

The background image is a photograph of a Swedish interior. On the left, a window with white curtains allows bright light into the room. In the center, a dark wooden chest of drawers with blue floral patterns is topped with a stack of books, a small framed picture, and a golden cherub statue. To the left of the chest is a white wooden rocking horse. To the right, a white curtain hangs, and a portion of a wooden chair is visible. The title 'Swedish' is written in a large, elegant blue script, and 'INTERIORS' is in a smaller, gold-colored serif font.

Swedish

INTERIORS

RHONDA ELEISH & EDIE VAN BREEMS

With forewords by Albert Hadley and Miguel Flores-Vianna

swedish
INTERIORS

RHONDA ELEISH &
EDIE BERNHARD VAN BREEMS

Photographs by Jon E. Monson and L. Langdon Ergmann



Gibbs Smith, Publisher

TO ENRICH AND INSPIRE HUMANKIND

Salt Lake City | Charleston | Santa Fe | SANTA BARBARA



I dedicate this book to my parents, Cathy and G. Eleish, and my daughter, Kari.

—R.E.

A book for my two Northern Lights, Lars and Martin.

—E.B.v.B.

First Edition

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Text © 2007 Rhonda Eleish and Edie Bernhard van Breems

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PAGE 2: During the mid-eighteenth century, trade with the Far East was made accessible thanks to the established Swedish East Indian Company based out of Göteborg, Sweden. As a result, the Swedish aristocracy and wealthy merchant class commissioned furniture that mimicked elements borrowed from the fashionable Far East. Unable to afford the expensive lacquer finishes of their Asian counterparts, the Swedes relied on faux paint finishes to achieve a similar result. Linda and Lindsay Kennedy's eighteenth-century, black-painted Rococo writing desk represents an ideal example from this period.

OPPOSITE: A view from the reception room into Libby Holsten's winter dining room reveals bare pickled floors, pale milk washed trim, and fanciful chinoiserie murals to set the stage for a Swedish eighteenth-century mood.

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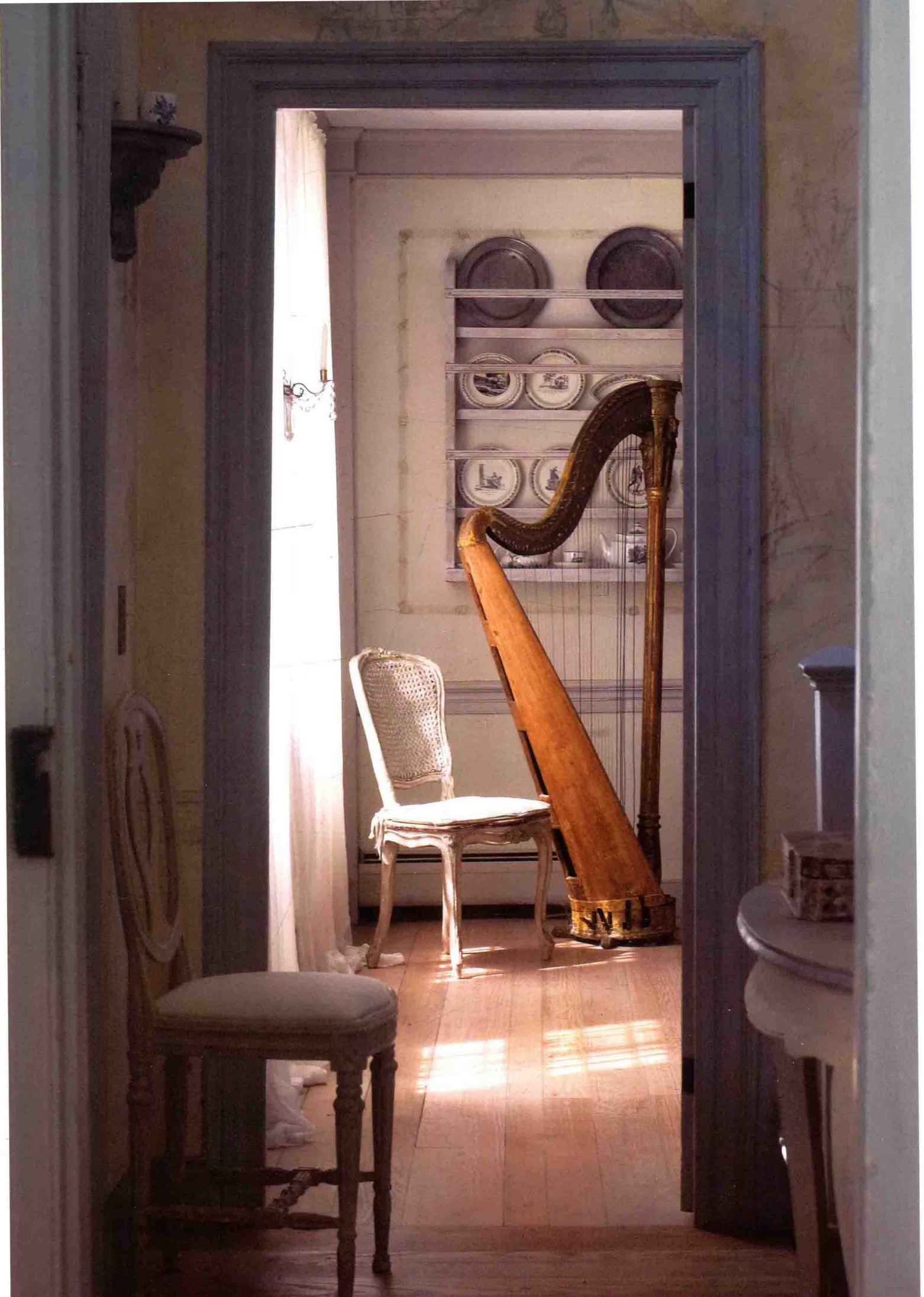
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Rare Rococo Swedish side chairs in their original finish flank the breakfast-room table. A Swedish Rococo tea table sits under a portrait.

