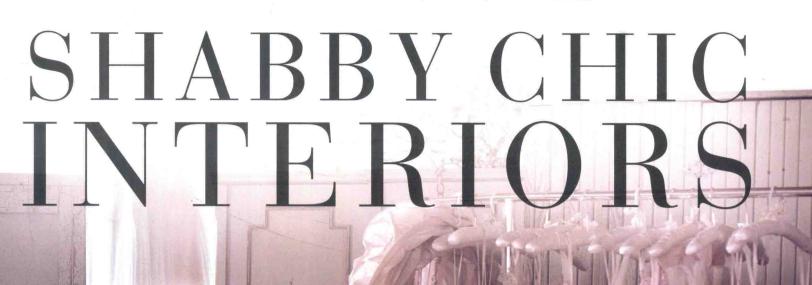


RACHEL ASHWELL



MY ROOMS, TREASURES, AND TRINKETS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY NEUNSINGER

CICO BOOKS

Published in 2009 by CICO Books An imprint of Ryland Peters & Small

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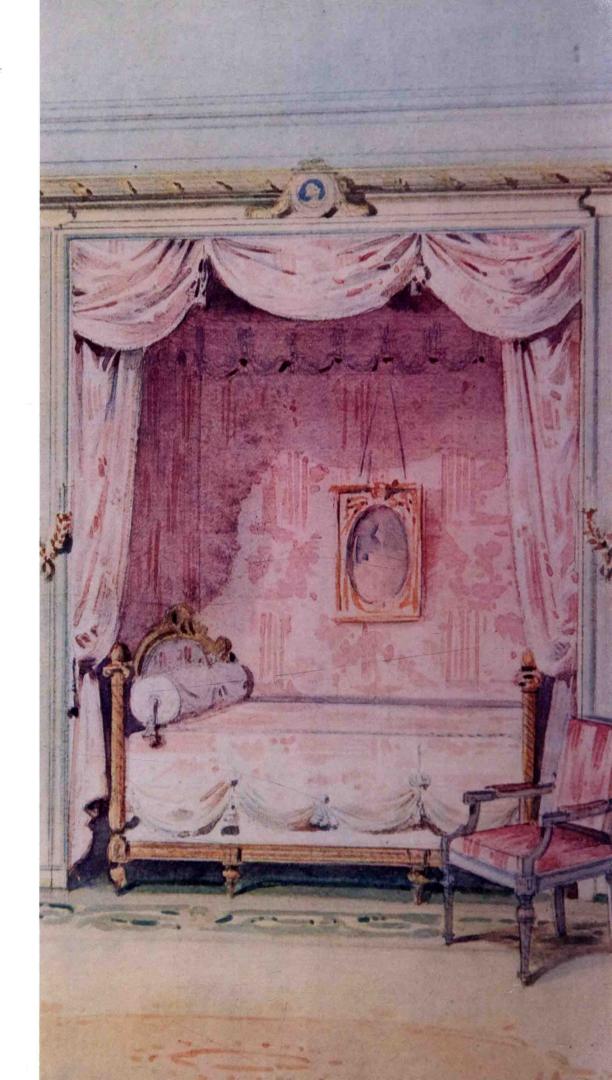
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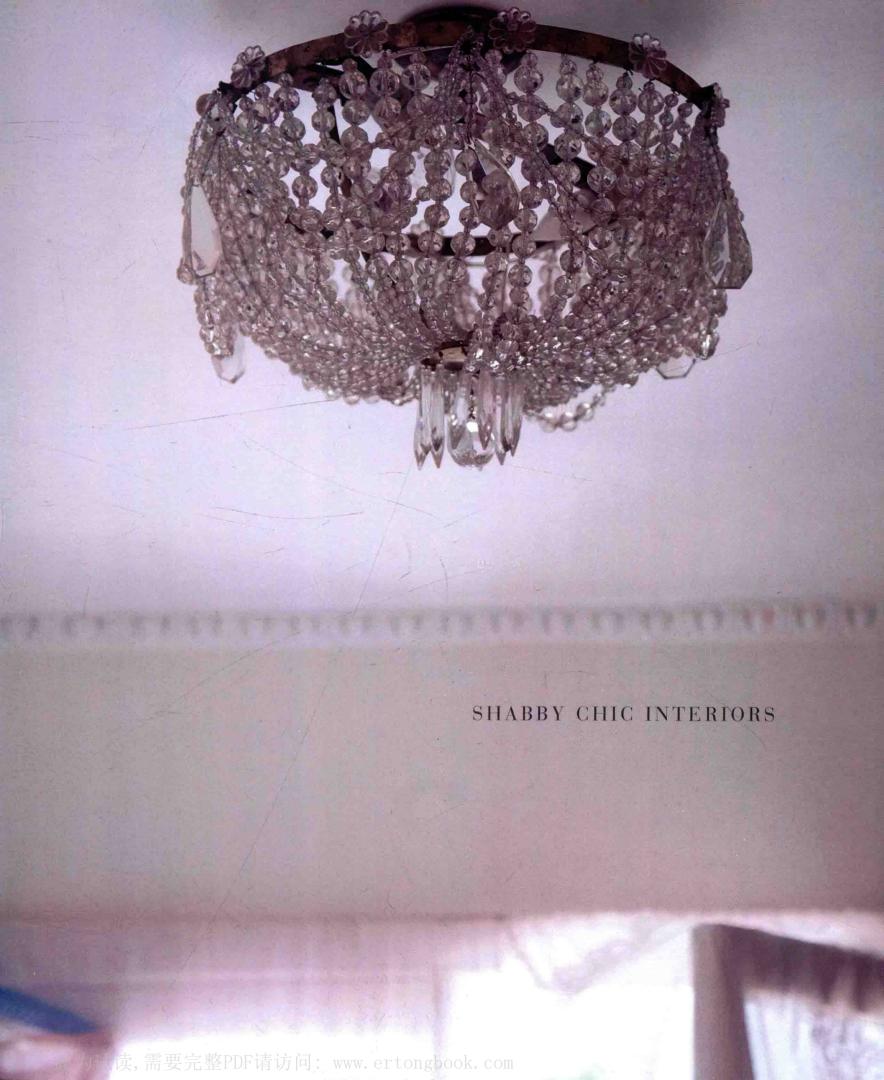
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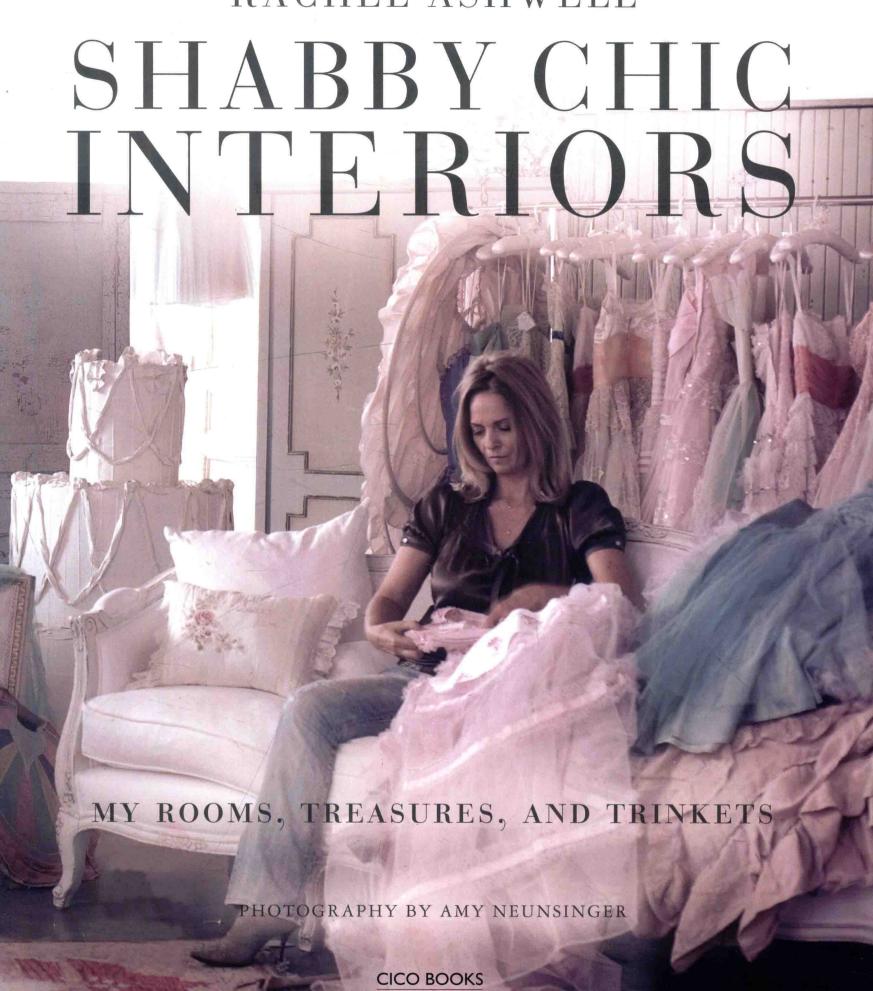
