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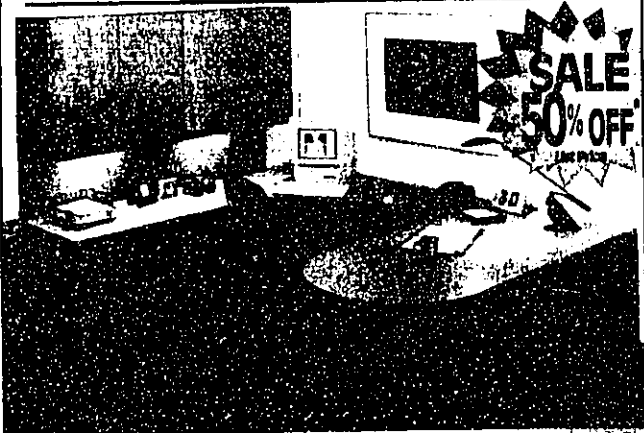
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INTERIOR MOTIVES

French decorating is 'soigne et bon gout'



NAOMI STONE
LEVY

Part I

No matter the simplicity, the French people instinctively know all there ever was to know regarding elegance in their furniture, fabrics and "bi-belots." What we refer to as French Provincial is a countrified version of French, but is nonetheless "soigne" (elegance).

When you graduate to any of the more formal "Louis" periods their elegance becomes incredible.

Country French furniture won't be highly polished. It won't be pretentious. It won't be ostentatious. It won't be unadorned; there is a lot of handcarving. It will always have that inimitable handcrafted appearance. It may be lighter in weight, both physically and visually. It will always be refined, called "bon gout" or in good taste. If we are going to deal with French let's use a few of their words and phrases.

The finishes range from painted to warm walnut coloration and patina. The furniture will rarely be mahogany, leaving that for their more formal furniture or their English counterparts. Their country painted pieces have a rubbed-off and aged appearance, even when brand new. What we term "distressed" almost always prevails.

Upholstery

The French are fabulous weavers, among the best in the world. Therefore, we can expect their upholstered furniture to display fabrics "extraordinaire." A simple tapestry in muted colors is often the prevailing material. Even on the most countrified frames we find linen velvets and other pile finishes. However, their fantastic damasks are reserved for the more formal pieces.

Simple cottons in wonderful "Toiles de Jouy" prints are also prevalent. Other cotton prints, generally with a small repeat pattern, are ever popular. Quilting these cottons adds to their appeal, to the country look and to their durability.

Commencing with seating pieces,

sofas and chairs are seldom overstuffed and boxy. If there is a skirt, it usually is ruffled or box pleated. More often, the lighter weight frame is exposed, on legs, with stretchers, sometimes double stretchers. They are known as *bergères* or *fauteuils*. The arms may have a small padded area, with the balance of the wood arm exposed. The curves incorporated into the shapes of French Provincial resonate their design skills and innate good taste. Look at the pieces and see how intelligently these skills are used.

Storage

Storage units elicit another specialty. *Armoires* and *bonnetieres* originated with the French. We are smart if we avail ourselves of their knowledge. I frequently advise use of these marvels to house the ever-present TV sets that are ruinous to the decor of a living area.

Dressers, credenzas and cabinets are more palatable when in the provincial mode. They will undoubtedly be curvaceous and carved. These case pieces, when antique, are often topped with rough marble. When they are reproduced that is the intelligent way to go.

Returning to the subject of finishes: All of the above will be handsomely and knowledgeably painted. The paint should be wiped out of the grooves and carvings, leaving some of the bare wood exposed. This requires a craftsman who cannot learn the technique in one easy lesson; it takes study and practice, and, it is hoped, a good teacher.

Another great finish is fruitwood in a light color; of course hand-rubbed, never, never a factory spray-on. Fruitwoods include apple, pear, cherry and walnut.

Floors and windows

On the floor. Where do we go from here? Try for wood floors of lightly stained oak or pine. Top that with small scattered area rugs. Braided, hooked or Oriental designs are all very correct with provincial interiors.

On the windows. I would advocate louvered shutters as the No. 1 choice. No. 2 would be sill-length curtains, on

See LEVY, 4D

Rug society presents seminar

The Detroit Oriental Rug Society presents "Oriental Rugs: A Survey for the Novice and Serious Collector" at its meeting 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22, at Baldwin Public Library, 300 W. Merrill in Birmingham.

Edgar Hagopian, CEO of Hagopian World of Rugs and renowned collector, rug lecturer and dealer, will give a serious and detailed presentation on the history, craftsmanship and ethnographic aspects of the fascinating world of Oriental rugs.

Many fine rugs will be exhibited and

explained in the context of the presentation. Refreshments will be served. The public may attend. Admission is free.

The event is the first in a series of offered by the society, a non-profit organization dedicated to education about and appreciation of Oriental rugs. Future meeting dates are April 25, June 20 and Sept. 26 at the library. For more information, call Jason Francisco at (313) 872-4048 or David Morrison at (810) 542-1491.