



House Beautiful

The Finishing Touch

Details That Make
a Room Beautiful

Carol Spier



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THE FINISHING TOUCH

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a Room Beautiful

CAROL SPIER

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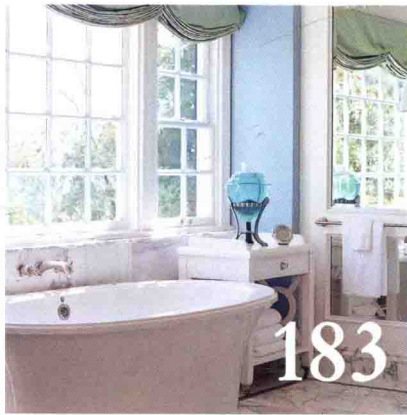
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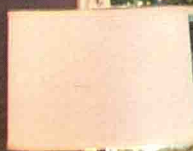
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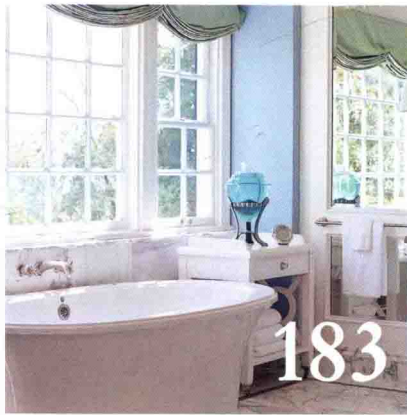
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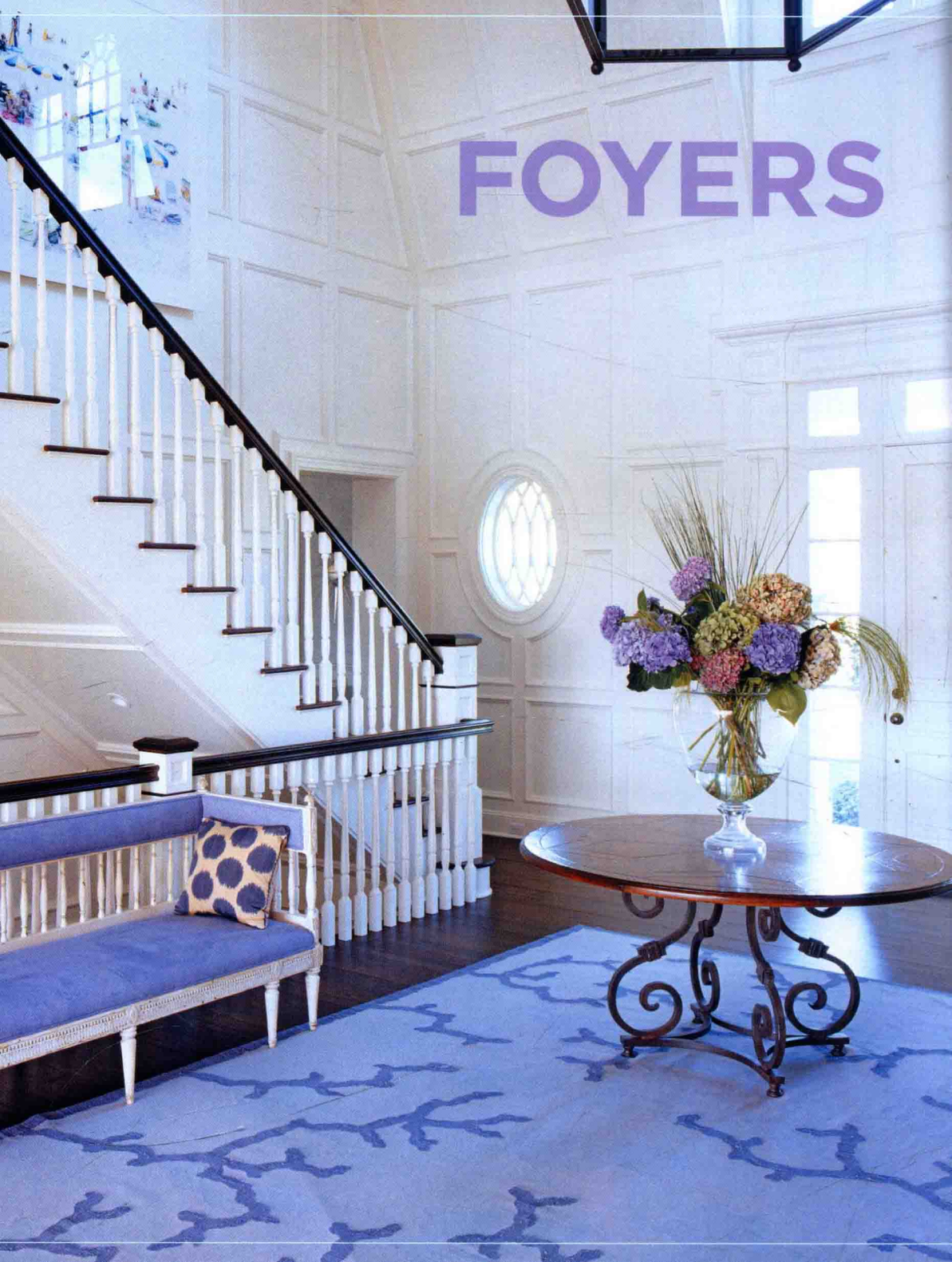
INTRODUCTION

What qualities do you look for in a beautiful room?