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Foreword

MIGUEL FLORES-VIANNA



My father specialized as an orthopedic surgeon at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. From an early age, I heard stories at home about the wonderful country of Sweden—of long summer days and endless winter snows. It was perhaps not a coincidence that I visited Sweden two months after Papa's death. I remember the first day in Stockholm walking around in a daze, looking for the faces that, I imagined, had known my father. Little did I know that his memories of that country would become my own as I got to know that wondrous land.

The world had changed a great deal by the time of my arrival in Sweden. My father's Sweden was quintessentially the 1960s, full of social exploration, of new boundaries and possibilities—Sweden was then at the forefront of all that. My world was the 1990s, and the Sweden that I came to know and love was very different.

My profession as a New York magazine editor had brought me to the country in search of beautiful architecture, inspiring interiors, and a very definitive sense of design. My various visits to Sweden, thereafter, and my meetings with members of the Swedish design communities, increasingly gave me a deep appreciation for how the citizens of that country view spaces that they inhabit in their daily lives—whether their home spaces are guided by principles of the eighteenth century

or the twenty-first. Throughout that land, there is an appreciation for space, light, certain types of color, noble materials, and surroundings that I have not often seen in other countries. The Swedes are at ease with the world, and their homes are a microcosm of the world as they see it: elegant and simple—whether traditional or contemporary—always unpretentious, warm and well lived. These characteristics are well understood and admired by their American cousins. I always say, in fact, that our country speaks English, but in its love for equality and freedom, it is a Scandinavian nation at heart.

The houses in these pages are American homes that have tried to capture the essence of their Scandinavian counterparts. This is a first in American book publishing, and it is no surprise to me that my friends Edie van Breems and Rhonda Eleish have authored it. Their work as antiques dealers specializing in Swedish eighteenth- and nineteenth-century furnishings has made them not only experts in design, but has given them a deep understanding of how and why Sweden has influenced the American home. I hope you will enjoy these pages as much as I did, and if this is your first encounter with Swedish design, may this be the beginning of a long love affair!