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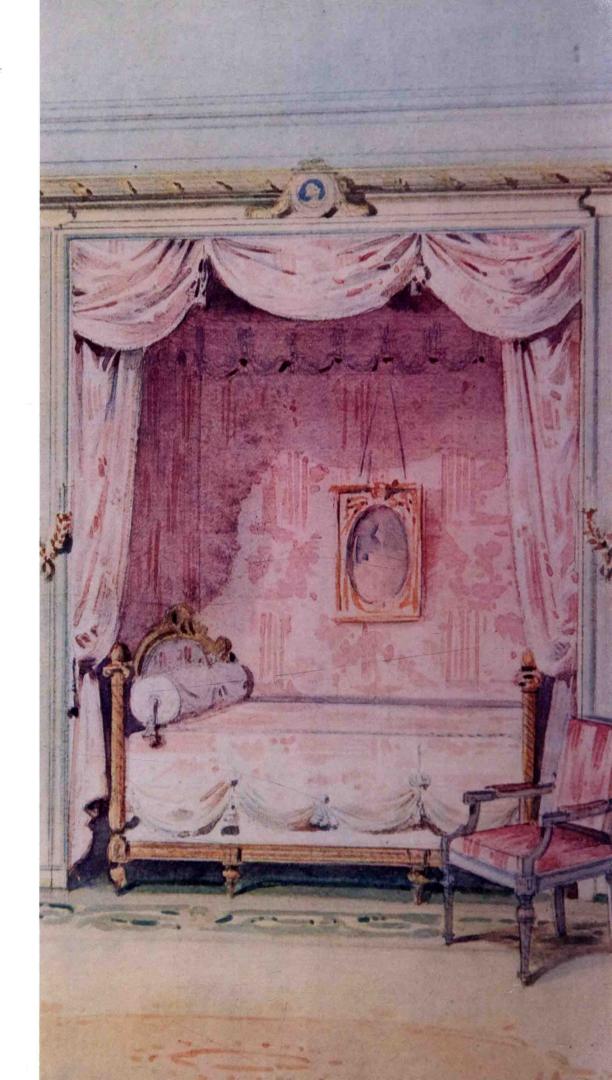
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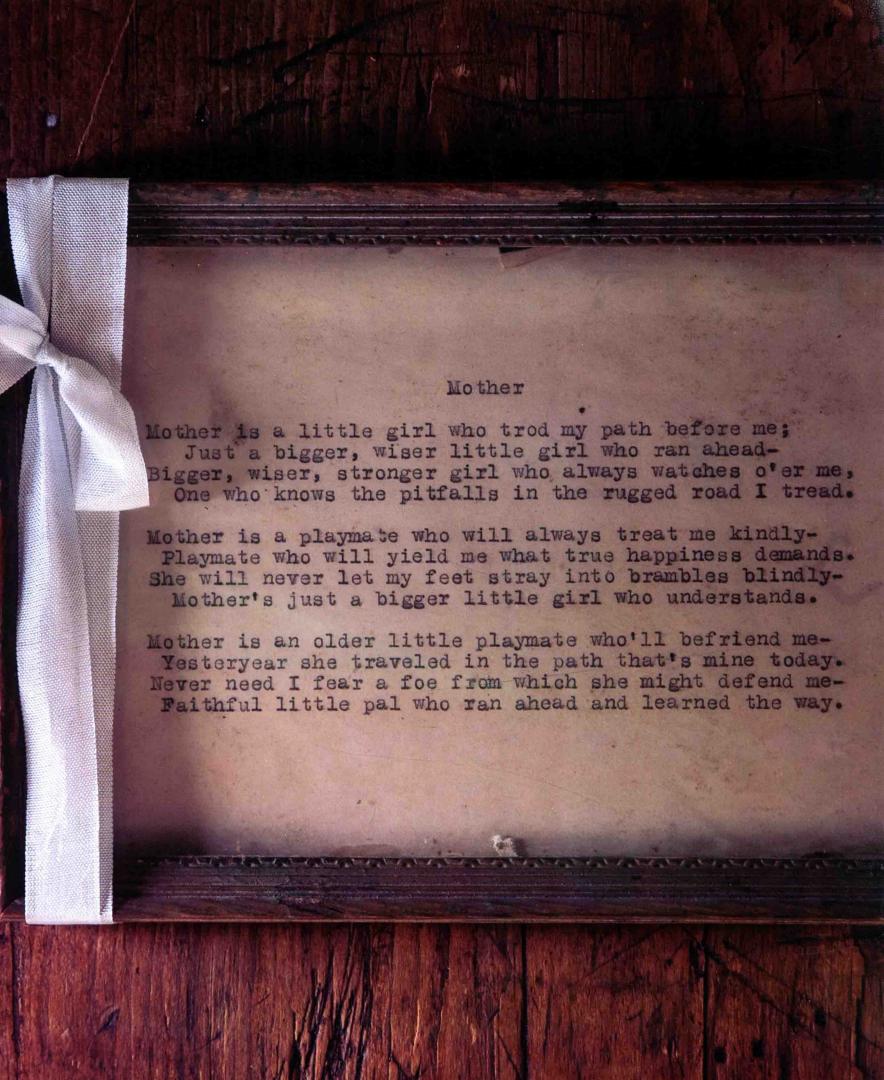
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#### Dedication