Good design, of course, but what specifically makes a design the right one for you? Is it the style of the architecture and décor? The formality or casualness of the look? The colors? The ease with which the room can be used—its layout or equipment? The way the space relates to the garden or captures the view? Is it an emotional quality—a sense of romance, joy, relaxation, intimacy, serenity, or energy? All of these elements are important; how fortunate and exciting that they can be mixed and interpreted in myriad ways with results diverse enough to please the sensibilities of each of us.

Because everyone defines and responds to design in a personal way, there is no single iteration that is “right”—only interpretations that are right, or not right, for you. Gathered in this book are photographs of many exquisite rooms, each designed for someone with specific aesthetic taste and a pragmatic list of required components. Each photo is accompanied by a caption noting the key features that make the design appealing and successful. Look through the photos and you’ll see rooms in many styles, interpreted to evoke different emotional responses and satisfy people with varied lifestyles. Allow them to speak to you on different levels—through their style, color, detail, layout, proportion, and emotional ambience, and take in the many ways they make life easier and more pleasurable. Note your responses to the décor and ideas, and as you create your own beautiful rooms, be inspired by the ones shown here that make you happiest.

FOYERS



CHAPTER ONE

What are the characteristics of your entryway?

Does it have gracious proportions, interesting architectural details, and lovely natural light, or is it a small hall you pass through quickly? Whatever its physical features, first impressions matter. Your foyer should give your guests a sense that they've arrived at a welcoming place and also introduce them to the style and ambience of your home.

Style

Whether your entryway is a grand reception hall or an intimate foyer, imbue it with the same sense of style you give the rest of your home. Let it tell visitors that they've arrived somewhere serene, exotic, cozy, or luxurious (for example), and make it formal or casual to reflect the qualities that make you happy.

Lighting

Artificial light should be soft and pleasing, but sufficient to guide the way through the foyer and show off any furnishings it holds—overly bright or harshly illuminated entryways can seem cold or institutional. If there is a closet, be sure it is lighted. And don't neglect the exterior: you want people to be able to navigate your steps, find the bell, and, of course, admire your porch.

Furniture

The size of the foyer sets the stage for furniture: at the least, a table to hold the mail and your keys is a plus, and a chair or bench, a boon. If there's room, a sitting area with a lamp may be enticing. An accent piece such as a long case clock, pedestal, or étagère can give importance to a niche or corner.

Floor covering

A decorative rug or patterned floor immediately conveys character and can be used to define space or lead visitors to the next room (and a rug will quiet footsteps, too). When other furnishings are limited, the floor can establish an overall style.

Window treatments

If there are windows (or the door is glass), cover them, especially at night, to provide privacy.

Finishing touches

A mirror will not only let your guests primp, but it will also reflect light and make the space look larger. Artwork, both framed and freestanding, gives polish and delights the eye, and small accessories add a personal touch. Fresh flowers add life, fragrance, color, and form—enjoy them!

Preview

If other rooms are visible from the entryway, arrange them to please and entice people standing in the hall: consider common color schemes, avenues of access to artwork, the fireplace, or comfortable seating.





MIX OF STYLES

Enter this hall to a sense of wonder and welcome: the contrast of dark and light, formal and informal is delightful and seems just right for an older home that has seen style evolve over time. On the left, the mirror (which offers guests a place to primp), serpentine chest, and dressy side chairs are distinguished and stately; on the right, the checked daybed offers a more casual welcome.

CORNER ACCENT

The marbled pedestal topped with an urn makes a charming and rather extravagant gesture at the far corner of the hall, spilling its array of greens informally against the wall.

AMENITY

With such a pretty powder room, the door at the end of the hall can be kept graciously ajar for visitors.

DRAMA

Painted all white, the architectural detail of this entry hall takes second place to the bold floor. The walls, moldings, coffered ceiling, and stairs rise serenely, anchored by the graphic, diagonal, painted black-and-white checkerboard. The foyer itself is distinguished from the hall with a different, even bolder painted pattern.

DETAILS

Elegant and solitary, gold provides the only accent to the severe black and white. The collection of intricate frames and the openwork of the bench add texture and capture the imagination. The old-fashioned black dial phone is a charmer.

