is certain that Richard Haas has already added significantly to the enrichment of our art and architecture. One measure of that can be made if we apply the standard that the artist himself wrote about in describing the older ar-

chitecture of American cities. "What was left of the past looked precarious but often more beautiful, more human, more evidently the result of craftsmanship than the new." One day not long from now the need to preserve the incomparable artifacts of Richard Haas ought to bring forth that very same response. □

IF YOU KNEW SUZY

(Continued from page 142) only about its old-breed fresco-figures but about the new-breed aristocrats: fashion designers, cosmetics tycoons, sports figures, movie stars—in other words, names that make news. "I do a people column, and I was doing it long before a magazine took that name for itself. I write about *many* people who could never in a million years be called social," she says. "If they're flamboyant enough, gifted enough, eccentric enough, attractive enough, powerful enough, or just plain rich enough, they can get into the column."

That column is a sustained and cumulative performance—running five days a week in the *New York Daily News* since 1967, and widely syndicated—and Suzy manages to keep it perpetually replenished with fresh names. "We all need a little bit of expansion and we all need a little bit of variety, including *me*," she says. Nor does she write for the sacrosanct few. "I try to write for everyone and to bring to my readers a feeling of what this kind of life is like."

Suzy's refreshingly irreverent style, perfected over the long years of her career, has not gone unremarked. Norman Mailer and William F. Buckley Jr. are among her writer fans. And Truman Capote said: "She is one of only two or three columnists who ever wrote well. She makes each of her columns a little short story with a moral commentary at the end." It has even been claimed that if a piece of her copy were washed ashore anywhere in the Western world, soaked with the spume and spray of gossip, the style would be instantly recognizable as hers.

Suzy's column may be society's Sa-



Aileen Mehle's table set for dinner

cred Text but it is also a tongue-in-cheek Court Circular in which everyone does not always look his or her best. Love of high society has not blinkered her to its lows and limitations. Although she once described herself as "the champion of the overprivileged," her attitude toward them has more dimension than that: the Suzy who rides beside those social avatars in their chariots is often chiding them that "pomp is mortal."

The world of gossipmongering has never been known for its decency, yet she delivers the goods to her readers without exploiting the closeted secrets of people's lives. Her friend Walter Annenberg calls her the "bloodless surgeon," because she operates but never draws blood. "I'm also quite generous with the anesthetic," she laughs. "Fair" is the important word in my vocabulary. Sure I touch on the

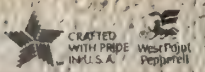
scandals and feuds, but I do have a code. I mean, I know a lot about everyone but I go only so far. For instance, I never write about a husband cheating. Absolutely not—he's married. But the minute he's separated, I have him in my column. The second he moves out!" It is her sense of fairness, along with her talent and credibility, that has made her such a welcome guest everywhere. Keyholes are open to anyone, but all doors are open to her. And she enters with a certain assumption of power. "I never work a room," she says. "The room works me."

Aileen Mehle works all day at home in a setting every bit as opulent as the ones Suzy visits at night and writes about for the next edition. The house she lives in was put up around 1914 by the furniture Sloanes, who had already built themselves one or two other substantial town houses in the stony heart of Manhattan's Upper East Side.

The drawing room of her duplex apartment was the original ballroom, and sitting in one of her brocade satin-and-cut-velvet chairs one can almost hear the elaborate steps of some immortal cotillion. The fireplace is eighteenth-century and ornately carved, with an antique smoked mirror over it; flanking the mantel are two huge oils taken from tapestries—both after Boucher. "One is Europa," she explains, "with all her luscious, full-breasted handmaidens attending her, and the white cow or bull or whatever, and all the little cherubs running around like crazy. And the other is Diana, the huntress, with the hunting dog and—of course, again—the bare breast."

