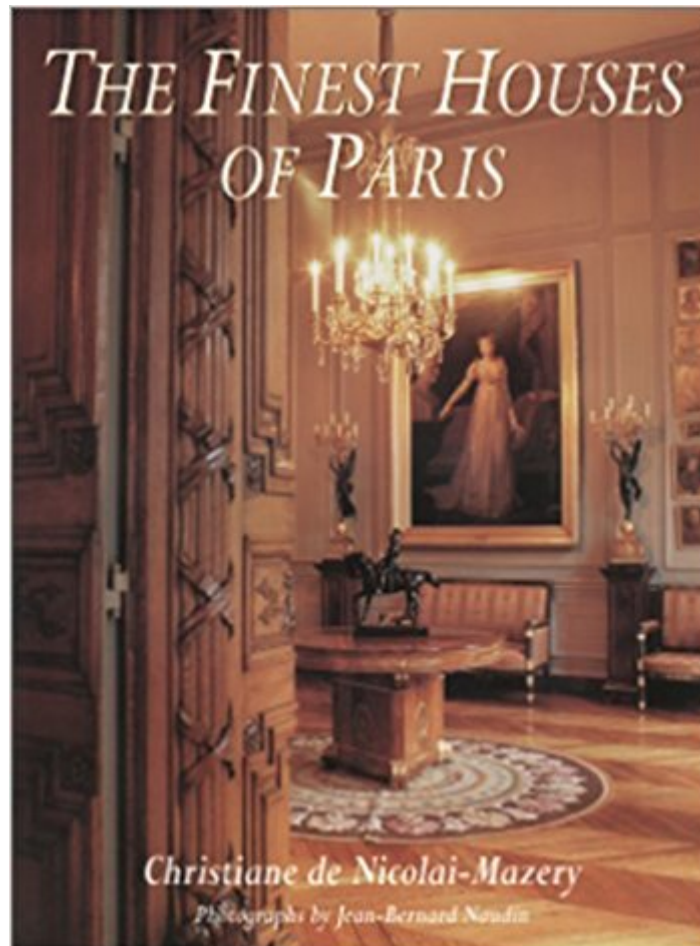




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The Finest Houses Of Paris



Synopsis

This is a true insider's view of the most elegant houses of Paris, home of the rich and famous generally seen here for the first time. No one could have better access than author Christiane De Nicolai-Mazery, whose family own one of the most beautiful medieval castles in France as well as a magnificent townhouse included in this extravagant book. We are taken into a world of luxury and refinement beyond imagination: butlers setting a table for sixty in Baron Guy de Rothschild's palace, considered the grandest private house in France. Or a summer's day on the edge of Hubert de Givenchy's left-bank garden, where a table of six is set in eighteenth-century silver and porcelain. Visit the British Embassy, which still retains the décor and furniture of its erstwhile owner Paoline Borghese, sister of Napoleon. Tour the history-filled apartment of the Permanent Secretary to the French Academy. In some cases, the owners have refused to be identified, but that does not detract from the elegance of their interiors, the superb presentation of their food, or the fascinating descriptions of those who preceded them - including Madame de Stael, Proust's hero the Comtesse de Greffuhle, and a parade of now-departed bewigged grandees. There have been other highly successful books on the great houses of Paris, but nothing this sumptuous or exclusive. This volume will seduce every Francophile, society watcher, and Paris lover, not to mention every decorator and party giver.

Book Information

Hardcover: 208 pages

Publisher: Vendome Press; First edition (November 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0865652171

ISBN-13: 978-0865652170

Product Dimensions: 9.5 x 1 x 12.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #767,392 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #82 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Decorative Arts & Design > Interior & Home Design > Style #1001 in Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Buildings > Residential #1126 in Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Interior Design

Customer Reviews

Christiane De Nicolai-Mazery writes for many French magazines and is the author of The French

Chateau: Lifestyle and Tradition. She is also an auctioneer and lives in Paris. Jean-Bernard Naudin is a well-known photographer whose books include, The Recipes of Claud Monet, Dining with Proust, and Cezanne's Provence.

Somewhat disappointing. Uneven in its treatment of the various homes, I thought. Some of the rooms are illustrated pretty completely, but in others individual items of furniture or individual painting are the focus of the photos. In my opinion, Mansions of Paris by Blanc and Bonnemaison (English edition 1998) is much better. Great Villas of the Riviera published by Rizzoli (1998) is spectacular.

Nice to look at but a bit overdone. I skimmed through the pictures but everything was so busy, I didn't want to read the text. I keep hoping I'll get back to it.

Paris is one of my favorite cities and in my next life, I will live there (hopefully in one of the homes shown in this book)! I had purchased this book from many years ago and somehow it got lost during a house move and I had to re-purchase it -- that's how much I love it. One of the authors, Christiane de Nicolay-Mazery, also was a co-author of the book The French Chateau: Life, Style, Tradition, so I knew I would love The Finest Houses of Paris. I wouldn't consider this book a "photo book" but rather, a book with gorgeous photos of homes in Paris accompanied by narration. There are tons of photos and they are all clear, crisp, large and most of them show entire rooms. Smaller shots show things on tables, or place settings, etc. Some homes belong to well-known individuals (Hubert Givenchy, Baron and Baroness Rothschild); other homes belong to well-heeled people that I did not know. Many of the homes are actually really huge, huge apartments and others are actual free-standing homes with lovely gardens. This book appealed to my interest in decorating and design, but when accompanied by the verbiage which includes the history of each home and their current inhabitants, this book would appeal to anyone who loves Paris.

Great pictures, just loved it!

A fabulous book!!

Lovely pictures of Paris interiors -nothing really fancy or grand, but still very luxurious homes.

Don't let a fondness for Proustian luxe sucker you into purchasing this book containing mediocre photography and a text of perfumed flatulence. The ostensible purpose of the book is to reveal French urban, aristocratic taste as of the late twentieth century, or more accurately the taste of their designers (the usual cast of Henri, Renzo, etc.) and other arbiters of taste (Hubert, Alexis, Carlos, etc.). Certainly, there are more than enough interiors of the mummified magnificence that comes from cocooning staggering numbers of objects in layer after layer of fabric (WARNING: Do not try at home. If you do not possess first-rate things and have access to the production from the best mills in Italy and France, you will achieve only The Old Junkshop look), but the pictures are uniformly fuzzy, muddy and printed on poor quality paper. Most maddening of all, the photography neglects genuine masterpieces (you cannot catch more than a glimpse, for example, of the incomparable Ingres portrait of Betty Rothschild) while devoting page after page to boring tabletop vignettes usually consisting of a few knickknacks and photographs of long-dead nobodies as children. In fact, the real purpose of the book is apparently to provide the author with a vehicle to boast about her ancestors (many of those same long-dead nobodies) and the elegant life they led. There is also a stench of moral decay most evident in the fawning description of Lady Mosley with an outrageous defense of British fascism before World War II. Mostly, however, the premise of the book seems to be that you are what you own, or more accurately what you inherit -- a concept so inherently ridiculous that even the owners of the homes depicted in the book had the good sense for the most part to insist on anonymity. If you truly want to revel in the atmosphere of things past, make yourself a cup of tea, find a hard biscuit and settle back in your recliner with the first volume of you know what.

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