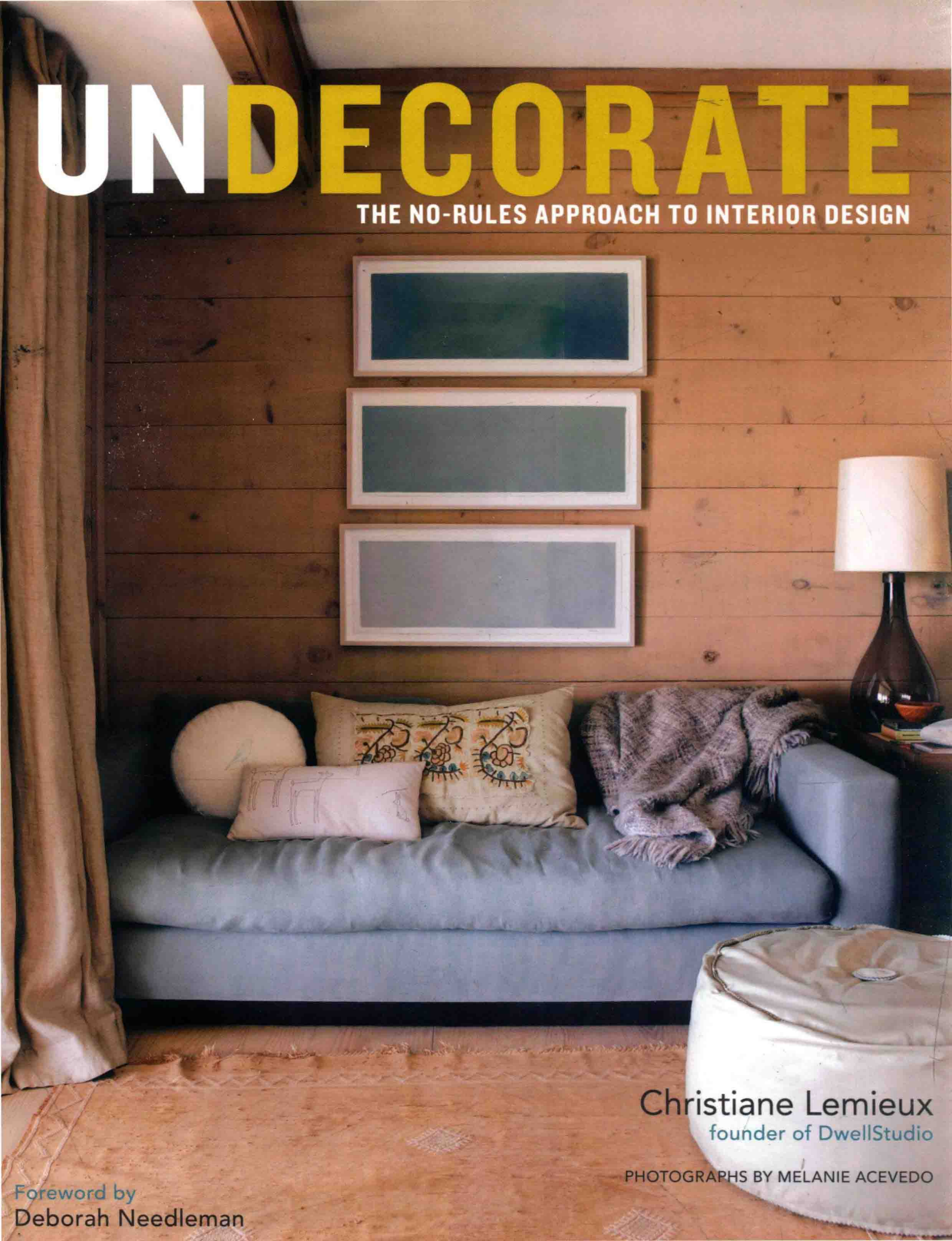


UNDECORATE

THE NO-RULES APPROACH TO INTERIOR DESIGN



Christiane Lemieux
founder of DwellStudio

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MELANIE ACEVEDO

Foreword by
Deborah Needleman

