FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Architecture

Secrets of French Design
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Lush, sumptuous, elegant, and tasteful—these words are often used to describe the French influence on decorating. This author, in her seventh book, leaves behind the exclusive world of French tastes to add a new word to that pantheon—eclectic.

This beautiful coffee table book seeks in words and photos to assert that there is life beyond French taste in decorating, and that such life comes from mixing styles, ages, and cultures. Everything from Scandinavian painted furniture to limestone hearths, Asian objets d'art, and handmade lace is included in this volume, which truly spans all tastes. The large format, wonderful photography, and thick paper all contribute to this full-color book's testament to the growing diversity of tastes used in contemporary decorating.

Although the text could have been improved upon by including fewer diversions, the informative asides are a delight. Phillips confides that Madame de Pompadour, for instance, elevated her position as the wife of a financier to become the mistress of Louis XV, and involved herself in political maneuvering that led to the Seven Years' War. Her influence led to the creation and collection of art in everything from Gobelin tapestries to Sèvres porcelain. Phillips also offers tidbits about Marie Antoinette (whose lapdog was sent back to Vienna upon her arrival in France) and Redouté, the gifted botanist and illustrator. Reminding readers that the grand tour was once considered essential to young gentlemen of social aspirations, she regrets that the current political climate in which the United States and France do not see "eye to eye" has diminished the glamour of travel.

Not only are the gossipy snippets enjoyable; the photographs are truly extraordinary, offering views of everything from a doggy shower (complete with pawprint tiles and wallpaper) and a child's room in which stuffed animals peer over a picket "fence" at the top of a built-in bed, to a nursery out of another century, in which twin bassinets are enthroned beneath canopies that could have nestled royal babies in centuries past. While not all the rooms depicted and described here will suit everyone's taste, there is something for everyone—a small table for two, dressed in an opulent "table kerchief," sits in monastic simplicity on a bare stone floor; a wine cellar, with modern appurtenances and a stone floor inlaid with ammonites, offers storage room

for three thousand bottles, floor to ceiling; a château kitchen pairs a nineteenth-century Italianate library table with Louis XVI chairs; a powder room is painted with extravagant murals evoking the flavor of an old movie theater. Flea market finds jostle bona fide antiques, and modern conveniences such as brushed steel kitchen appliances rub shoulders with aged refectory tables and the rich patina of copper.

Fabrics, paintings, and gilding intoxicate the eye; the spare lines of bare tile and stone floors and the sweep of draperies offer relief from rococo's detail. Surviving bits of Aubusson carpets are transformed into plump cushy pillows, and ancient fabric patterns are reproduced in modern textiles to achieve the feel of an earlier day.

The book's organization is roughly chronological, but therein too lies a small disappointment. The section on Chinoiserie is only two pages long, offering a meager pair of photographs of blue and white pottery, although the author talks at length about how popular the style was and mentions lacquered cabinets and carved furniture as well as whole buildings devoted to the craze.

This volume is as eclectic as the author promises, with views of very modern youth rooms relying on sports paraphernalia and steel contrasting with the restoration of an old Italian villa and a loft magnificently flooded with light. Photographs range from small close-ups of details to full-page or page-and-a-half glimpses of dark wood libraries, sun-drenched kitchens, tapestry-decked parlors, and bedrooms boasting fireplaces and mounds of pillows. French taste, asserts the author, is not afraid to mix styles in order to use good pieces, nor does it fear having an empty spot awaiting the perfect chest, painting, or chair. While there are many examples of the former in this book, the latter is absent—but the mix of styles is pleasing, and the author's vast knowledge of intimate details of French customs of days gone by is most enlightening.

Marlene Satter