

# Town & Country

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SPECIAL  
HOME ISSUE

## DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

JULIAN  
SCHNABEL'S  
SUMPTUOUS  
LOFT

ROSE  
TARLOW'S  
EXQUISITE  
TASTE

PLUS: FIVE  
DESIGN  
MASTERPIECES

OCTOBER 2001  
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FOREIGN \$5.00



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with



# We Dare You

If the idea of taking risks makes you squirm a little, good. That's exactly why we've built our fall home issue around the idea "Dare to Be Different." Now, before you begin envisioning rooms full of outlandish art, in-your-face furniture, "statement" sculpture and thrift-shop finds, let me make it clear that this is not what we mean.

First and foremost, if you dare to be different, you'll need a sense of personal style—yours and no one else's. If it's lacking, please don't try this at home (particularly not in *your* home). But if you believe you do, by all means let your imagination take wing. Just don't fly all the way to Mars (this is where being a homing pigeon at heart comes in handy).

The second requirement for daring to be different is having the courage of your convictions. This is huge. So many of us wimp out in the end instead of staying our course. The result? Predictability or, worse, blandness. I've been in expensively decorated apartments that feel more like hotel suites where strangers regularly come and go than places where real people reside, surrounded by what matters to them. I have visited MacMansions in which every beam and piece of molding is fake, and every object and item of furniture is proudly (and pathetically) in its place. Does anybody really live here? I've wondered. And what happens if someone's three-year-old child eagerly puts his messy little hands on the white silk bergère—is it "Off with his head!"? Or maybe it's that children are simply not welcome in such a pristine world. If so, it's a pity. (Personally, I'd never want to live anywhere that forbade kids or pets—that's taking the juice out of life.)

Need a few more encouraging words to get you going? Here they are: Don't hide your personality. Unless you're into sadomasochism, never let a decorator dictate; if you do, you might as well call it his or her home, because it surely isn't yours. Beware of buying so many museum-quality pieces that you end up feeling as if you are living in . . . a museum. Don't buy or decorate a house for your friends or relatives unless they plan on moving in (and, for your sake, I hope they don't). Have chairs and sofas you like to sink into—if you can't be comfortable in your home, no one else possibly can.

Now let's move on to the individuals we feature in this issue, because they all are people with what Diana Vreeland called "pizzazz." Olatz Schnabel and her protean husband, Julian (artist, director, voluptuary), live in a former factory building (page 158) with the kind of high ceilings and enor-

mous dimensions that easily accommodate large canvases and allow plenty of room for self-expression, not only for them but also for their kids.

Toni Goutal worked with designer and friend Muriel Brandolini to transform her serious 19th-century uptown apartment into one that is colorful, playful and just right for Toni and Jean, her restaurateur husband, and their five (yes, five) children (page 186).

L.A.'s Rose Tarlow has sublime taste and an uncanny, almost obsessive eye for detail. In a new book—her first—Rose has done what few designers before her have been able to accomplish. She invites us into her fertile mind so we can see how tiny ideas metamorphose into something truly marvelous. Watch Rose blossom (page 176).

Speaking of metamorphoses, Francesca Stanfill, recently divorced and embarking on a new life, went through several in the process of taking over the apartment that had once been "theirs" and making it utterly her own (page 200). This was more than redecorating; it was a renaissance.

Living with—and within—great architecture can presumably have its joys but also, perhaps, its burdens. In a sense, those who do may find themselves abiding by the concepts of *others* who dared to be different (such as Mies van der Rohe, Richard Meier and Frank Gehry). What does it mean for the houses' residents? How much license can they take with the finished works of such modern design geniuses? To find the answers, see page 168.

Finally, how do people with exquisite, sometimes eccentric taste accessorize their habitats? Not with anything ordinary, that's for sure. That question sent us in search of objects (see page 194) of high quality, produced in small volume and, if not one of a kind, then kind of wonderful.

If you don't want your personal world to look like anyone else's, may you find ideas within these pages to inspire you to be less conventional, more open-minded and, yes, I'll say it, daring. And daringly different at that.

PAMELA FIORI, EDITOR IN CHIEF





Spectacular finds of all sizes distinguish the rooms of Tarlow's Bel Air house, which was built to her specifications. A circular staircase from a Paris flea market leads to a small sleeping alcove; a wall drawing on plaster by Jean Cocteau dominates the living room mantel (opposite).







