



# DESIGN INSPIRATIONS

VOLUME I

CHARLOTTE MOSS

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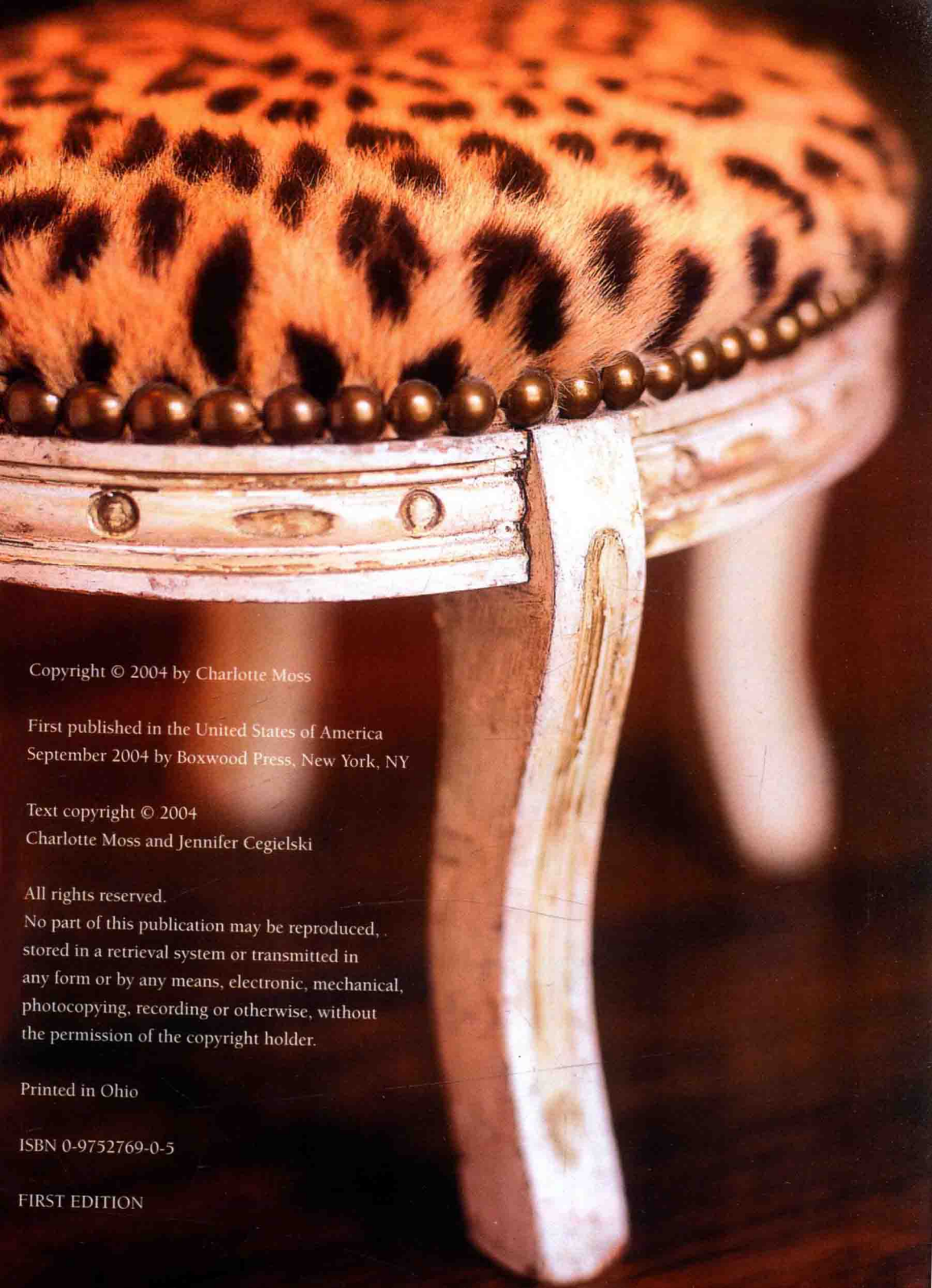
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CHARLOTTE MOSS

WRITTEN WITH JENNIFER CEGIELSKI

DESIGN BY DINA DELL'ARCIPRETE, dk DESIGN PARTNERS INC, NYC





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Charlotte Moss and Jennifer Cegielski

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## INTRODUCTION

What exactly is design inspiration? And how does this inspiration translate into the elements that ultimately compose a room? To understand the process, take a walk with renowned interior designer Charlotte Moss through four stunning decorator show house rooms as she explains her selections of furniture, fabrics, and accessories.

