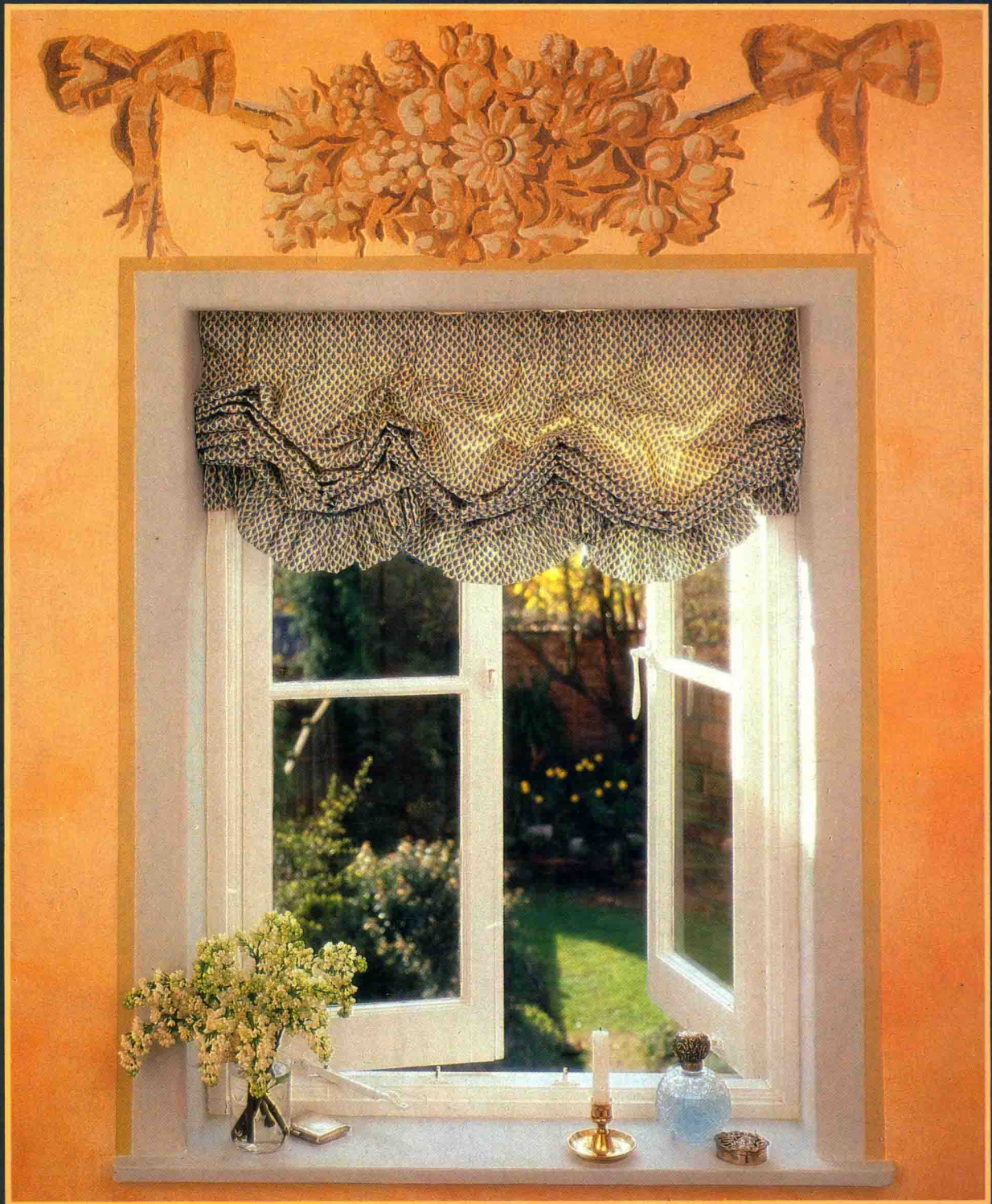


WINDOWS

— THE COMPLETE ART OF WINDOW TREATMENT —



— JOCASTA INNES —

00-1209

WINDOWS

— THE COMPLETE ART —
OF WINDOW TREATMENT

JOCASTA INNES

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS BY
— CASSANDRA KENT —

Orbis · London

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Captions to photographs

PAGE 2: This detail from an old French window shows how attractive decorated glass can look treated in a purely secular style. The formal grid of lead comes binds together a lively patchwork of decorated panes, different in both treatment and subject matter.