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other in dusty pink, both fringed at the bottom. Lurking beneath them: case upon case of Dom Pérignon. People, you see, send Suzy presents. "The most surprising people, too," adds one of her friends. "I mean people who *she* thinks should know better, because she doesn't mention them in her column for what she's going to get out of it. She's incorruptible." Aileen Mehle explains, "I *have* to put the excess champagne under those tables, I ran out of cupboard space."

Against one of the mirrored walls at the far end of the drawing room is the oversize day bed, covered in "a heavenly shade of blue silk damask," on which she has often been photographed—"lying on the cushions as though I didn't do a *thing*," she laughs. "This was my bed in my previous apartment, but my bedroom here, up on the second floor, was too small to accommodate it, so my friend Valerian Rybar said, 'Put it in the living room.'"

Much of the rest of her furniture also followed her from her old apartment. The green silk faille draperies had to be custom-made for the high drawing-room windows. The rug was made in Portugal. "When I first saw it, I cried," Aileen Mehle confesses. "I think I'd expected something pink and blue with little dainty bow-knots. I wasn't expecting anything so vivid, and when I saw those coral flowers coming out at me I broke into tears. Valerian said, 'The reason you don't like the rug is because it wasn't in your mind's eye. Just wait until tomorrow.' And he was right, because the next day I fell madly in love with it. All I had to do was look at it twice.

"I had to buy other things for this apartment, too," she continues. "Such as a chandelier. I already had loads of chandeliers, of course, but not one of them was worthy of hanging in the center of this drawing room."

The chandelier that hangs in Aileen Mehle's bedroom is off-center, striking an eccentric note in an apartment where everything else is symmetrical. "I'll tell you the story of my little off-center chandelier," she offers, already laughing. "It was given to me by a friend I loved, but when I moved here, there was absolutely no place to put it. You know, many of my chandeliers I had to sell, because I didn't have room for them, but I said to myself I would

never part with this one. So I said to Valerian, 'We've got to hang it in the bedroom.' And he said, 'There's no place to hang it because there's a big beam right in the center of the ceiling and if you hang it on that, it'll be right in your face.' Which was true. So I said, 'Well, let's put it over on the side.' And he said, 'The side? That will look so terrible. It will look like a showroom.' So then I said, 'Well, let's hang it on the beam, anyhow.' And he came by after it was hung and he said, 'I don't mind it there. But it *is* pretty low. If someone comes up here, won't it hit his head?' And I just looked at him and said, 'Anybody smart enough to get in here in the first place is smart enough to duck.'"

The apartment's original bedroom is now her office. Here, in the same corner as a Louis XV chaise longue and on the same floor as the major chandelier, sits Suzy's word processor, through which are filtered the complex capillaries of the whole social body. For here in this pale-coral-strie-walled social-central-intelligence station she writes her column every day immediately after rising around eleven. "I turn on the telephone," she says, "and from then on it's just phone phone phone doorbell doorbell doorbell write write write talk talk talk and that's it until my hairdresser, Sebou, comes over to get me ready and then I get dressed and go out and my evenings and days all flow into each other."

During the day, she functions without the gossip columnist's lifelines—secretaries, stringers, telephone answering machines, answering services. "Suppose I have an answering service," she says, "and I come back and I've been gone for a couple of hours. 'Hello, did anybody call me?' 'Oh, yes, you have fifty calls.' Now *what* am I going to do with fifty phone calls? They'll all call back."

Aileen Mehle is as cavalier about her entertaining as she is about her telephoning. She rarely has people in. She doesn't have to. Of course, she has the perfect "out": she *is* out every night. "If I do have anybody over, it's my closest friends, and if I'm lucky they'll ask for champagne and caviar and I can get rid of some of that inventory."

Just who are Suzy's friends? "Well," she replies, "start with this country and you can say the Reagans. I've known

them for fifteen years and I admire and respect them—I always have, not just since he became President and she became our First Lady. I thought Nancy was a first lady even before she was first Lady.

