

THE BEST OF MARTHA STEWART LIVING

How to Decorate

A GUIDE TO CREATING COMFORTABLE, STYLISH LIVING SPACES



How to Decorate



CLARKSON POTTER/PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK

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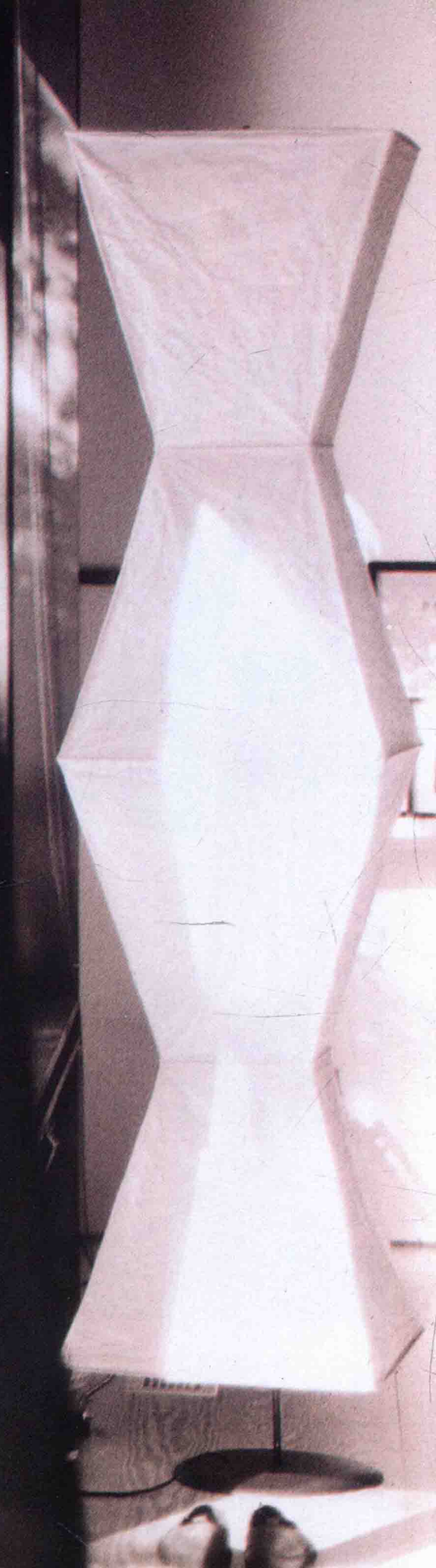
Designer: Constance Old

Writer: Celia Barbour

Editor: Eugenia Leftwich

Managing Editor: Amy Schuler

Style Director: Stephen Earle



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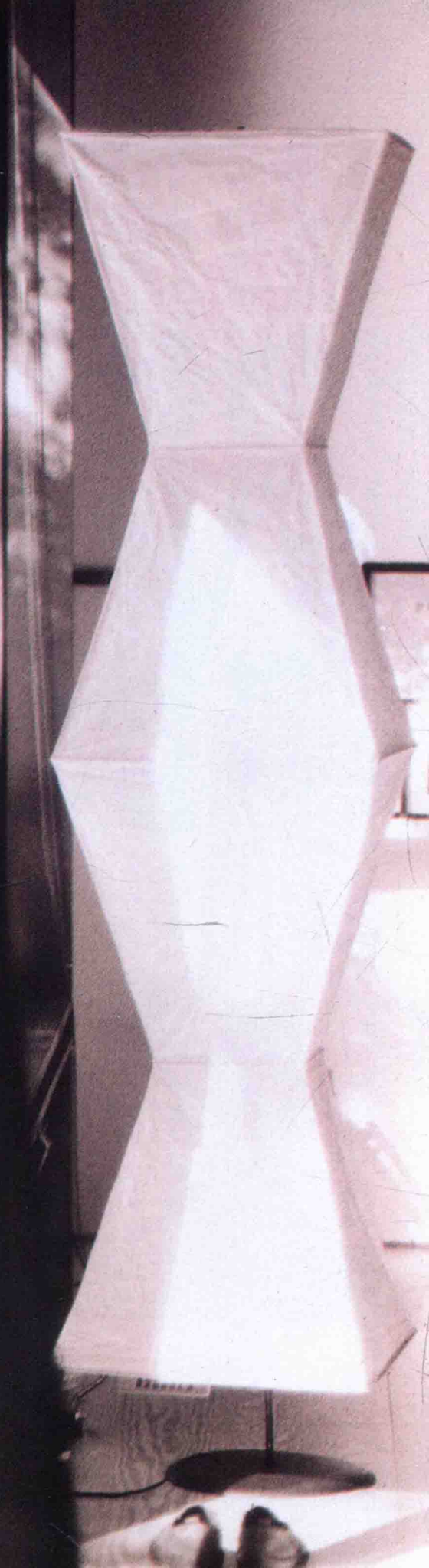
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Introduction

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP IN OUR FAMILY'S MODEST TWO-STORY, THREE-BEDROOM home in Nutley, New Jersey, neither the idea nor the reality of interior decoration was of great importance. The eight of us Kostyras were more concerned with finding a comfortable place to study in and an adequate spot in which to sleep.