To Mum, 1927-2008

#### With thanks

To Lily and Jake. People say we don't choose our family. But Jake and Lily have grown into people I would choose as friends. Interesting and interested, responsible, compassionate, loving, and funny.

To my dad and my sister as we find our way.

This book was created during a major crossroads in my life. Unwavering friends stood strongly and consistently by my side. You made it easy to recognize what authentic friendship truly is. You know who you are, and I appreciate you all so very much.

To Judith, my previous publisher, who led the way to my world of books.

To Cindy and David at Cico Books who stuck with me during some uncertain times. To Sally, Roger, Alex, and Gillian, who let me sit on their shoulders.

To dear Amy. Our fourth book together. We have an unspoken language. This was a special time together. Thank you, your wonderful team, and Carol for supporting us.

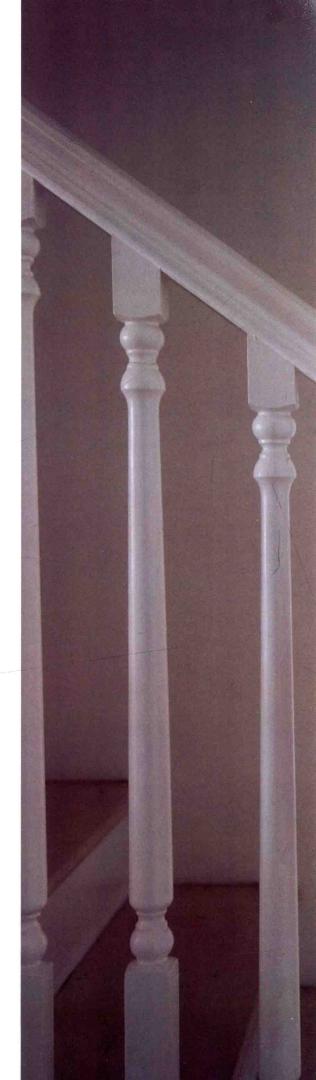
To Lupe, for eyelashes, lunch, and for always knowing where everything is.