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常州大学图书馆
藏书章

Christiane Lemieux
WITH RUMAAN ALAM

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MELANIE ACEVEDO



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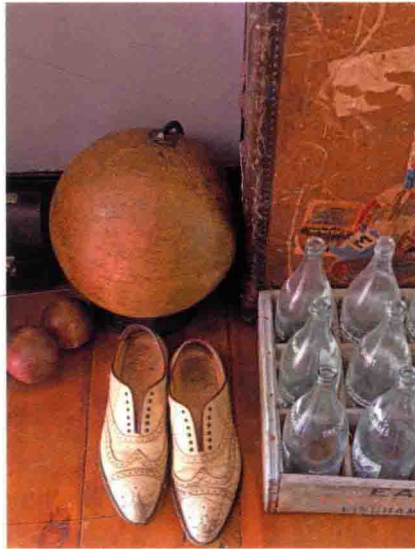
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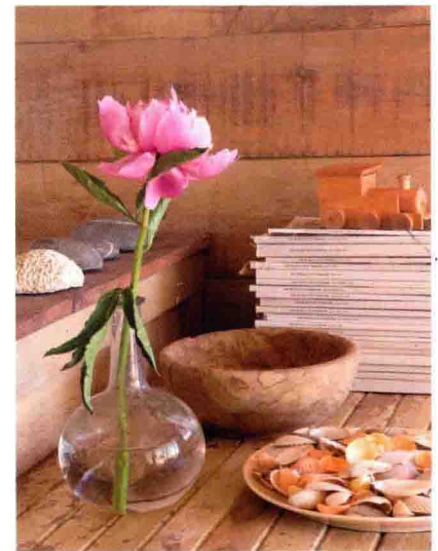
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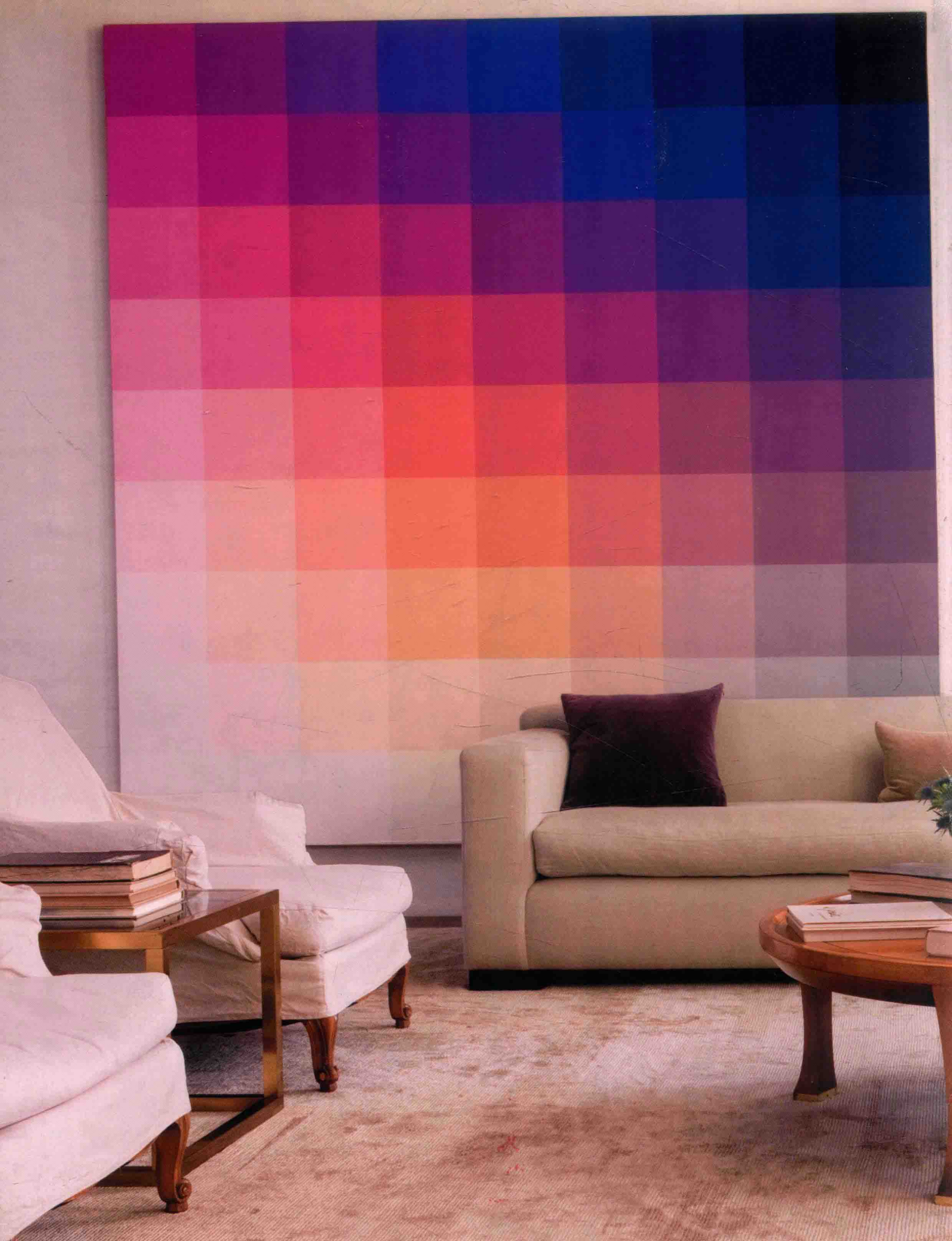