RIGHT: Neo-Classical meets American vernacular in this trio of pedimented windows in the clapboard wall of a South Carolina house. The carved hoods are imposingly Classical but it is the subtle play on horizontals – wide boards alternating with fine shutter louvres – which give such an austere elegant effect.

PAGE 6: This unusual awning/shutter in the dining room of a Turkish villa, or yalé, serves a dual purpose: to keep out direct sunlight while reflecting the cool, wavering light off the Bosphorus on to the room's ceiling.

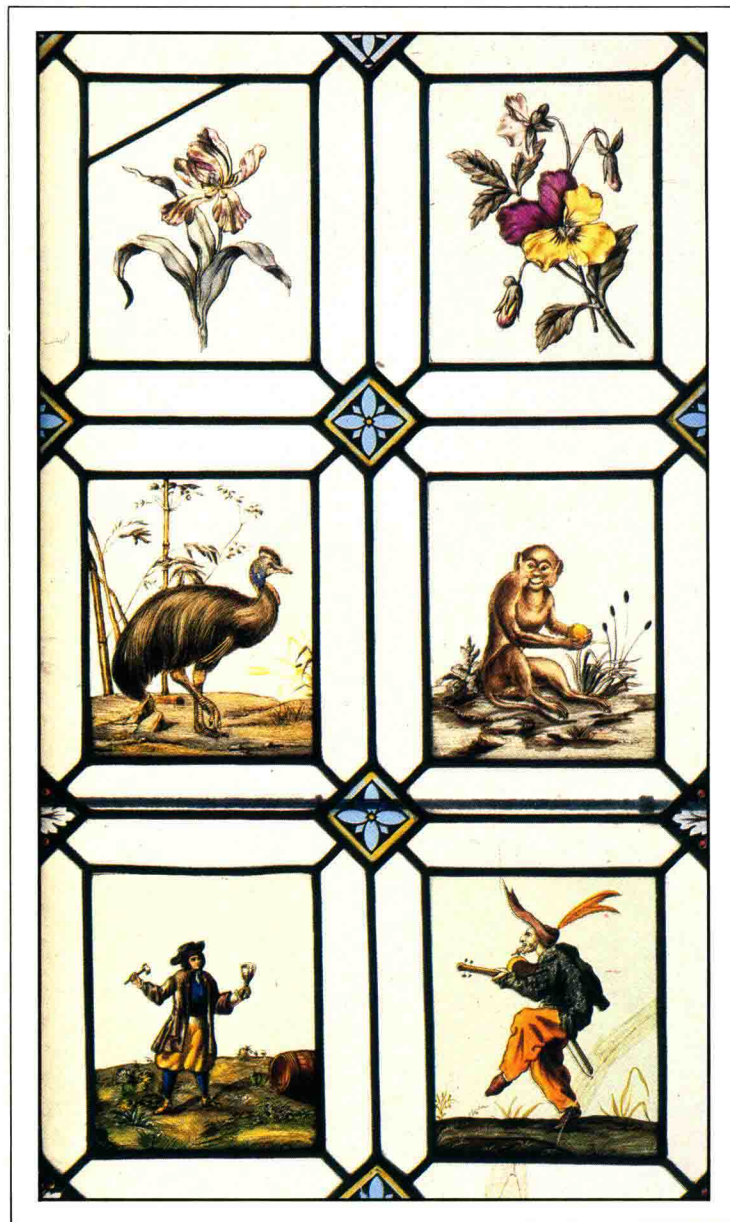


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There are many ways of looking at windows. Children draw houses like faces, with windows for eyes. Architects talk about the rhythms of fenestration, the balance between voids and solids. Housewives worry about the cost of curtaining, and the problem of keeping all that glass sparkling. Small boys get wicked joy throwing stones. Heating engineers are preoccupied by energy losses when windows are thrown open, while the medical profession speculates on possible health hazards when windows are kept sealed. Some housebuyers will spend thousands putting the windows back to their original state, while others will spend almost as much replacing original windows with sheets of plate glass.