## SPECIAL HOME ISSUE



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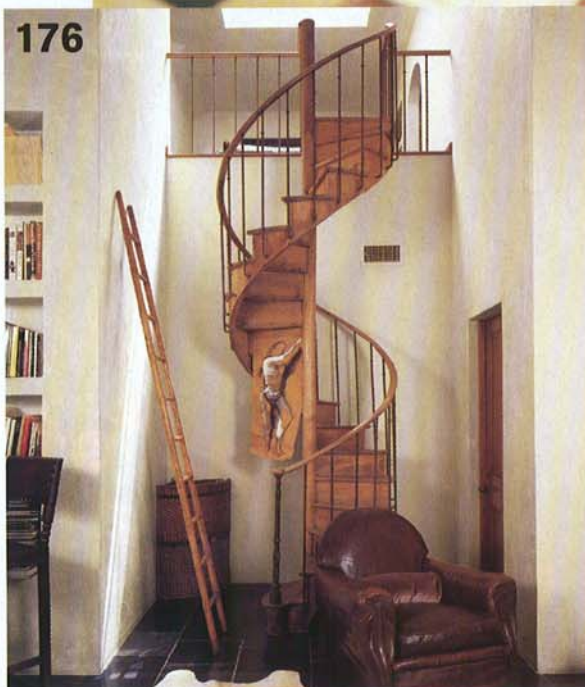
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Give your living space a contemporary lift with these stylish accessories.

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Francesca Stanfill recounts her nearly twenty-year quest to convert an unruly Manhattan apartment into a place of her own.

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**ON OUR COVER:** Olatz Schnabel, photographed by OBERTO GILI at her home in New York with her dog, Zeus. In the background, a painting by her husband, Julian: *Eulalio Epiclantis After Seeing St. Jean Vianney on the Plains of the Cure d'Ars*.







In one room, the television sits on a bronze gueridon, looking quite pleased with itself simply because it has been allowed to be seen. It, too, is piled high with books. I do not usually display any sort of media paraphernalia, and have been known to tuck telephones away in old wooden boxes. Yet in this case the room is so imposing in scale and content that I wanted to bring it down a peg; the modern television set gives the room an authentic, lived-in quality.

As with books, art is one of the most subjective and personal choices we can make in our houses. Just recently I completed a house for a collector who owns some truly wonderful works of art. Although the client has relied on me for many aspects of the design of the house, I have not par-

ticipated in selecting his constantly growing and changing collection. As is the case with many art collections, the works move around, sometimes within the house and sometimes on loan to museums. Rooms are therefore designed to stand by themselves, with the knowledge that art will sometimes grace their walls. Nothing competes with the art; my goal is always to create a house that subtly envelops a collection and offers multiple options for its display.

The juxtaposition of contemporary art with antiques makes a room young and alive. Although I have been identified with my passion for antiques, I refrain from using too many of them in one place, for I learned long ago that too many pieces of antique furniture and accessories in one room can be oppressive. In the same way, a house that is very modern needs contrasts, some objects of a different period to enhance its beauty and soften its lines.