“Or start with *everybody* in *every* country—you know, if you want to start with *kings* and that kind of thing. . . I go to all the parties, all the best parties in all the really good countries. When I go to England, I go to the palaces. When I’m in Venice, I go to the *palazzos*. When I’m in Spain, I go to the *palacios*. When I’m in France, I go to the *châteaux*, but since it turned socialist there’s not much to do in France—they don’t have those big balls any more. And when I’m in Hollywood, I go to Betsy Bloomingdale’s. All the Hollywood people are more or less my friends, too. Cary Grant always says, ‘Everyone should be like *you* in the newspaper business.’ Well, I mean, who *don’t* I know? I’m trying to think of who don’t I know.”

Despite these whirlwind comings and goings in “all the really good countries,” and though she can hardly be said to be in natural contact with the whole of the social condition, Aileen Mehle never lets herself get carried away. “Look, I know what I do,” she says. “I write a gossip column, a fancy gossip column. If it’s amusing, that’s all I intend—to entertain, to fulfill a few fantasies. □

NOBLE SPACES

Continued from page 123) every reign of France since Louis XIII and every republic—also began to crowd him out. “You could barely move—so what I did was done up until the middle of the nineteenth century: push all the furniture back against the wall and pull it out as needed.”

The “truffled” marble floor of the first room (discovered under endless layers of linoleum) now gives way to parquet de Versailles that has been stripped and varnished. After the sorriety of the first room we move on to a more playful mood. Five chandeliers hanging from ropes (boating rope painted red ochre) look as though

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NOBLE SPACES

they're about to go up and down—like a stage set for a ball in an Italian theater. "When I discovered those hooks under plaster acanthus leaves in the ceiling, I had five matching chandeliers made in New York by a place that makes them for night clubs." Lit with real candles for years ("my sacristan's stick came in very handy"), Berthelot, tiring of these nightly duties, electrified the chandeliers with dimmers. Silk taffeta sleeves above the chandeliers match the curtains fashioned "Carmencita style." Overhead, the sky and clouds are authentic Berthelot too, bringing the outside in again.

Making do with what you have is a game that Berthelot likes to play. "Look at that Louis-Philippe *secrétaire* between the windows. For years, I considered it an ugly sister. An ugly sister that lived behind a door in another room. But when I started throwing this fabric over the furniture—she came out of hiding and found her place, as ugly sisters do!

In the same way, a Napoleon III desk came into its own as the artist's worktable. Stretching oilcloth over the top and scattering paints and brushes about was an inspired gesture "to take the deadly seriousness out of it!" After all it's the same kind of desk used by the President of France.

Mixing bronze doré and oilcloth is indeed original—and playful in the way only someone secure in the knowledge of his own taste can be. Berthelot readily points out, "there are some good things, some fakes. The fakes are all perfectly recognizable—plaster busts, columns, and consoles (that he has marbled) from the *Ateliers du Louvre*—but they're nice ones. They're friendly fakes."

Are those blue-and-white soup plates under the amaryllis flowerpots on the Restoration table? "It looks like a mistake, or something you've forgotten about. That's what I like." A deliberately unfinished look is something he has always found enticing. The walls of the first two rooms are sponged yellow and red ocher (over an eggshell base) in a manner that is much less *fin* than the usual application of the method. "But I wanted it done rather crudely. You know that somebody has had their hands on it. People often come here, look at the walls and the light parquet and say, 'but you haven't finished yet!'



You see, it's like the Arab thing," he explains, "they never finish a house. Because if you finish a house that means your life is over."

Wherever he's lived or traveled, Berthelot has never come home empty-handed or empty-headed. While others may return with new possessions, part of his new baggage invariably includes an entire philosophy that he will graft onto his very own personal style. "Those are *retour de voyages*," he says, pointing out the kilim carpets that lead the way to the final *petit salon*, formerly the Duke's bedroom. True to style, Berthelot beckons us further south. We've now gone all the way, lured on by an oversized Turkish divan. By pushing his mania for southern exposure to this extreme, Berthelot comes the full circle and retrieves a very French context: "Because the Turks came frequently to Marseille in the eighteenth century, French country houses in the south of France had these wonderful divans for a lie-down after lunch."