Ladies leaning out of high windows are an inspiration for poets, and everything about windows is material for painters: the view from the window, the light falling inside, the silhouettes of people standing in front of them, the idea of windows as frames within a frame. Some decorators dress windows up, with lace petticoats and flounced curtains as elaborate as ball gowns, while others strip them to essentials with surrounds of stainless steel and blinds of natural canvas. Men look out of windows at pretty girls and pretty girls are always looking into windows at themselves. The right window can sell a house: picture windows in suburbia, windows with fretted balconies in seaside towns, little old crooked windows in country villages.

Windows are about light, views and status. What we tend to forget is that they are also about making connections. Through their windows buildings connect with visitors, passers by, the life of the street or square, the time of day and the

passing of the seasons. Windows are the interface between the little world inside a house and the large world outside. The unguardedness of windows, so many apertures in our house walls, is based on all sorts of assumptions about the society we live in. We assume that people will abide by certain unwritten rules; that they will not stand outside staring in, or throw stones, or mistake an open window for an invitation to climb in. In a

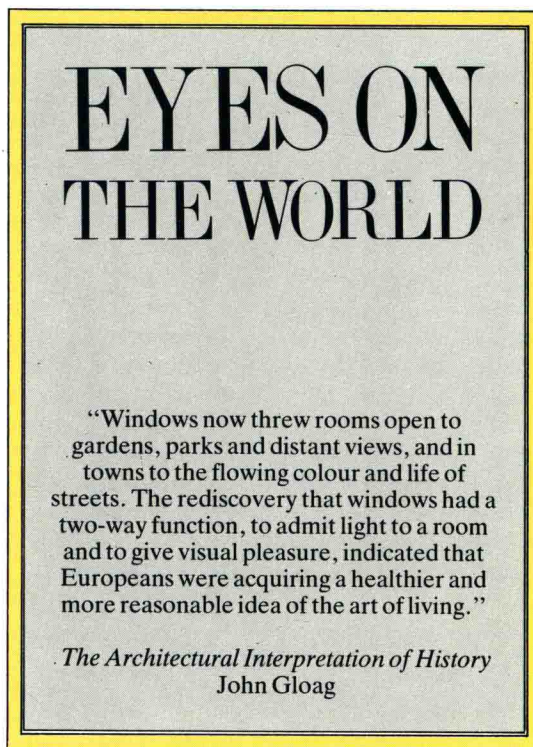
civilised society windows symbolise mutual trust and respect. As communities feel more secure, they proliferate windows. The huge windows of early Victorian villas, fronting the street, tell us a lot about the confidence of that period, while the small windows slotted into street elevations in so many housing schemes today tell us something about the problems of the society we live in now.

— TECHNOLOGY —

In the beginning, of course, there were almost certainly no windows at all. The first human habitations of any permanence had a door and a hole in the roof to let the smoke out. Safety

and shelter were the priorities. Opening up holes in the walls not only breached one's defenses but let in the elements and other undesirables ranging from insects and rodents to hostile humans. Most of the earliest purpose built dwellings which have been excavated, in China and the Middle East, are closer to burrows and caves, partly dug into the ground, and then roofed over with mud-plastered bundles of reeds bent to form a shallow dome. These date from prehistoric times. Primitive people still build this way, especially where the climate is extreme, fiercely hot or cold.

The dawn of civilization brought many benefits,



LEFT: One of the most original features of architectural writer Charles Jencks' astonishing theme house is this cushioned seating space at one end of the Summer Room. Sun rays carved into the floor and summery colours inspired by Poussin's painting *Dance to the Music of Time* reinforce the summer theme, while sliding windows open the space up on warm days to make a solar directly connected to the sunny garden.

WINDOWS

among them windows. Not that the first windows would have been much more than functional spy holes, rough openings set high up and sealed against intruders or the weather with a stone slab or a flap of hide. Noah's ark had just one window, as the Bible relates. "And it came to pass after forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark." When social conditions are right, though, people feel secure enough and have enough leisure to attend to other things than survival. By classical times the desirability of windows was well understood. The gaily painted terraced houses in the Cretan capital of Knossos were pierced with row upon row of windows, unglazed but made into a noticeable feature with broad painted 'frames', just as many Mediterranean houses still are today. Life felt good to the Cretans, and their *joie de vivre* is evident in their sensuous wall painting, their love of warm, glowing colour, the open construction of buildings such as the palace, a place of open galleries and loggias open wide to sun and air and views over the sea.

