

William Haines
designs

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what's hot! books



just your type

The season's best style books trace the work of decorators and architects at the top of their game

The doyenne of the beloved "English style" was actually an American. **Nancy Lancaster: English Country House Style** (Frances Lincoln, \$60) covers her work from the renovation of the grand estates she acquired through marriage to her purchase of the design firm Colefax & Fowler. Martin Wood explores Lancaster's life and her interiors, which exuded the same elegance and approachability as the legendary beauty, who had Winston Churchill, Cecil Beaton, and David Niven as admirers.

Billy Haines refutes the claim of F. Scott Fitzgerald, his Hollywood contemporary, that American lives lack second acts. A silent-film star known for his wit, as well as a low-key openness about his homosexuality, Haines segued into a more distinguished career as the L.A. designer of choice through the 1960s. **Class Act: William Haines** by Peter Schifano and Jean H. Mathison (Pointed Leaf Press, \$95) highlights his work for Jack Warner and Joan Crawford, among many others, and illustrates his evolution from opulence to subtle modernism.

Opening Adam Lewis's new biography, **Albert Hadley: The Story of America's Preeminent Interior Designer** (Rizzoli, \$65), is like diving into the famed decorator's personal diary. The author details Hadley's design philosophies, relays colorful anecdotes about his unlikely business partnership with the more traditional Sister Parish, and provides stories behind quintessential American interiors, including Brooke Astor's library and the townhouse of Vice President Al Gore.

Bunny Williams might have gotten her start at Parish-Hadley, but she has long been a famed decorator on her own. In **An Affair with a House** (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$55), the Virginia native takes us through the Connecticut retreat she has loved for more than 30 years, sharing everything from her living room to her larder, and tells the charming story of how the house has evolved with the addition of many gardens, an aviary, and a rusticated Greek temple made of tree trunks.

Though his works have been well documented in hundreds of photographs, **Walking Through Le Corbusier: A Tour of His Masterworks** by José Baltanás (Thames & Hudson, \$45) offers a new perspective on 12 of the Swiss architect's projects, including Villa Savoye and the Unité d'Habitation. Each is shown in a sequence of photographs accompanied by a narrative description. The result is a virtual tour, a far more engrossing and edifying experience than any single iconic shot could convey.

One of Sweden's most acclaimed architects, Gunnar Asplund was a contemporary of Le Corbusier. But as Peter Blundell Jones's exhaustive monograph, **Gunnar Asplund** (Phaidon, \$75), makes clear, his style was shaped as much by indigenous folk architecture, Beaux Arts classicism, and even the Arts and Crafts movement as by modernism. With so much contemporary architecture consisting of show-off shapes that relate more to ego than function, Asplund's discreet forms, use of natural materials, and sensitivity to site seem more pertinent than ever. ■