Remaining resolutely French, Gaston Berthelot has opened his windows on the world. Pausing for a moment's thought, he makes an unexpected comparison with houses in Ireland. "You see they are essentially English, Anglo-Saxon—but there is a bit of madness in them. There's a crazy strain that makes them more lively and amusing than the proper stolid English houses, often of the finest quality, but there's a bit of salt and pepper missing!" □ Editor: Marie-Paule Pellé

BATIK

(Continued from page 179) on the fabric, outlining with wax instead of ink.

Around 1840 the invention of the *cap* (or *tjap*)—a copper block that applies an entire design onto the cloth with a single imprint—revolutionized the batik industry. With *cap*, a worker can wax twenty pieces a day rather than spending up to 45 days to hand-wax a single piece of cloth.

After each color has been dyed the wax is scraped off and reapplied; sometimes additional designs are

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drawn on the cloth between dyeings. After dyeing is completed and the wax is removed, the finished batik is draped over bamboo racks or laid on the ground to dry, then folded and put under a press.

The spectacular works of art created in the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries by this intricate process are a visual archive of the geographic and historic forces that have pressed upon Java for centuries.

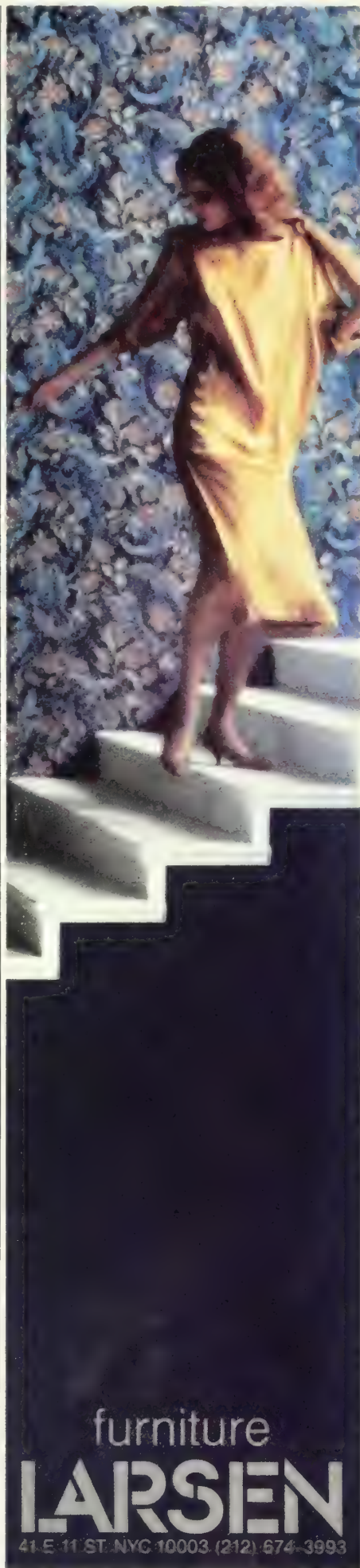
First Buddhism, then Hinduism, then Islam came to Java, and each profoundly affected its sacred and secular life as well as the development of its batik. But typically, the Javanese would adopt particular aspects of each religion that they found appealing and would mingle them with the others. Design elements used in batik are found in both Buddhist and Hindu temples—the lotus, for example, in the reliefs of Borobudur; and the interlocking circular designs in the later Hindu temples of East Java.

Although Muslim communities had existed in Java as early as the twelfth century, it was from Malacca and Sumatra that the major drive for Javanese conversion came. If Javanese merchants were to win Arab favor and support, they would have to open their doors to Islam. The Muslims were the world's leading traders, with connections throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa: association with them meant new routes and more riches.

