

PARISIAN INTERIORS

BOLD · ELEGANT · REFINED



BARBARA & RENÉ STOELTIE
Foreword by JACQUES GARCIA

Flammarion

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Acknowledgments

We never would have been able to complete this work without the gracious collaboration of all those who opened the doors of their *hôtel particulier*, apartment, loft, or “dacha in the attic” to us. We also would like to thank Mr. Lenny Kravitz and our friends M. Jacques Garcia and M. Yves Gastou and, last but not least, Mme Hélène David-Weill and Mme Sylvie Legrand-Rossi, who gave us access to one of the finest jewels of French decorative art, the Musée Nissim de Camondo. Thanks to them, what could have been a grueling task was transformed into a fascinating adventure.

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PARISIAN INTERIORS

This book is dedicated to the memory
of Madeleine Castaing

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FOREWORD

Paris is a city of contrasts. Contrasts conferred on it by the mixed character of its population and by the unceasing hospitality it offers to those who have a taste for radical change.

The French are not a subdued people, and Paris follows this example by translating the need for excitement and new forms through its constantly changing appearance. You do not build a new temple over the ruins of the old, and in Paris this golden rule has been followed for centuries in an acute fever of demolition and construction—a collective frenzy that has seen countless buildings and even whole neighborhoods disappear, only to be reconstructed. For example, in the nineteenth century, Baron Haussmann demolished beautiful mansions and eighteenth-century follies to erect his own extravagances in their place: the Grands Boulevards. A century later, the “belly of Paris”—the vast central market—was razed and the gaping hole was filled with a blatantly futuristic Les Halles and the nearby “Beaubourg.” And more recently, the construction of La Défense and its Grande Arche, and the Bastille Opera have left an unforgettable visual imprint on the city.

Paris loves the transformation process and in no way opposes the iconoclastic spirit of its innovators and constant critics. The city’s architecture and interior decoration have experienced more styles and trends in the last two centuries than in the rest of the two millennia of Christian civilization put together. And *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*, I willingly confess to having often contributed to these changing interiors and having created controversy in this fundamental field; persisting to the point of utter stubbornness, and going against the tide.

Paris is no white and beige city. Paris is bubbly, cheerful, crazy, grand, elegant, exuberant, provocative, haunting, and vulgar—it is shameless. The interiors portrayed on these pages demonstrate this personality, and the individuals who created them provide undeniable proof that creativity and boldness make for a good partnership.

“Everything is created in Paris, everything comes to Paris, and everything comes from Paris!” declared the late Madeleine Castaing when the avant-garde spirit of London or New York was praised. And, as usual, Madeleine had the last word.

— Jacques Garcia



INTRODUCTION

During her honeymoon in Paris, in 1954, my aunt bought me two gifts: a dreadfully ugly plastic pen—complete with a magnifying lens displaying the Eiffel Tower—and an equally awful snowdome containing a plastic model of the Sacré-Cœur with a wretched little pile of snow that allowed me to create my own blizzard around the famous basilica. However, these souvenirs intended for tasteless tourists did not prevent me from truly falling in love with the French capital, whose culture and beauty—and especially the combination of both—from that moment forward instilled in me an unshakable faith before becoming—although only briefly—my home base. *Paris is always Paris*. For me, too. Paris and its stunning monuments, elegant boulevards, the kitschy charm of the place du Tertre, and the past glory of Montparnasse, or the artistic atmosphere of Belleville. The Paris of Mistinguett, Chevalier, and Piaf. An accordion and a glass of ruby red wine sipped during a moment of reflection on a terrace. However, beyond the Paris of overused clichés, an unsuspected task awaited me: to describe what hides behind the beautiful facades of its buildings.

Anyone who has lived in Paris has experienced the exhilaration of these discoveries. Long walks through the city, exploring every little corner and, above all, taking a peek behind the facades. For René and me this was a true quest to find the most distinctive, captivating, surprising, intriguing, dazzling, and spiritual interior spaces, generated by the imaginations of the most diverse personalities: artists, designers, architects, businessmen, collectors, notable residents, and the inevitable eccentric. The world is made up of a little bit of everything ... wealth and poverty, inventiveness and conservatism, classicism and the avant-garde, ingenuity and innovation. For interior design spies brimming with curiosity like René and myself, Paris has unexpected splendors. Armed with a camera and a pen, we easily accessed the most fascinating interiors and few doors remained closed to us. Thus, this book was born. A book about a city of incontrovertible magic. In short, a book about the magic of Paris.

A SUMPTUOUS ESTATE

Lenny Kravitz





