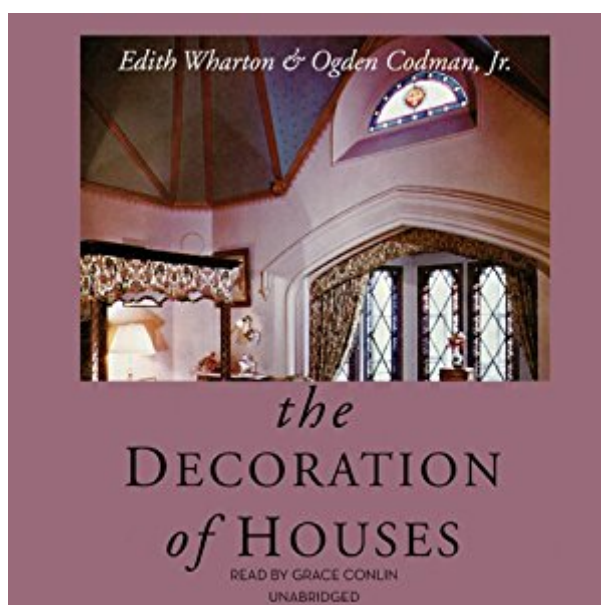


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The Decoration Of Houses



Synopsis

One of the classic works on interior decoration, Edith Wharton's *The Decoration of Houses* offers a comprehensive look at the history and character of turn-of-the-century interior design. Co-written with architect Ogden Codman, Jr., this invaluable reference provides us with numerous keen and practical axioms for house design, such as (1) The better the house, the less need for curtains, and (2) the height of a well-proportioned doorway should be twice its width. In the words of John Barrington Bayley, President of Classical America, "this book has charm. *The Decoration of Houses* brings to mind the pictures of Walter Gay: There are the reflections in looking-glasses, and on parquet, and the garnitures of chimney-pieces, boiseriers, the odor of wax; outside the tall glazed doors there is a sunny silent terrace, we are now at Mrs. Wharton's Pavillon Colombe—a well laid out parterre, a rose garden, and an orchard of Reinette apples and luscious double cherries."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Amidst today's seemingly endless supply of domestic guides and treatises on interior decoration, Edith Wharton might be surprised that her *The Decoration of Houses* (co-authored with architect Ogden Codman, Jr.) would still be as relevant and necessary as it is a century after its first publication. Long before "simplicity" and "classic" became catchwords for branding, Wharton took a public stand against the bland, trite excesses of Victorian décor in America. Favoring the considered, informed and complex processes of design rooted in architectural principles, her graceful humility was matched only by her assertive plea against the contemporary dominance of

thoughtless, conspicuous consumption visible in New York society. As she determinately decreed: "According to the creed of the modern manufacturer, you have only to combine certain 'good' to obtain a certain style." Often associated with the frivolity connected to historical descriptions of femininity, this volume might be a surprise for those who prefer to view Wharton as a New York literary powerhouse. While her 40 books in 40 years (many of which were devoted to travels through European residences and gardens) are a testament to the force of her pen, it's the themes of beauty, pleasure, societal indulgence, cultural education and cosmopolitanism in America's modernity that make her analysis, and eventual ruling on the importance of design and space, a necessary extension of her literary thought. As she aptly begins her historical and aesthetic analysis, "Rooms may be decorated in two ways: by a superficial application of ornament totally dependent of structure, or by means of those architectural features which are part of the organism of every house, inside as well as out.

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