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## A FEMININE RETREAT

Making more out of less, Charlotte lavishly layers a Venetian toile fabric to transform an unassuming passageway into a lady's private retreat complete with writing desk and sumptuous sleeping alcove.

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## A COUNTESS'S CHAMBER

Charlotte looks to a trio of style icons—socialite Mona Bismarck, fashion designer Cristobal Balenciaga and photographer/artist Cecil Beaton—for inspiration to create an extraordinary room featuring a whimsical daybed fit for a countess.

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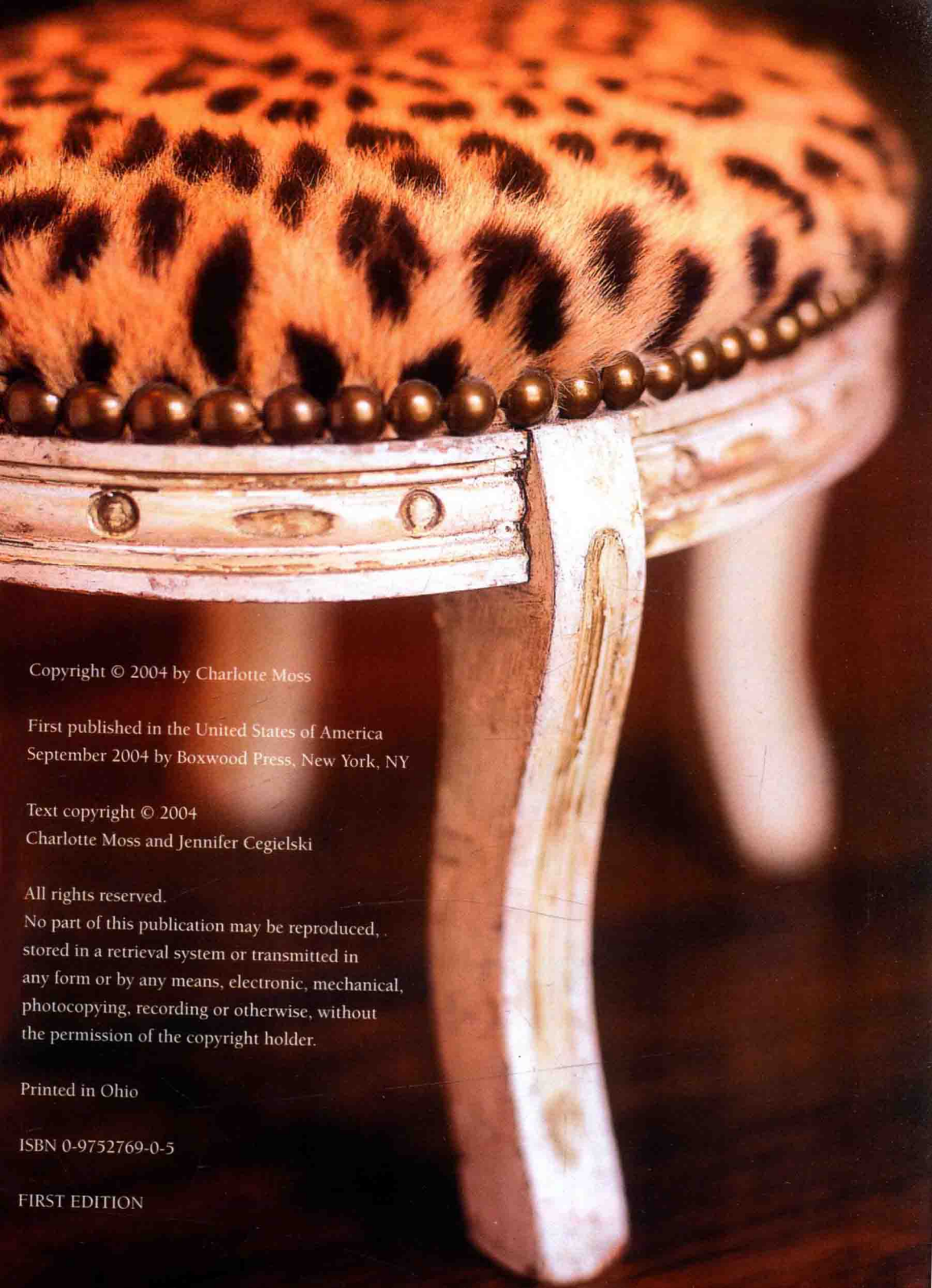
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# INTRODUCTION

“Inspiration starts with observation.  
Once you look at the world we live in, you’ll  
be able to create a world in which to live.”