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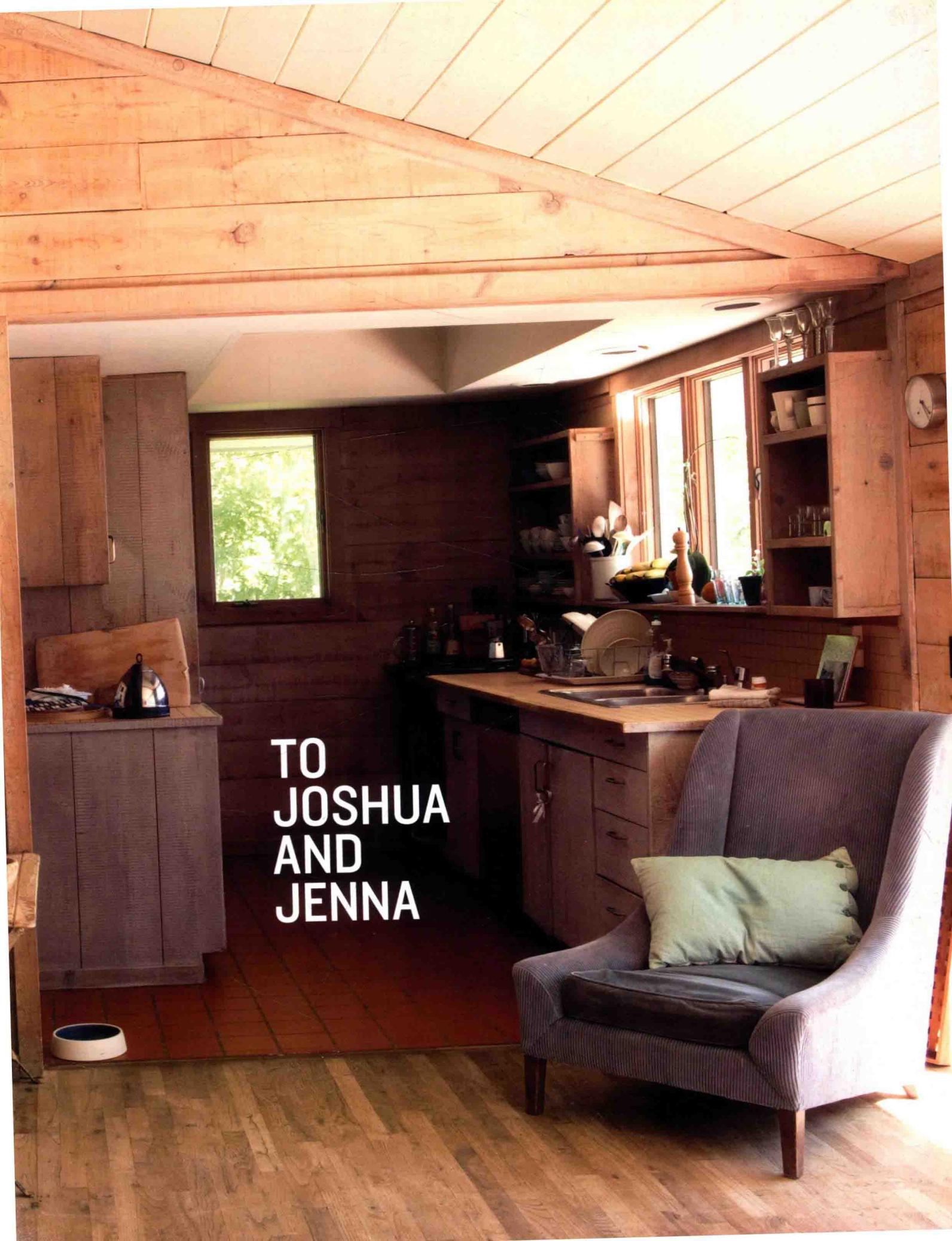
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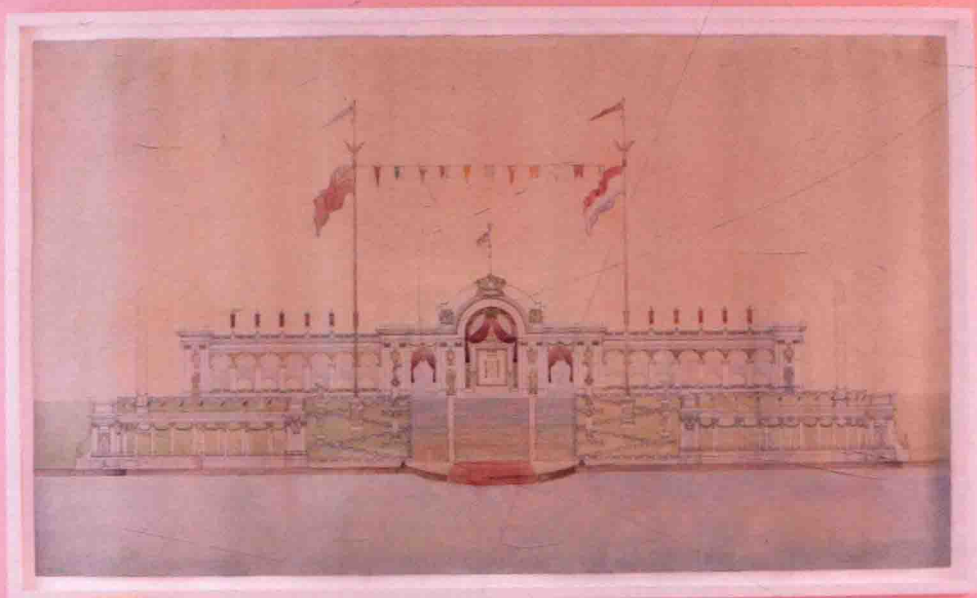
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First Edition