Islam also worked its way into the designs and uses of batik, "encouraged by the Muslim rulers as a major element of social expression in garments and hangings." Not only did Muslim traders expand the batik market but because of the Muslim prohibition against depicting human forms, design motifs were also changed: flat arabesques and calligraphy were introduced.

The influence of the Chinese on Javanese batik was as profound. Trading such prestigious commodities as silk and porcelain for Java's textiles the Chinese had long been doing business in the area and the princes of Java had sent colored cotton cloth as tribute to Chinese leaders. Now the Chinese brought mythical lions and lyrical flowers to batik designs along with a bright new palette.

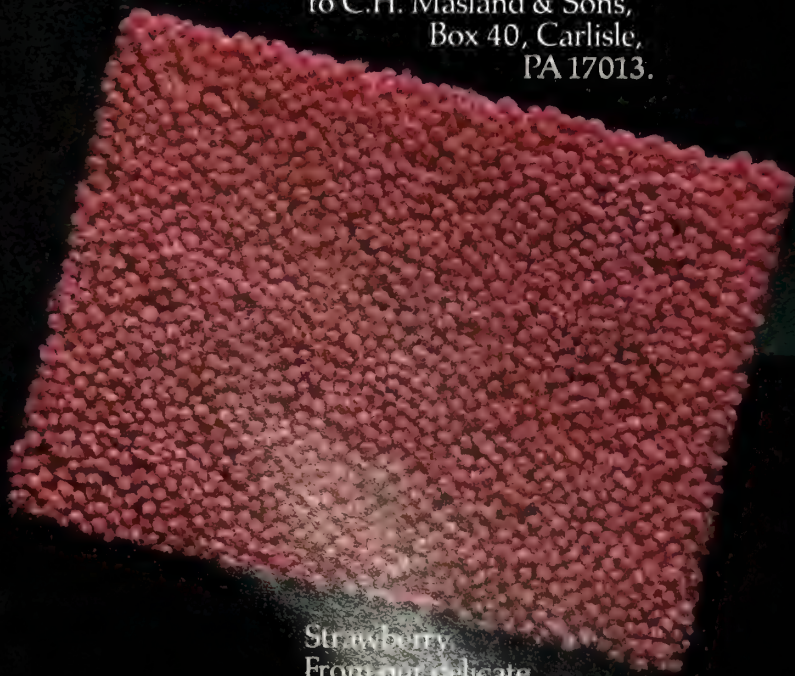
The batik of central Java has always



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BATIK

had a style of its own: orderly, controlled, usually geometric in somber tones of indigo blue and *soga* brown, often combined with black on a background of cream or white. Java's north-coast batik is surprising and exuberant, vigorous and muted. It explodes with brilliant reds, blues, and radiant yellows blending with soft pastel tints of green, lilac, and pink. The motifs—people, farm produce, fish, and animals—evoke all its varied life, and designs were often made to commemorate special events. War was especially popular, but so was the opening of a new railroad line. Sometimes entire fairy tales were illustrated; sometimes simple playing cards or ships or locomotives.

There was nothing particularly magical about these designs but they tell us what people were thinking at the time and show again the outside influences that came to bear on batik design.

Middlemen, some of mixed descent—Oriental, Arab, European—blazed the trail for the real business of batik in the last half of the nineteenth

century. Traders would carry heaps of white cotton and mountains of batik piled high on their bicycles or horse carts. In some coastal towns, the areas known as “Arabic village” or “Chinatown” would turn into veritable mercantile exchanges near sundown.

In contrast to courtly central Java batik in these coastal towns was not so much made for family or personal use; trade was the name of the game. Factories were established by entrepreneurs who catered to local and overseas tastes.

In 1970 there were nearly seven hundred thousand batik workers on the north coast of Java, but within thirteen years their numbers had been reduced to about 250,000. There are many reasons for the decline of batik: the breakdown of a feudal society; the decline of batik as clothing; the policy of transmigration; the competition from Malaysia and Singapore and from “batik” screenprints; the arcane import and export policies; and the fact that Javanese women, as they became better educated, began to seek other careers.