Window technology advanced steadily, particularly under the practical Romans, but though they knew about glazing as well as windows – bronze circular window frames set with thick greenish glass were excavated at Pompeii – these tended to be restricted to patrician homes like the magnificent villa Pliny the Younger designed for himself with views in three different directions over the sea. Apartment buildings were quite common in Roman cities, but most citizens lived in houses built around a central open courtyard, where natural light flooding in made further windows unnecessary. Solid bourgeois houses like the surgeon's house at Pompeii turned their backs on the street, much as houses in an Arab *medina* tend to do today.

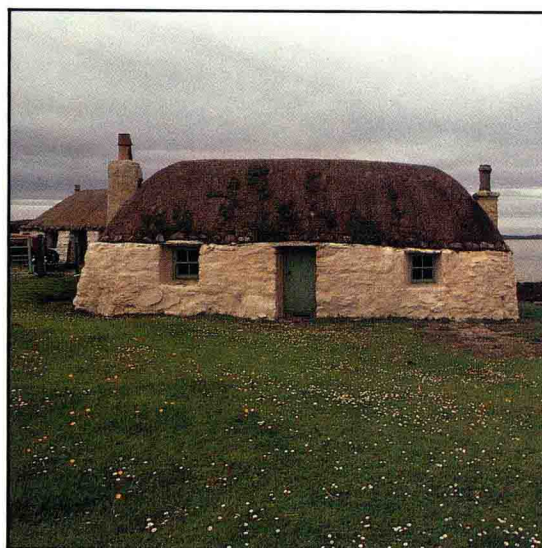
The Romans took their window technology with them to the northern outposts of the

Empire, and the Roman villa at St Albans had glazed windows set into frescoed walls. After the Roman Empire fell apart it was many centuries before glazed windows were seen again, and then only in ecclesiastical buildings. Buildings did have windows, but these were small, set deep into thick walls and generally protected by an iron grid, or a trellis of canes or laths embedded in the plaster. These kept out birds, cats and marauders. Detachable wooden or stone shutters pivoting on metal pegs kept out wind and rain and – in some instances – invaders. Sometimes these were pierced to let in a little light. Even when glazing was first introduced into English domestic buildings around the fourteenth century, often only the upper segment was glazed, while the bottom was closed off with shutters. Primitive window arrangements like these could be seen in peasant cottages until well into the nineteenth century, though in some cases makeshift glazing was supplied by pieces of horn, mica or oiled cloth.

By Tudor times glazing was quite standard in aristocratic and wealthy bourgeois houses. The typical Tudor window was a casement, of outward opening type, made up of many small panes of blown glass held together by lead cames. A 'came' is a lead strip, deeply grooved either side, into which glass pieces can be slotted. Soft enough to bend easily and weather resistant, lead cames are still used in making stained glass windows. Lead is

not rigid, however, and lattice paned Tudor windows had either to be quite small or reinforced by being set in sturdy frames of wood, as in the Long Gallery at Little Moreton Hall, dated around 1570, or in stone mullions and transoms.

Tudor builders devised new window types, such as the oriel (from the Latin *oratoriolum*, or little prayer place) projecting like a decorative swallow's nest, and precursor of the later bow window, and the dormer window, highly practical



ABOVE: The more primitive a building, especially in harsh climates, the smaller and fewer the windows. Two little 'wind eyes' set into thick stone walls give just enough light and ventilation to this small croft on an exposed Hebridean headland.



ABOVE: *The romance of the age of chivalry lives on in Catherine de Valois' recently restored 'Chambre de Retrait' in Leeds Castle, Kent. Double ogive windows enhanced by a decorative quatrefoil are set into a deep embrasure scooped in the thickness of 12th century stonework.*

OVERLEAF: *The monumental scale of Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire makes this Elizabethan prodigy house a truly fitting symbol of a daring and virile age. Built by Robert Smythson for the redoubtable Bess of Hardwick, the house rapidly became legendary for its extravagant use of glazing.*