A photograph of a rustic interior space, likely a cabin or a small house. The room features a vaulted ceiling made of light-colored wooden planks. The walls are also made of wood, with a darker section in the background. A kitchen counter with a wooden top and a stainless steel sink is visible. Above the counter, there are wooden cabinets and shelves holding various items like dishes, glasses, and a pepper mill. A window in the background shows green foliage outside. In the foreground, a purple corduroy armchair with a green cushion sits on a wooden floor. To the left, there is a wooden cabinet and a small white bowl on the floor.

TO
JOSHUA
AND
JENNA



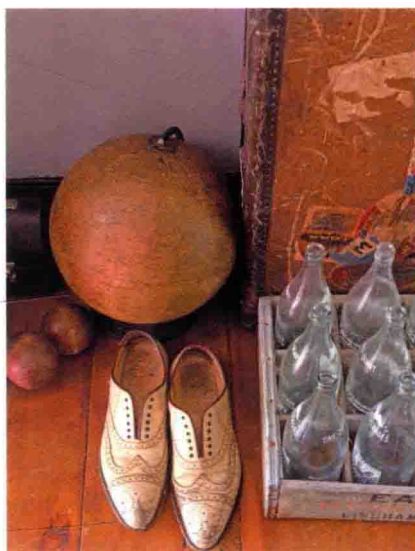
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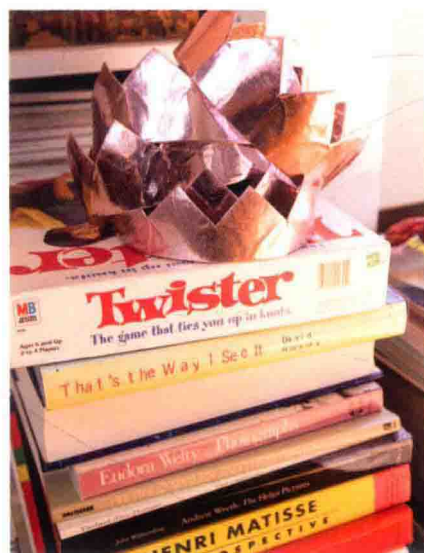
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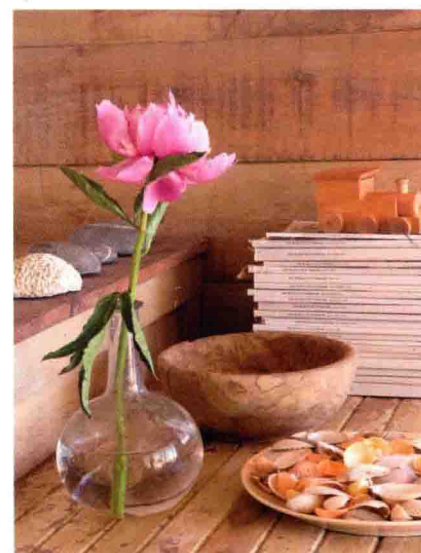
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FOREWORD

A few years back, a jewelry designer friend of mine hired one of the country's top decorators—a man high on my own if-money-were-no-object short list—to do up her apartment. He spent six months hunting for clean-lined twentieth-century antiques by the likes of Poul Kjaerholm and Tommi Parzinger. He treated the walls with pewter-leaf, stuffed furniture with horsehair, and created custom pieces, such as a fabulously long, silk-velvet sofa. The result was breathtaking: tailored and elegant and undeniably glamorous. It was perfect—only for someone else's life.

This friend of mine is a wonderfully exuberant, colorful, chic, and witty woman who modestly manages a thriving business with a couple of lively children underfoot. The tonally restrained and rather formal apartment the decorator created for her seemed to demand a different sort of occupant—someone more conventional and reserved, with the sort of children who might be summoned from their playroom to kiss mummy goodnight and then ushered out again. Eventually, she couldn't take it anymore and moved to a new apartment nearby. There she made a home in her own image: one that was exuberant, full of color, chic, and witty—and much more casual.

The norm used to be that lives conformed largely to the dictates of the house, rather than the other way around. Those were the dark ages of decorating, before the rise of the Internet and accessible good design. It's hard to remember now, but even a decade ago there weren't any shelter magazines or blogs trafficking in the home-grown style of the passionate amateur. We once viewed mostly pristinely decorated homes across the chasm of perfectly styled magazine photographs—that often revealed, if unintentionally, the homes' lack of personality. In our new, democratized world, anyone with his or her own sense of style and a clever knack for pulling things together can reach and inspire us.

This doesn't mean that everything that bubbles up on the Web is worth taking note of. But wading through a bit of mediocrity is a small price to pay for the profusion of original talent, fresh energy, and, often, unconventional ideas that can readily be found. Christiane Lemieux has created a design book culled from the best of this indigenous revolution: a collection of homes that exemplifies the

diversity of style happening now. What she calls ‘undecorating’ is a movement blissfully free of any ideological stance. Here you will find no preaching on the moral superiority of modernism, or hewing to the hegemony of classical interior design. If there is any devotion to a single period or school of design, it is personal and heartfelt.

This is decorating that is passionate *and* particular. Each of the homes featured could *only* be the home of the person who made it, so much does each reflect and enhance the individual lives it contains. (If you try to envision the sophisticated Francophile on pages 32–43 in the vintage fantasyland featured on pages 78–87, or the auto fanatics profiled on pages 102–111 in the pared-back elegance on pages 204–215, it simply wouldn’t make sense.) In any of these homes you could very well find handmade art, delicious dinners, domestic spats, lazy afternoons, bad days, wonderful parties, financial struggles, or broken dishwashers. In these pages, real life shows itself to be the muse of good design.

The experience that Christiane has created feels less like a conventional decorating book and more like a round robin of visits with friends. I was lucky enough to get to know several of the people featured in the book—including Christiane herself—in the four years (2005–2009) I was editor of *Domino* magazine. The author is precisely the kind of original talent we loved to feature. As a designer of textiles and bedding, Christiane brings her great style into many homes. And she has created a home for her family that channels who they are and the kind of life she wants to make for them.

