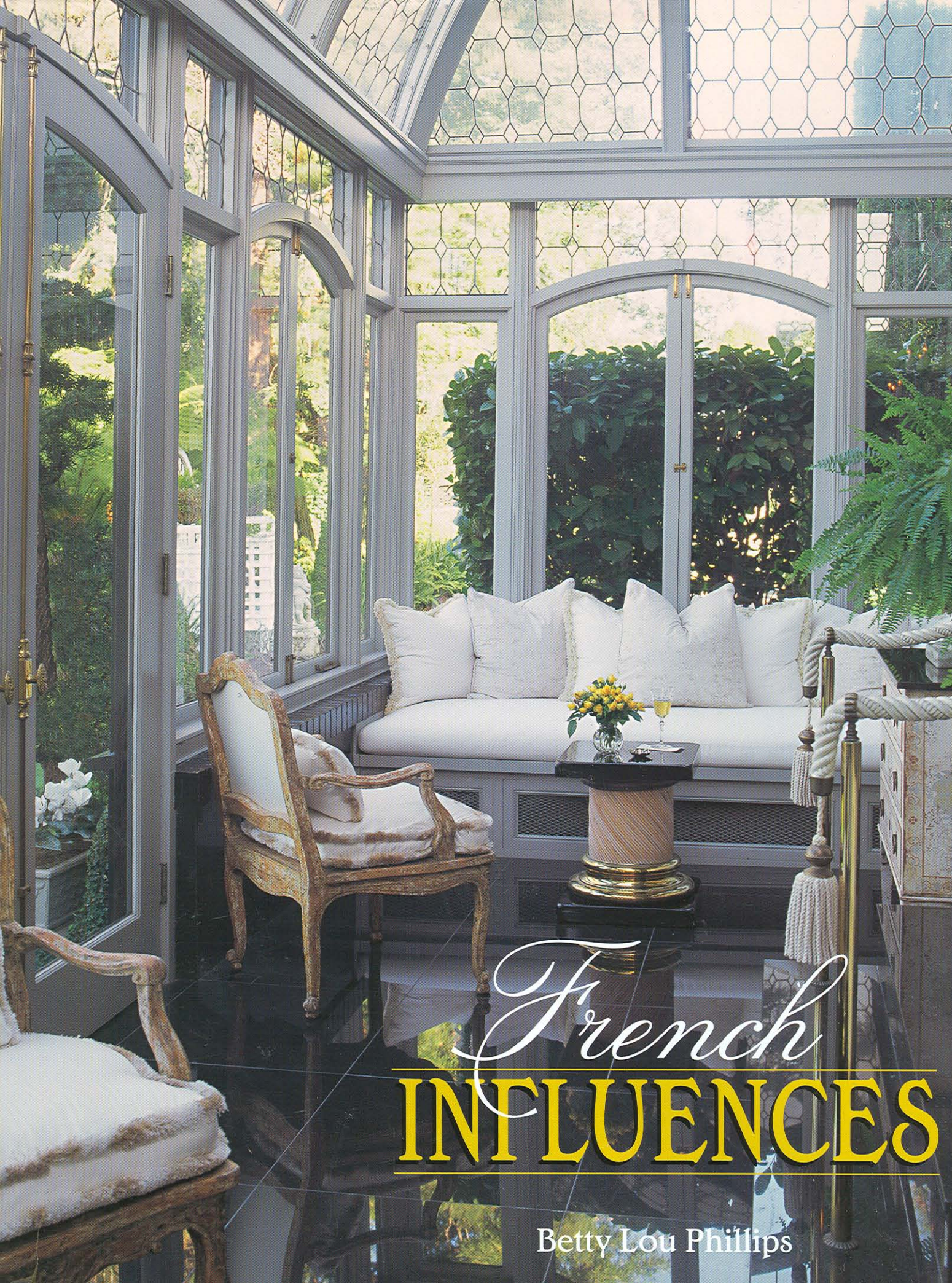




French **INFLUENCES**

Betty Lou Phillips

Undeniably, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And some settings do inspire more awe than others, mostly because there is more to decorating than amassing furnishings with presence. It helps, therefore, to keep some basics in mind when aspiring to inviting and stylish *chambres*. For example, in France the foyer is not a place intended solely for warmly greeting special friends with four kisses on alternating cheeks (starting with the right cheek). Nor is it simply where one leaves an engraved calling card, or graciously signs the *maison's livret d'or* (guest book). Rather, it serves as a discreet introduction to the interior, so architectural details are as gracefully rendered as in any major room.

In some *châteaux*, *bastides* (stately villas), and *hôtel particuliers* (private townhouses) of proud proportions, crisp moldings, seamlessly bound together, frame hand-finished plaster walls draped with dazzling centuries-old tapestries. In others, handsome hand-hewn beams and timbered ceilings emit an air of nonchalance. And in still others, thick stone walls privy to long-hidden secrets form stately archways that define broad passageways between rooms.

Finely detailed hardware, in keeping with the period of the house, bestows added nobility on intricately carved doors that hint at the beauty beyond. At the beginning of the twentieth century, surface bolts and *crémone bolts* that could almost pass for artwork—and often are as expensive—became *de rigueur* on groaning doors and tall narrow windows. However, it is the exquisitely fashioned ironwork outlining wide curving staircases and wrapping interior balconies that merits multiple glances, as

might be expected, since the French have long been renowned for their skill in making magnificent objects from iron.



Hand-forged ironwork is replete with details from centuries past. OPPOSITE: A dramatic domed ceiling, with astonishing plaster ribs and moldings, crowns a sweep of rooms swirling around a center hall with old-world opulence. Dallas architect Richard Drummond Davis designed the unabashedly grand French estate that gives the eye an exhilarating ride up spectacular walls.



threads.  **Ticking.** A documentary toile. At least one *torchère* (tall hall lamp). An unpredictable mix of textures. A trumeau. *Trompe-l'oeil*. Pleasingly proportioned upholstery. Ornamental urns. Vintage textiles stitched into decorative pillows. **Washstands.**

 A tilt-top wine-tasting table with wear and imperfections imbedded in the wood. A Louis XV writing table with graceful *cabriole* legs. Antique tables (draw, farm, Portuguese, and trestle). Elegant wallpaper.



Iron chandeliers twelve feet tall, designed by Cole Smith, Sr., of Dallas, drape a sky-high forty-foot ceiling. Also suspended are banners crafted from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century antique velvets, silks, and wools, in keeping with designer Sherry Hayslip's vision and the proportions of the great room. A resplendent centuries-old Persian Malayer carpet warms the slate floors, while a Smith & Watson sofa and antique Louis XV chairs from Newell Galleries in New York rest upon it. All revolve around the sectioned ottoman by Rose Tarlow for Melrose House. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century wooden deer heads are "trophies of the hunt."