Modern batik designers are aware that theirs is an art whose heyday is past. They search for new inspirations in their roots and in new techniques. By the 21st century, *cap* batik will probably give way almost entirely to screenprinting; *tulis* will continue in limited quantity for a rich clientele. Rather than representing aspects of Javanese life, culture, and religion, batik will be more and more the inspiration of particular designers. No doubt their best work will be seen as art, used for wall hangings or perhaps even for ceremonial and religious occasions. Ironically, this was the original use of the cloth. After more than two hundred years, batik will have come full circle. □

The exhibition “Fabled Cloth: Batik from Java's North Coast” is on view at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., until January 6, 1985. On January 29 it opens at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. Subsequently it will travel to The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Sewall Art Gallery at Rice University in Houston.
Photographs pages 178–180 by Brian Brake.

CACTUS IN SPLENDOR

(Continued from page 165) colored pale green with rosy tips. What passes for trees formed of cacti are in fact giant *Euphorbia ingens*, not cacti at all, and a big *Cereus horribarbis*, sort of an elephant from the shoulder down. These impressions were not hard to come by; the Huntington Desert Garden virtually forces you to stretch your concept of “plant.”

Railroad magnate Henry E. Huntington's concept of “garden” had to be stretched in 1905, when his ranch foreman and landscape designer, William Hertrich, first approached him about adding a desert collection to the master plan for the most extraordinary gardens in the area. Agreeing to the garden on a trial basis, Mr. Huntington, who had just retired to his ranch to pursue his interests in collecting art and rare books, was won over by Hertrich's successful design of about three acres planted with cacti and other suc-



Winter-blooming lampranthus

culents from local nurseries and estates. Soon afterward, with Huntington's hearty approval (by now he was already thinking of the property's future public value) William Hertrich began what was to be over twenty years of enrichments to the desert garden, ensuring its future as one of the most aesthetically pleasing botanical gardens to be found.

Early on, Hertrich contacted European nurseries for plants and seeds for

the fledgling California garden; other cacti and succulent fanciers around the country and the world heard about Huntington's garden and donated plants. As the acreage of the garden was expanded, specimens from plant expeditions to desert areas populated the new territory. A 1908 trip to Arizona brought back three railroad cars full of cacti, on a spur line of Mr. Huntington's Pacific Electric Railway. In the teens, an expedition to Mexico produced several thousand new specimens of cacti. By the thirties, the Desert Garden had come into its own.

Hertrich's gardening heirs attended no less lovingly than he to the Desert Garden, and over the following years saw it through the failure of prized-plant experiments (the saddest of which was the unsuccessful transplanting of a peerless crested saguaro from Arizona), forced wartime neglect, and several decimating frosts. The current



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CACTUS IN SPLENDOR

staff minutely documents each new plant upon arrival, but the garden was growing for 25 years before anyone began to record its contents; today the Desert Garden is beautiful in part because of plants up to ninety years old whose origins remain a mystery.

In such an extraordinary environment problems thrive alongside the plants, and the Huntington staff manages them patiently and good-naturedly. Though the visitor is enchanted by the garden's jungle quality, Jim Dice, as curator, has legitimate worries about overcrowding, which can not only kill rare plants but also obscure labels beneath tenacious foliage, forcing a gardener to remove a plant entirely in order to recover its identity. Weeding is a continuous difficulty; for negotiating especially cactus-rich areas head gardener Joe Clements has had to invent his own tools, several of them made from barbecue utensils. The two other full-time gardeners spend so much time maintaining the present plantings that new beds are cleared behind schedule. Nonetheless, each new bed, in accordance with the latest master plan, is geographically better organized than the older beds, and its appearance is more like natural habitat. Also part of the master plan is the nearly completed conservatory in the upper garden, for displaying all the rare plants that now reside in the greenhouse (under the care of horticulturist John Trager) out of public view. The Huntington attempts to introduce new, rare, or unusual succulents to the Southwest nursery trade on a continuing basis; and the general public is offered regularly scheduled educational programs.