At *Domino*, when we were on the fence about whether to photograph a house for our pages, we would ask ourselves if it seemed like it would be a fun place to be invited over for a drink. Oftentimes, an interior might be tasteful and well-executed, but it seemed to lack a crucial *something*. Just like my jewelry designer friend’s place, which while gorgeous, didn’t feel exciting or inviting. That ineffable something is vibrancy and energy—or you might call it love, or quirk, or personality. However you define it, *Undecorate* is chock full of it. And no home should be without it.

—Deborah Needleman



INTRODUCTION

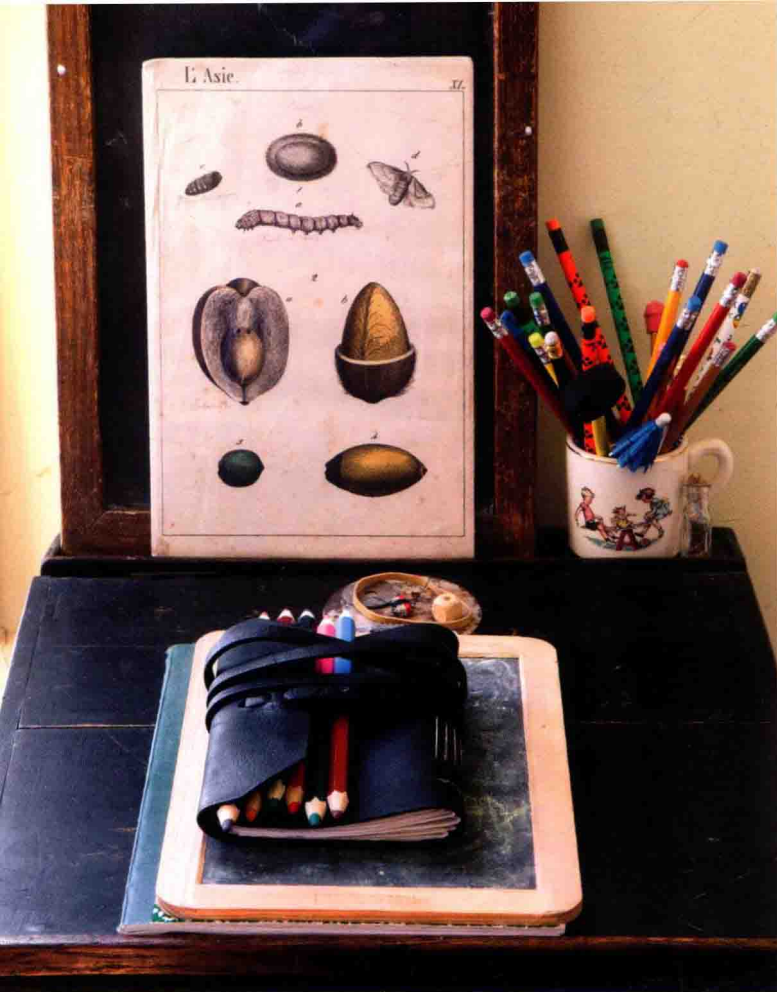
In service of what I do for a living, I get to indulge in a lot of things that only barely count as work. I get to peruse flea markets and out-of-the-way vintage shops, to study how the pros of yesteryear practiced their arts. I get to watch movies and take mental notes on the sets and costumes, and I get to stop by the fancy boutiques and stay abreast of what's going on in the world of fashion. (At least that's what I tell myself.) I get to buy as many magazines and books as I can carry, because I never know where I'm going to spot the thing that sparks my interest.

It's not a bad life.

Since I founded DwellStudio in 2000, however, the thing that's had probably the biggest impact on me, creatively and professionally, has been the Internet. It's no exaggeration that the Internet has totally changed the way the world works. It used to be that you'd design something (anything: a dress, a pillow, a car) and then send it out into the world, and the only way to gauge its success would be to look at how many people bought it. But with the proliferation of design websites and personal blogs, a whole new window has opened up: I get to see how people are actually living, whether it's with the bedding, tabletop, and home accessories we design at DwellStudio or with the stuff they've turned up while trolling eBay. I used to turn to the experts—the fashion and interior designers of the world. These days, I much prefer to go to the amateurs. The Internet offers so much proof that the most vibrant style ideas are coming from the minds of real people.