The house was serviceable, crowded, and clean, but pretty much devoid of style—primarily because of a great paucity of money. My handsome father had grand dreams that far exceeded his finances, and besides, he preferred to spend whatever leisure time he had in the garden. Mother had no time to sew curtains or faux-paint walls—she was too busy cooking and sewing clothes for her six children.

It was not until I married the son of a very talented decorator that I felt an urge to beautify my surroundings. In college, I began to study the decorative arts and architecture and—taking a cue from my father, a fine colorist—color theory and application. Our first apartment was furnished mostly with hand-me-downs, but our second apartment, seven rooms overlooking the Hudson River, was a reflection of my new interest—with milk-chocolate-brown walls, shiny white trim, unusual velvets, brown glazed chintzes, and English furniture found at auctions and sales. This was the first of my forays into an art form that has become for me a passion.

What I have learned, after designing and decorating five homes, is that decorating is something one can learn to do, that it consists of the ability to turn a space, however small, into a home that is inviting, warm, and useful. And while it can mean putting everything one deems beautiful into a space, it can also be a process of editing out everything unnecessary.

This book is intended to give you insight into the fascinating world of decorating. Most of the material was designed by the talented contributors to and staff of *MARTHA STEWART LIVING* magazine. I hope it will guide you in developing your own decorating talent.

Martha Stewart



Color

It is a luxury to live with beautiful color, to give your eyes the continual pleasure of absorbing rich and subtle shades from your surroundings. It's also one of the easiest decorating projects you can undertake, for a simple coat of paint is within reach of

nearly everyone, and has truly transformative powers. Yet in order for a color palette to really work in your home, it has to meet a variety of criteria, from the sentimental to the scientific. Getting it right isn't a mystery, however; it's a simple matter of learning how to open your eyes to the nuances of color.

Eve Ashcraft, a paint and color specialist in New York City, has developed a list of questions to help her clients choose colors. It's not a test; many of the questions don't even provoke clear-cut answers. "What this does is get someone to begin thinking about color," she says.

WHAT IS THE ROOM USED FOR? In rooms where you won't spend much time, such as powder rooms or entrance halls, you can get away with dramatic colors that would

OPPOSITE A deep, intense color like Gaillardia Red comes alive in warm lamplight but may seem murky by day, so it works well in a bedroom. The chintz quilt is from the 1850s. (Our palettes appear on pages 28 and 31.)

become tiresome in living spaces. Rooms with a multitude of purposes should be painted a versatile neutral. **HOW BIG IS THE ROOM?** Dark colors create a sense of intimacy appropriate to small spaces; lighter colors provide the ease and openness that large rooms require.

HOW DO YOU WANT THE ROOM TO FEEL? AND HOW DO YOU WANT TO FEEL IN THE ROOM? These questions are tricky, says Ashcraft. "People often say they want a soft room or a cozy room, but if you need to be thinking and working, you don't want colors that are too sleepy." Asking yourself how you want a room to feel is as important as determining how you want it to look, since color isn't simply a visual phenomenon—it also has great emotional power. Studies have found that colors affect people's judgment and reactions: Blue is a sedative and can calm anxious nerves, red and other warm colors make time seem to move more slowly, and yellow improves students'





grades. But there are no hard-and-fast rules; the world is full of calm brick reds and anxious neon blues.

WHAT KIND OF LIGHTING DOES THE ROOM HAVE? Light activates color, and can change its character dramatically. The warm glow of incandescent lamps will give some colors a golden flush and cause others to turn sour. Halogen lamps can neutralize and flatten colors. Lampshades add another layer of color to light. “If you have red silk lampshades and pea-green walls,” says Ashcraft, “you’re going to have a muddy cast where the light hits the wall.”

WHAT TIME OF DAY OR NIGHT DO YOU MOST USE THE ROOM? The quality of light changes throughout the course of the day, from pink and lilac in the morning, to lemon yellow at midday, to the deep, rich gold of evening. Ashcraft tells her clients to look carefully at their walls and describe how many colors they see; it’s often possible to distinguish as many as a dozen as the light plays across the surfaces and reflects off of nearby objects.

HOW MANY WINDOWS ARE THERE, AND WHAT ARE THEIR EXPOSURES? Within the same house, the rooms facing north will be filled with a bluer, cooler light than rooms with a

Drabware, a glazed English earthenware (shown above and displayed on the wall at left), inspired the wall color in this dining room. Because this neutral is so complex and highly pigmented, it works in almost any color scheme. Here, Silkie White was used on the woodwork, and an entirely different hue—Araucana Turquoise—on the ceiling for contrast and surprise.