The Huntington is, after all, an educational institution; the Desert Garden boasts specimens either a scholar or tourist feels gratified to have the opportunity to study. But to my mind, the education of the senses is an equally important function of the garden. When you visit this lush desert you share it with lizards, parrots, hummingbirds, and a tame blue jay; their movements will heighten the feeling that you are entering another dimension where a cactus might be expected to do something more aggressive than grow. But what is wonderful here is that only your imagination, not the plants, can carry you away. □

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(Continued from page 153) the most talked-about houses are based on nineteenth-century themes pioneered by Mongiardino or Geoffrey Berrison. Fernanda's house is one of these recent efforts. Decorator Anne Geddes helped her with the main sitting room, but for the rest Fernanda took her time and pieced together a rather Victorian mixture of fringed benches covered with nineteenth-century needlework, round tables covered with stacks of books and magazines, flower prints framed in England with marbled mats and black frames, black lacquer and black papier-mâché furniture, Empire daybeds, glazed chintzes, discreet stripes, walls painted the pale vivid pastels of a twentieth-century English dandy's shirts, real sisal and wool-sisal rugs, revitalized Victorian and Edwardian tufted upholstered furniture. The effect is both fresh and old-fashioned.

In the course of doing her own decorating Fernanda developed interests that in turn developed into business ideas. After Christmas she will introduce with her partner Liz Williams a line of chintz designs taken from eighteenth-century documents. Also a director of the Clarendon Gallery in London, which specializes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century watercolors and en-

gravings, Fernanda helps plan Clarendon's exhibitions in New York.

Fernanda's luxuries on Long Island go beyond the obvious ones of owning an agreeable old house, garden, and orchard. Past being house-proud she possesses sufficient serenity and humor to move forty little children in doors but not into the basement when a thunderstorm washes out an afternoon party in the garden. She urges grown-up guests to wear bathing suits to lunches around the pool where tables are covered in the best beautifully ironed linen cloths and napkins and the menu is light but complete.

By the end of October most house guests have gone and it is too chilly to sit on the terrace past five o'clock. It's the time of the year when the whole family spends Saturday afternoon painting pictures together. Her brush in the paint pot, Fernanda's mind nevertheless races ahead—bulbs to be planted, plans laid for the Parrish Art Museum benefit, ideas on how to back the latest needlework acquisition when they get made into cushions, who to call to say that Gavin Henderson of Clarendon will be here in a few weeks. All happy thoughts, that start at home are rooted in the look of the house, and make a life move along just right. □

Editor: Jacqueline Gonner

THE HOUSE WITHIN

(Continued from page 134) with the pervasive straight lines and right angles of the new construction.

Visually, the old house is a powerful presence, its outer walls and double-hung windows painted a strong clear red. Seen from new rooms and patio as a cherished relic or personal museum installation, this preserved cottage gives depth and resonance to everything new.

George Woo based the new structure on a nine-foot-square grid that organizes the ground-level tile floors indoors and outdoors as well as the posts and beams that rise as high as three stories and push through the glass walls to the patio. Courtyard windows on the long wing fit the grid in sizes that diminish as they rise.

Color is used not only for pleasure but also as another organizing factor. The Woos worked on color choices with Stephanie Mallis from the Pei office, all three actually matching paint chips to flower petals. The red of the Dallas azalea—the color that means happiness in China, the Woos' ancestral homeland—defines the social zone. Two tranquil colors appear: Texas-bluebonnet blue for the master suite and spruce green, the hue of the ink used in old Chinese landscapes, for the family and music rooms. Sun yellow belongs to some of the space for George Woo's recently formed architecture firm; ceilings directly under the roof are sky blue.

And the client is pleased. □

Editor: Heather Smith MacIsaac

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