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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ HOUSE & HOME

Meditations on Design: Reinventing Your Home with Style and Simplicity

John Wheatman
Conari Press (March 2000)
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Included among House Beautiful's Top American Designers (1999), John Wheatman offers his philosophy and some practical guidance for individuals who want to improve their home with guidance and expertise from a book by a professional.

Presented in twenty-one well organized chapters, Wheatman discusses the elements of successful design, as well as the problem solving techniques experienced in his long career as a teacher and as head of his own design firm in San Francisco. Many of the pointers are universal enough that anyone can apply his sound advice to even a small project such as rearranging a sitting room for the full benefit of the space, natural light and the art or personal artifacts displayed there.

The prevailing attitude throughout this tastefully photographed, full-color volume is that one need not go to extremes to improve a preexisting living space, whether in terms of money spent or changes made. Wheatman claims that "with an open mind and an adventurous heart," a space can be transformed for ultimate functionality and comfort, reflecting the unique life within. Also important to this process is a non-attachment to conventional design myths and a little bit of daring, allowing for the "poetics of home" to serve as a means of creative self-expression.

Emphasis is placed on the benefits of choosing quality materials and furnishings, despite the potentially higher price tag, since in the long run this will ensure their appearance and usability into the future. Wheatman also has a soft spot in his heart for the special touches-whether the children's paintings or mementos from trips abroad-and he works to incorporate these features into the character of the design. In this same vein, he discourages the impulse toward sterile recreations of homes made in the image of magazine photo spreads, which can result in the exclusion of the owner's specific needs and personality.

As the introduction states, imagination doesn't cost anything. With this in mind, a browse through the pages of this book is likely to provoke enthusiasm in anyone with an interest in the topic. The text is concise and written in a tone that regards the reader with familiarity and respect, offering thoughtful advice and the proof of Wheatman's forty years of experience in the field.

HOLLY WREN SPAULDING (February 14, 2000)

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