—CHARLOTTE MOSS

I am often asked the question “What inspires you?” In all the lectures and interviews I give, the people I meet never seem to tire of wanting to know where the ideas for designing a room come from, or where to begin when starting a design process for their own homes. I’ve been in the decorating business now for almost twenty years, and I’ve decided that maybe the best way to answer this question is to revisit the archive of my work and share examples of rooms I’ve created and discuss how each came to be. The result is this book—the first in a series—which tells the story behind the story of four rooms I created for decorator show houses.

For those who may not be familiar with the concept, a show house is a collaboration for a good cause. A selection of reputable decorators are invited to participate, and the different rooms within the location are allotted or awarded to them. After that, it is up to the decorators to work some magic and come up with plans to fully furnish the rooms with the cooperation of fabric houses, antiques dealers, fixtures suppliers, and others in the industry. Tickets to view the house are sold to the public to benefit a specific charity, but it’s a win-win situation for everyone involved: decorators are able to experiment with concepts they have been wanting to try and create a fantasy environment unconstrained by a client’s wishes or demands; suppliers and dealers have the opportunity to display new collections and inventory; and viewers new and old to decorating get to soak up as many ideas as they can for a nominal fee.



I have participated in more than a dozen show houses, and have chosen for this book three examples of rooms from Kips Bay Show Houses and one from a French Decorator Show House, all of which were in New York. The Kips Bay Decorator Show House is one of the most well known; it benefits the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club, which since 1915 has enriched the lives of nearly nine thousand children in the Bronx as a nurturing environment for study, recreation, and making friends. In the French Designer Show House, rooms are interpreted in *le style français* for the benefit of the American Hospital of Paris, which is located on the site of one of Louis XV's summer homes in Neuilly-sur-Seine and has offered American-style medicine for more than eighty five years. I am proud and privileged to have been a part of these wonderful show houses.

In addition to my discussion of the four show house rooms, you'll find a few apropos quotes about inspiration sprinkled throughout these pages. I'm a collector of quotes, particularly from people whose lives or work I admire. One of my favorites is by the photographer Walker Evans, who advised his students, "Stare. It is the way to educate your eye, and more." Obviously, this is important advice for fellow photographers, but I think that what Mr. Evans said really applies to most creative endeavors, decorating included. This looking, observing, and really *seeing* things around you broadens your knowledge base so that you can create the environment you've always wanted. Looking doesn't cost anything, and it's something most people can do, easily and wherever they are. Think of it as going through life as a big sponge, soaking up ideas as you find them!

I believe we derive inspiration from the things we see and experience that strike a chord with us and stay with us for a long time. One little memory or moment in your collective unconscious may be a great source of inspiration when you are decorating your home. An image, a color, or an object you encounter while visiting a museum, traveling, or even walking your dog down the street could become part of a great decorating idea later. I find inspiration in many places: through the imagery and crafts-

manship of art, architecture, fashion, photography, and individual objects; through color and the natural beauty of flowers, plants, and gardens; and through the books I read and my own experiences while on my travels and when building my collections. I am also inspired by women through the ages who had a sense of humor and great personal style. All these things I keep in the back of my mind for future use.

When something strikes me, I like to record it in some way to jog my memory later. I have a huge archive of images and tear sheets that I store in thematic portfolios. You might say I'm an incurable clipper! These resources come in handy when I'm presenting a scheme for a room. I always revisit my scrapbooks and files and assemble an inspiration board with a selection of pictures, sketches, postcards, tear sheets, fabric swatches, and quotes to convey a sense of mood and atmosphere for my clients in order to help them visualize my concept. You'll see examples of my own inspiration boards, as well as room schemes, in each chapter.

So what advice can I offer someone in search of inspiration? Go out, go do, go see. Take lots of photographs, and keep scrapbooks or start an inspiration board. Browse the home shops, visit museums and exhibitions, attend lectures, antiques shows, and, of course, show houses. Read books and magazines about interiors; look carefully at their pictures and think to yourself, What is it that I really like about this room—is it the color, is it the detail, is it the floor plan, is it one great chair? From all this looking, you can learn to take concepts and make them work for you and your home. The best homes are personal homes, places that have “fingerprints.” Choose furniture and objects not just because they look pretty but because they elicit an emotional response. If you like something, it will always have a home. You'll find that your inspiration just clicks—when you're not even thinking about it, things will just seem to come together. The beauty of this is that each of us has a different way of extracting knowledge, and everybody can see something different in the same thing. I hope you'll be inspired by what you see on these pages.