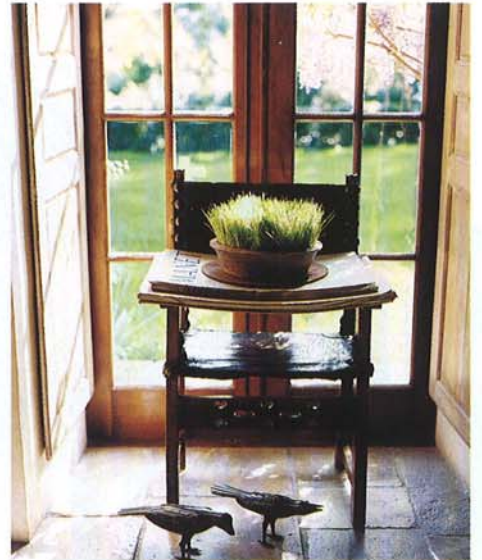
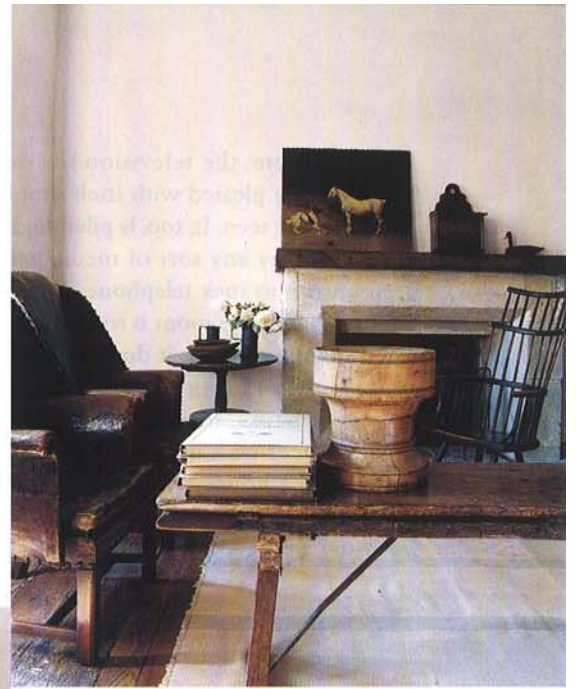
There are those who spend lifetimes in houses that have nothing to do with who they really are. The rooms may be perfectly designed, yet if they fail to reflect the personalities of the people who live in them, the very essence of intimacy is missing, and this void is disturbingly obvious. Houses that we call "too decorated" lack the very ingredients that make a home come alive. Taste is a matter of opinion, and its true nature is constantly seeking to define itself. So we are continually influenced by the people we meet, by what we read and by what we see. Our opinions take shape, yet we are never fully formed, always becoming, continually refining our image of ourselves throughout our lives. This never-ending process of evolution makes designing one's own home an extremely personal—and ongoing—experience. ❖

*From the forthcoming book The Private House, by Rose Tarlow. Copyright © 2001 by Rose Tarlow. To be published in November by arrangement with Clarkson Potter/Publishers.*

One of Tarlow's strongest design tenets is that rooms should be timeless. In her London apartment (left), she plays an antique bookshelf off an amusing and eccentric antique chair that might be mistaken for contemporary sculpture. The living room (opposite), with its 17th-century K'ang Hsi screen and unusual tea table, hasn't changed in twenty years.







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To me the fantasy of living in a nun's cell is pure heaven. I imagine a bed covered in a creamy, heavy hemp fabric in a tiny room that has rough, whitewashed plaster walls, a small Gothic window, a stone sink; outside, a bird sings. Peace prevails. But where would I put the television, the stacks of books, the clothes and shoes, the telephone, the reading lamp, the chaise longue? It seems I would be none too good at being a nun.

• • •

Many of the rooms I've designed for myself and others use color predominantly as a simple background wash, but this doesn't mean I don't appreciate color. Just the opposite: I need color in my life for visual nourishment, and so I use it with great discretion and respect. Color can be a powerful factor in any interior scheme. In fact, its selection may be the most important design decision we make.

It is essential to spend time with a color, become preoccupied with it before making a commitment to live with it. Study a sample of it at different times of day to see if your feelings about its beauty are the same after a few days or weeks. Revisit it at dusk, in the evening and in the sunlight.

I often prefer to use various shades of one unifying color throughout the main rooms of an apartment or house. Unexpected accents of color can be added with objects: a beautiful old fragment of fabric on a chair, an unusual Oriental vase, a patterned area rug, a painting, a wonderful collection of books, a stunning lacquer box, a table or cabinet that adds some new color complexity. In this way, I am continually engaged in experiencing a variety of different shades without ever feeling wedded to a single one. You will find you are passionate about different colors at different times, and you may enjoy experimenting with a variety of them. Consider, therefore, giving yourself a neutral canvas to work with and use color as if it were jewelry: provocatively.

• • •

While clean, clear walls are refreshing, there are times when you may want to create an aged effect on a plaster wall. My technique for doing so is to leave out the corner metal stripping that makes edges and corners neat, sharp and clean. This leaves the walls just slightly irregular, as if carved with a butter knife. I have done this in my own house and love the way it looks. But be aware that any protruding edges constantly have to be patched: no more than a sharp tap may cause an area to crumble. Granted, this may be a bit eccentric, but if you are trying to effect an authentically aged wall, patches and even unwanted leaks can help to mellow a house naturally. In all cases, a very light hand must be used in purposely antiquing anything, and that extends to aging fabrics, furniture, wallpaper and walls. It is similar to applying makeup foundation—sometimes, to get the most natural results, you end up removing half of what you put on.