It was not always so. Less than a generation ago, the ultimate expression of taste was to hire a big-name decorator to put his or her own stamp on your home. The expert would deliver everything from silk-upholstered ceilings to the sugar bowl on the kitchen counter, and you had only to move in and enjoy the bragging rights.

I still love that traditional decorator-as-artiste design book. I always pore over whatever the season has to offer—to see how one singular talent has worked his or her magic in stately homes all across the world. It's the stuff of pure fantasy: mansions in East Hampton and Aspen, Lake Como and La Jolla; tables laid with Dresden china; powder rooms clad in hand-painted wallpaper; tufted leather sofas as long as limousines. It is also instructive to see how one designer consistently



uses a certain color palette or references a particular historical moment. These books offer a focused, detailed look at one personality, one point of view.

But what makes for a great coffee table book doesn't necessarily make much sense for real life. Most real people don't hire a decorator and then expect to move into a flawlessly furnished house six months later. The most stylish people these days understand this fundamental aspect of good living: it's always evolving. Great style isn't necessarily a finished product so much as it is an ongoing process.

When I decided to write a book of my own, I knew I wanted it to be about people who understand this contradiction. I wanted it to capture the dazzling variety—the many different ways of living—that I so love about the Internet. I wanted it to be about the multiplicity of styles that are flourishing out there right now, with or without the stamp of approval of some trained professional. I wanted to write a book about the kinds of people who catch my eye, time and again—a book about real people, and real style. It's true that most of the people you'll meet in these pages have some kind of relationship (usually a working one) to the worlds of art and design and fashion. But their homes feel so authentic, so achievable. These aren't flawless residences straight from the pages of some interiors magazine; these homes are imperfect and unbuttoned, a lesson in how to live whether you're a fashion designer or a dentist.

The variety of styles I see on the Internet doesn't necessarily translate seamlessly to book form. Or so the editors kept telling me. We needed to narrow it down a little, to sift through all the great design and inspired ideas that are out there and figure out what it all meant. So I spent months looking at everything from slick, well-designed blogs to humble sites documenting one homeowner's DIY renovation. And somewhere along the way I heard a word that stuck in my head, a word that seemed to me to encapsulate the one common thread in all these great spaces. Because design has its rules, and what I was noticing more and more is that the most stylish people are willing to disregard those rules. And this word I picked up from who-knows-where seems a very apt one for this approach to decorating. That word is *undecorated*.

What does it mean to undecorate? A fine question.

It's mixing fine antiques with your collection of Cher Barbie dolls, as Harry Heissmann does in his description-defying apartment in Brooklyn Heights. It's leaving temporary party decorations up for years because they just somehow seem right, as Erica Tanov does in her ridiculously beautiful California house. It's wedging antique columns into a suburban house, or parking your cars in the living room, or building your own altar, or hanging vintage advertising posters in your toddler's bedroom. Undecorated is following your instinct, even when it's telling you to do something a little crazy, a little different, something against the rules.

The homes featured in these pages reflect their owners' fearless approach to style. An approach that has nothing to do with trends (though inside you'll find all the trends that are current now or ever have been, done pretty terrifically), and it has nothing to do with the rules. So you can have a period dining room adjacent to your modern kitchen, if that's what you want, or a pink accent wall, or wallpaper on the ceiling. Stranger things have been done, and have still looked plenty chic. Undecorating isn't haphazard style; it's not thought-free. It's about being guided by something other than the traditional constraints—whether it's your commitment to the environment, or your love of polka dots, or the fact that you want to feel like you're in Paris when you live in Peoria.

If you undecorate, you acknowledge that life is a fluid thing, and accordingly, that style is a flexible thing. Undecorated style isn't one wholesale thing—it's a shifting target, and has much more to do with process than with finished product. It's decorating not to meet the

OPPOSITE LEFT In Erica Tanov's home, even everyday essentials like pencils are displayed with flair. **OPPOSITE RIGHT** Harry Heissmann's Brooklyn home is devoted to collections—even humble ones, like cans of Campbell's soup with Warhol-inspired labels. **PREVIOUS PAGE** In their Tennessee abode, Genifer Goodman Sohr and Benjamin Sohr have created what seems like an oxymoron: a modern log cabin home.