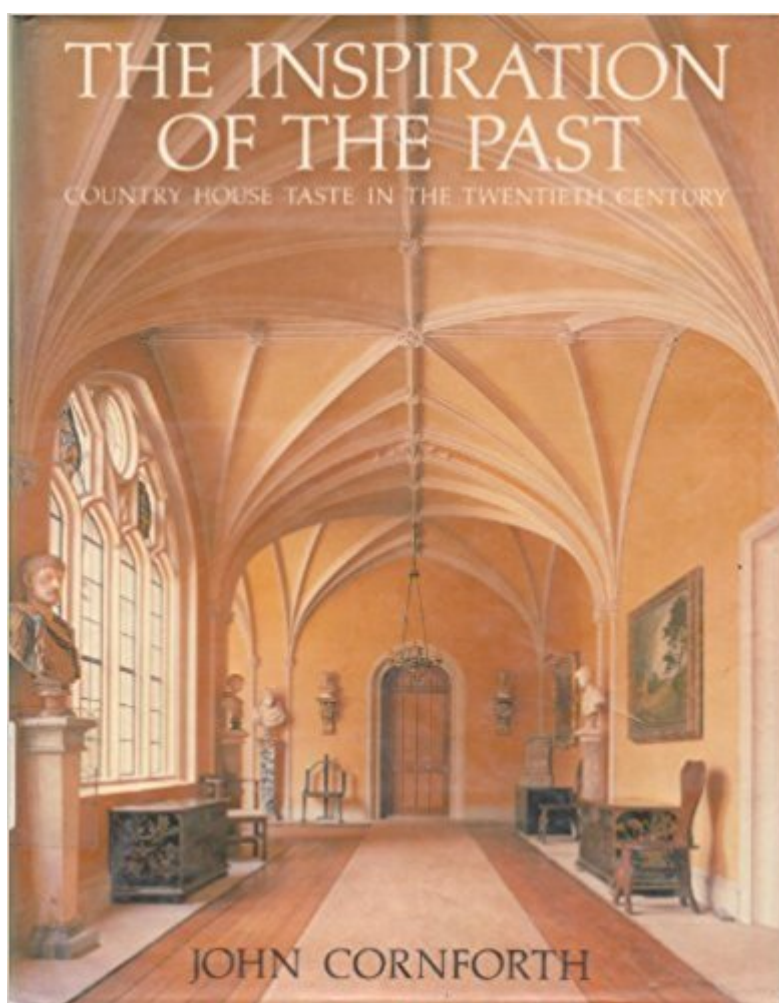


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# The Inspiration Of The Past: Country House Taste In The Twentieth Century



## Synopsis

Book by Cornforth, John

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cornforth's long career on the staff of England's Country Life and his membership in the National Trust give him an appropriate background for his elegant, impressive discourse on the extremely stately homes depicted in this volume. The British "country house" includes palaces, castles and vast structures with many lofty rooms, unlike any dwelling in America. Splendid color and black-and-white photos illustrate chapters on the restoration and preservation of these marvelous homes in the British Isles. Concentrating on aspects of interior design, the author pays tribute to the late John Fowler, whose charming and beautiful furnishings delight the eye. As Fowler intended, his interior decoration is "well behaved yet free from too many rules." His rooms bespeak graciousness and "a logical compromise between comfort and appearance." Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A well-known designer mentioned this book in a magazine interview and so I ordered it. It is a textbook of wisdom with copious photographs, mostly old, and lots of discussions of techniques and 4 chapters on John Fowler's work. This was a library copy, condition just OK, but it does not matter. A great resource for traditionalists. Many pictures of the same room, pre-renovation and post renovation.

An excellent book about the dedication of the English to their beloved country houses. People spend all their lifetime, energy and money to preserve these historic houses. It is a source of continuing inspiration for me. There are excellent photos to accompany the text.

This is a review of the 1985 first edition, hard cover, of *THE INSPIRATION OF THE PAST*. John Cornforth, a writer for *COUNTRY LIFE* magazine which is associated with the publication of this book, is one of the leading authorities on the Country House in Britain. Written at the peak of the United States' interest in the classic interior design style featuring flowery chintz slipcovers, oriental rugs, and dress-maker curtains, the book features fabulous interiors, both stately and modest, to illustrate the taste of the earlier styles but with the addition of modern comfort. 196 black & white photographs, mostly from the archives of *COUNTRY LIFE* provide valuable documentation along with 80 color photographs, mostly taken for this book we are told. Early 20th century projects by architects Edwin Lutyens and Clough Williams-Ellis are featured, followed by 1930s rooms designed by Lord Gerald Wellsley in the neo-regency, roccoco revival and neo-baroque styles. One of the most influential rooms of the between-the-wars period, the dining room at 5 Belgrave Square designed by Stephane Boudin of Jansen, is also pictured. But much of the book is devoted to the work of the master of the style, John Fowler who, along with business partner Nancy Lancaster, brought the taste into its full development after World War II. Both Fowler and Lancaster were worthy of their own books and other authors have done just that since this publication. The last chapter *ASPECTS OF JOHN FOWLER'S INFLUENCE IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA* mentions Keith Irvine and Imogen Taylor, assistants who became well-known decorators, and George Oakes and Christopher Gibbs, who became well-known decorative painters. Fowler never visited the U.S., but his work with Lancaster influenced Mrs Henry Parish. Sister Parish, along with partner Albert Hadley, was the key figure in traditional decoration in the U.S. in the second half of the century, according to Cornforth and this writer agrees. Mario Buatta worked for Irvine when he established his own office in the U.S. and visited Fowler for years through the 1960s to learn from the master before opening his own office to espouse the English Country House Style in America. This book is a **MUST HAVE** for all interested in the academics of traditional interior design.

This is a book for the serious historian of design or architecture -- while the many photographs are all outstanding, and, in particular, the photos from *Country Life* are truly some of the most extraordinary interior photos of the 20th century [notwithstanding the complaints of the prior

reviewer] --- this is not in the least a coffee table book and those seeking such should look elsewhere. Rather, this superlative volume is a landmark in the intellectual history of Anglo-American design aesthetics and will likely not be equalled in the future. Of course, it's not at all surprising that the book is OOP --- the sophisticated audience for this subject is quite distinct from the acquisition-minded, typical subscriber to Architectural Digest.

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