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I have always had a passion for 18th-century wallpapers, which are difficult to find. Many years ago, based on my research into rare Chinese papers, I commissioned an artist to hand paint wallpaper panels for my dining room. When the work was finally finished, the room was breathtaking. The first evening after it was completed, we all sat for hours admiring the walls, but I could not wait to be alone there. Later that night, when the family was asleep, I went back down, took fine sandpaper, fine steel wool, a stepladder and all of my nerve and proceeded to soften the newness of the paper by removing some of the design. I worked slowly and carefully for hours and succeeded in completing only a small section. I was pleased with the results. In the morning, my husband came downstairs and was horrified. I explained that the work had just begun, that it needed to be done—the newness of the walls was intruding on the room.

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Never leave any room alone until you ignite it. When you complete a house, make sure that you have created something quite magical. You will find that the magic rarely comes from where you expect. It is the unexpected, whimsical touches that often give a room its charm.

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My bookshelves display artifacts alongside treasures I have culled from construction sites—modern sculpture at its most uncomplicated. These found treasures are my Giacomettis, my Brancusis. I am not recommending that everyone dig through construction or dump sites for their accessories. I am just suggesting that we not be afraid to display any simple, interesting object. My only rule is that nothing adorn my life that is not precious to me. I must respect its shape, color, meaning and quality. An object added for effect instead of affection will always look like an affectation.

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I collect books on architecture, art and literature, and while some are rare editions, all are on subjects I am passionate about. Book-loving cannot be simulated; bookshelves filled with magazines and auction catalogues can be far more interesting than rows of expensive leather-tooled books bought by the yard. In my London flat, books are the featured players on my shelves, in all colors, shapes and sizes.

**Bel Air details, clockwise from top left: A country-style kitchen with a mammoth French sideboard; a 17th-century English needlepoint mirror and wooden sink in a guest bath; the corner of a much-loved guest room, with a comb-back rocker; a bowl of grasses outlasts cut flowers and brings the outdoors in; in another guest room, a rare 18th-century settee folds out into a bed; the pool and pool house, with its old slate roof tiles imported from England; a portrait of the author at home. At center: A still life of the living room mantel with a Cocteau drawing on plaster.**





that is preoccupied with harmony, structure and beauty—those intangible things that educate and delight us. Yet I know there are times when we plan our houses as much for the pleasure of our friends as for ourselves, because we wish for their enjoyment and rely on their appreciation and praise—especially their praise. Thankfully, that stage in my life has passed. Today I am far more interested in a home only for myself and those I share my life with. A house is what we design and decorate to suit an image of ourselves, and a home is what we establish by actually living there. To be at home in our house is ultimately the reward of all the effort and thought we put into the most private process of decorating.

The architecture of a space should be as perfect as possible, and should look that way. Furniture, carpets and accessories must also be considered with great care and attention, but should not seem so. This interplay of evident perfection and seeming spontaneity best begins with a floor plan. Many people find intense pleasure in concentrating on a difficult crossword puzzle; my favorite type of puzzle is the planning of a particular space on paper.

It is absolutely necessary to organize design ideas when working on a floor plan. You begin with a vision and then work toward it, one small step after another. Applying this to a house, you first imagine what you want your room to be like when it is finally finished. A floor plan guides you in getting there, revealing the choices that need to be made in the architecture, the wall colors, the floor coverings, the furniture layout, the fabrics and ultimately the mood of the room.

As a rule, my favorite rooms fall into two categories: those that have enormous presence, great scale and high ceilings, and those that are quite small, with interesting proportions. My bedroom in London is one of those lovely little rooms, so irresistible that one might hope to have the flu just to spend a week in bed there, all cozy and cocooned. The curtains are blue-and-white taffeta, with a medium-scaled flower print in different shades of blue. They have been in place for almost twenty years and are fraying a bit now. On the wooden floor lies a blue-and-white Agra carpet with an allover pattern. A chair and ottoman, a bed and a prie-dieu are the extent of the furniture. While the chair and ottoman are of normal size, they are larger than you might expect in such a small room. I could have used smaller pieces, but then the room would not look, or be, as comfortable as it is.

Though color and pattern are usually subdued in Tarlow's interiors, she welcomes their presence in bedrooms, where she feels they lend intimacy. Her own Bel Air bedroom combines the warmth of boiserie walls, blond wood furniture and gilt accessories with small-scale patterns on chintz bedcoverings, a French fauteuil and a William and Mary lacquer secretary.











# Everyday Magic

In an exclusive excerpt  
from her new book,  
*The Private House*,  
tastemaker Rose Tarlow  
reveals her singular  
approach to decorating.