Skål! 🌸



Foreword

ALBERT HADLEY



When one thinks of Swedish design and decoration, one conjures in one's mind and imagination visions of aristocratic and sophisticated examples that have been beautifully featured in such various publications as *Neoclassism in the North* by Håkan Groth, *The Swedish Room* by Lars and Ursula Sjöberg, *The Swedish House* by Lars Sjöberg, and other equally fine publications. The images that have been presented represent Swedish design in its full-blown splendor—a unique splendor of a given time and place. There is no denying the superb quality and cool allure afforded by such images—images that represent a total philosophy and a point of view of people whose lives are rich in historical investigation and interpretation. For the most part, it is architecture and design of august measure, and measure that causes one to return to a dream state without further pursuit of possibilities in the realm of personal expression.

Swedish Interiors opens wide the doors of possibilities for personal dreams and investigation. In this extraordinary book by Edie van Breems and Rhonda Eleish, one is enchanted, and yes, a bit surprised, by the multitude of examples put forth through means of photographic magic that show Swedish design in all its charm and beauty, very much “at home” in American houses.

In this ravishing volume, one visits vicariously a wide range of distinctive and personal houses where their owners have combined elements representative of their own personal taste; in each case, a taste that is diverse while at the same time expressing a strong and knowledgeable aesthetic.

Swedish Interiors comes full round: for instance, in an old log house where the interior walls are indeed the logs themselves, the furnishings are of appropriate earthiness and primitive quality. One is happily surprised to find ravishing examples of primitive Swedish furnishings and appointments performing with stage assurance alongside their American counterparts.

Another brilliant example is a house of more open plan employing soaring walls of multipaned glass—the spaces artfully punctuated by furnishings and objects of both Swedish and American design.

Edie van Breems and Rhonda Eleish offer the reader a great opportunity to witness these various and many properties where the inhabitants—obviously people with imagination and daring—share with enthusiasm and hospitality their superb examples of Swedish design in America. ✿



preface



What is Swedish style? Generally in the United States, we have become very familiar with the Swedish Gustavian style, with its neutral tones and clean lines, as seen on the covers of most shelter magazines; however, the depth of Swedish design and color is much more expansive than just the white-hued images we have become accustomed to. As antiques dealers and designers specializing in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Swedish antiques and interiors, we have long been aware of the diversity and beauty in both the soothing grays and whites of the Gustavian era, as well as the richness of the Swedish Baroque, Rococo, and Biedermeier periods. Most recently, Swedish modernism has also become a force in itself.

Swedish design is popular today, and its beauty lies in the confidence to mix both old and new. A stunning apartment in Stockholm will boast eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiques, mostly family heirlooms, with recently acquired modern and contemporary art and furnishings. The desire to mix—whether furniture imported from abroad or antique versus modern—has been in the Swedish vocabulary since the sixteenth century.

Throughout the course of our business, we have been asked time

and again by our clients, hungry for information, for resource information regarding Swedish interiors that is relatable to American homes. Given that America is a large and expansive country, finding resources that encompassed east, west, north, and south was not an easy task. This type of compiled resource just has not existed until now. Swedish interiors and lifestyle are becoming very popular in the United States, and we felt that there was a need in the market for a book that detailed American homes inspired by Swedish interiors. We kindly asked friends, clients, and colleagues across the United States to share their homes and spaces, and without hesitation, we found that they were just as passionate about sharing their love of Swedish style as we were.

Knowing how closely our cultures have crossed paths over the centuries, it is amazing how little is known about Sweden and Swedish decorative arts in the United States. It is our goal, with *Swedish Interiors*, to begin a dialogue that will excite and inspire those who read it, and show the diversity, depth, and mix-ability of Swedish design.

We hope that you enjoy *Swedish Interiors* and we thank everyone who opened their hearts and homes to us, and who shared in this incredible journey. ✨

OPPOSITE: The heart and soul of Sweden lies in the understated Swedish country folk antiques, or *allmoge*. To understand a country and its people, you really have to examine how the simple folk lived. In contrast to the wealthier merchant and noble classes, the farmers, mostly dairy and agricultural, lived a harsh life where survival of the family was the ultimate goal. The interior colors of their homes reflected what natural pigments were available to them, and handicrafts became a source of income during the cold winter months. The decorative arts flourished, and traditions sprang out of functional forms. For example, a simple mangling board used for ironing became a ceremonial symbol for marriage and union when carved by the fiancé of a young bride.