



On the Fringe: A Life in Decorating

Imogen Taylor

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If John Fowler was—in the words of the late Duchess of Devonshire—the Prince of Decorators, and Nancy Lancaster undoubted doyenne of English country house style, Imogen Taylor was their crown princess. She joined interior design firm Colefax and Fowler in 1949 and when John retired in 1971 he passed on to her all his clients. Until she retired in 1999 she was, along with Tom Parr, the firm's principal decorator. This book combines style bible with social memoir. Imogen Taylor brings a sharp eye and ready wit not only to decorating style but also to the social history of the latter part of the 20th century. Here you will learn about how fabric walling was done, how the famous "12 different whites" were applied, how to oil gild, how the passementerie was made for Buckingham Palace and Windsor, about Bessarabian carpets and trompe l'oeil painting, and Nancy Lancaster's broderie anglaise lamp shades, "like a child's skirt or a ball dress." You will also find the Duchess of Windsor dismissing the Duke ("David, you're not needed—go and buy some brushes or something"), Harry Hyams' reluctance to sign checks ("It's like spilling my own blood!"), John Fowler in a tantrum yelling at the Duchess of Cornwall (she was a girl assistant at the time, not a client), and Imogen being summoned to Howletts because "a young Siberian tiger, who had been in bed with Aspinall and his wife, had ripped down the silk hangings on the inside of their canopy bed."

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