And thanks to all looking at this book. Likely you are one of the many who have supported me over the years, as a customer, a supplier of goods, an employee, or a lover of Shabby Chic. We created something quite wonderful, together. This book is for us all.

### INTRODUCTION

Home truly is where we hang our hats, and I have hung my hats in a lot of different places. To move as often as I have is not so unusual in today's world. The acceptance that nothing lasts forever should not deter from making an experience as wonderful as it can be, during its time. When I move into a home, I never quite know my length of stay but "home is where the heart is" are the truest of words. My philosophy is that wherever I am, I make my nest, even in a rented home or hotel. With flowers, music, candles, and beautiful, comfortable, and functional things, a home will be that much lovelier a place for our hearts to be.

This book is about my favorite interiors, treasures, and trinkets, a true compilation of the world of Rachel Ashwell Shabby Chic. It is my attempt to portray the qualities of beauty, comfort, and function. The diversity of homes in this book range from the pure whiteness of my beach house, to a modern canyon loft, to a bohemian, eclectic townhouse, but each one in its way resonates with my design philosophy. Each and every time I move, it gives me the opportunity to tweak my style. As an artist it is necessary to evolve. I have had the pleasure of having a career of beauty and very little passes through my design world that isn't pure eye candy. Sometimes just owning treasures is enough for me, I enjoy them for a while, take away some inspiration, and then pass them on to









someone else. But there are a few chosen pieces that I consider "forever to keep": the quintessential classic, the perfect patina, or the perfectly functional practical piece, these are the elements of forever. But I do not only treasure star pieces. Equal in importance for me are the details, the bits and pieces that take the supporting and understudy roles which are vital when it comes to creating a complete story. And finding and compiling these takes time—it takes editing, it takes research, but it separates magic from mediocrity. And it creates soul.

I have always valued my source of inspiration. Sometimes the ideas born from inspiration find their way effortlessly into my design, my values, and how I live my life. I never had any formal training in anything, life has been my school. My biggest source of inspiration was my mum, who used to collect, restore, and sell antique dolls. She had drawers, cupboards, paper bags, cardboard boxes, and tins, filled with glass eyes, little wigs, and unwound wire hangers to restring their arms which were all rather scary. But what was glorious to me were the mounds of tattered ribbons, crumpled scrap fabrics, stained laces, salvaged sleeves or collars from Victorian clothing beyond repair, and lots of little buttons and smooshed fabric flowers. While others in her profession restored to perfection, she embraced the subtle signs of a doll worn by love, and restored them by honoring their character. In doing so she was my teacher;

I learned by observing and letting her essence become mine. I remember her work-worn hands, always with a thimble and sewing threads. I remember her painstakingly editing bits and bobs that were suitable to tell her story. I remember the powdered dyes of pale pink, blues, and greens she used to quietly create her magic. This would become my palette. She knew every stitch and scrap might be missed by many, but would be appreciated by anyone who noticed her "beauty of imperfection."

As years went by, Mum got involved in other interests. But her values of accepting things the way they were, were demonstrated in most everything she did. She always had time for people and she would listen—she offered opinions when asked, but never judged. She allowed us all to beat to our own drums. She only took on projects that she could take care of herself, she didn't delegate the living of her own life. Her garden was purposely teeny, as that was what she could maintain herself. She made her mark quietly and took up little space in this world.

When she passed away this year, I gathered up all her treasured bits and bobs. I am enjoying the process of looking at each and every piece and feeling close to her, for I understand the beauty in the tattered, thanks to her. And so for all I learned, and for all I have passed on, it was all thanks to Mum.



