



TROMPE L'OEIL
AT HOME

FAUX FINISHES AND FANTASY SETTINGS

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FOREWORD BY JOCASTA INNES

leather, fur, flowers, leaves, even living creatures, if their stillness can be plausibly explained, have been faithfully reproduced in paint.

Trompe l'oeil can extend to three dimensions, but when it does it becomes, by our definitions, reproduction. For the moment, let us confine ourselves to two dimensions.

While the fluidity of fabric does not seem to make a likely candidate for simulation by trompe-l'oeil techniques, it nevertheless has been ingeniously imitated. In the fourth century B.C., the Greek painter Parrhasius is said to have painted a curtain so realistically that his rival, Apelles, was fooled. At the Palazzo Davanzati in Florence in 1395, the "tapestries" lining the wedding chamber of Francesco di Tommaso Davizzi and Caterina degli Alberti were part of an elaborate trompe l'oeil that included a loggia opening on to a garden above the drapery.



THE LOOK OF MARBLE AND GRANITE, ABOVE, IS PRODUCED WITH EASE BY ATLANTA DECORATIVE PAINTER SCOTT WATERMAN.

NEW YORK ARTIST TOM ISBELL IS ABLE TO CREATE A LUXURIOUS GOLD-VEINED MARBLE THAT ADDS A CLASSICAL NOTE TO ANY SETTING, RIGHT. IN DOING SO, HE CONTINUES A TRADITION DATING FROM EGYPTIAN TIMES.

The drapery, elaborately patterned with heraldic devices, hangs from rings fastened to the parapet of the loggia and covers the walls. It is pulled back at the corners of the room to reveal a rich lining.

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38 While most theater curtains are real drapery, the Paris Opera's curtain designed by Jean Louis Charles Garnier in 1874 was not. The two-dimensional surface of the flat curtain was painted to resemble an elaborately draped and tasseled curtain in an ironic trompe-l'oeil rendition.

Author and trompe-l'oeil artist Martin Battersby points out the entertainment quality of this deception, which prefigures the fantasies that would be revealed when the "seemingly cumbrous weight of fabric was effortlessly lifted."

Printed wallpapers have imitated textiles. In fact, the first wallpapers manufactured in England in the sixteenth century were intended to simulate

the brocades and velvets popular as wall coverings. Soon after wallpaper makers took embroidery, leather, and even gathered drapery as their models. In the nineteenth century trompe-l'oeil wallpapers were praised and promoted by Charles Blanc, director of the Beaux-Arts in 1848 and 1870 and author of the influential text, *Grammaire des Arts Décoratifs*. He claimed the nation's newest manufacturing techniques lent a "simple sheet of paper not only the brilliance of silk and satin, the stiffness of moiré, the still colors of cloth and felt, the polish of ceramic glazes, but the grain of a material, the very stitch of old tapestries, the thickness of crocheted embroideries, the deep embossing of Spanish leather, the punctuated swelling of brocatelle, and even the bulge of the padded stuff."

The same strategies are in use today; flocked wallpapers are still available and popular.



THIS NEOCLASSICAL DRAPE, ABOVE AND RIGHT, WAS INSPIRED BY A NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH WALLPAPER. IT HANGS IN FRONT OF A LUXURIOUS "MALACHITE" DOOR. EVERYTHING IS REALISTICALLY RENDERED IN PAINT BY THE CONTEMPORARY TROMPE-L'OEILIST SCOTT WATERMAN.



Other textile sources are also used. Brunschwig & Fils produces a *Hare and Hound Border* based on a set of eighteenth-century crewel-embroidered bedhangings in the collection of the Winterthur Museum.

Contemporary trompe-l'oeil painters still create extravagant and rich effects of drapery. In a New York apartment house, James Alan Smith has evoked a sense of luxury by lining three sides of a mundane metal elevator cab with a "swagged linen" above a "wooden dado." David Cohn has created a windblown pavilion with a rippling canvas roof for a seaside house designed by decorator David Barrett. Scott Waterman has painted a single panel of white drapery over a dressing room door that is itself painted in a faux malachite. The architect Michael Graves has decorated buildings with gigantic swags of "sculpted" drapery.

Wood is another familiar



PART OF AN UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE HAS BEEN TURNED INTO AN "OPEN-AIR" WINE CELLAR, ABOVE. SCOTT WATERMAN TRANSFORMED THE CEILING OF THE GARAGE, WHICH SUPPORTS THIRTY STORIES OF CONDOMINIUMS, INTO A PERMANENT BLUE SKY WITH WISPY CLOUDS. A HIDDEN TAPE DECK PLAYS GREGORIAN CHANTS, ADDING AN AUDITORY ELEMENT TO THE ILLUSION.

1709) "opened" the ceiling to the heavens so that Christ bearing the Cross becomes the source of all light. The 1685 work, which also features Saint Ignatius, his followers, and angels all levitating, is a tour de force, even if it requires the viewer to stand at one particular spot to get the full effect.

Other materials can also be used to achieve trompe-l'oeil effects. Around the 1460s a wood marquetry technique was developed by the Landinara brothers. They inlaid delicately shaded pieces of wood to create amazingly realistic renditions of still-life subjects. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance the private studies of the aristocracy were often set apart from the rest of the house and decorated especially to create an atmosphere conducive to contemplation, and wood intarsia was often used to panel them during the Renaissance. In the Renaissance *studiolo* of Federigo da



ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS HAVE ALWAYS MANIPULATED THE EXPERIENCE OF SPACE. IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ROME, BORROMINI EXAGGERATED THE PERSPECTIVE OF A PASSAGEWAY BY NARROWING ITS WIDTH AND SHORTENING ITS COLUMNS—ALL TO CREATE A GRANDER EFFECT, RIGHT. MORE RECENTLY, SCOTT WATERMAN “LENGTHENED” A THIRTY-FOOT CORRIDOR BY PAINTING ON AN EXTENSION FOR THE BILTMORE HOTEL IN ATLANTA, LEFT.





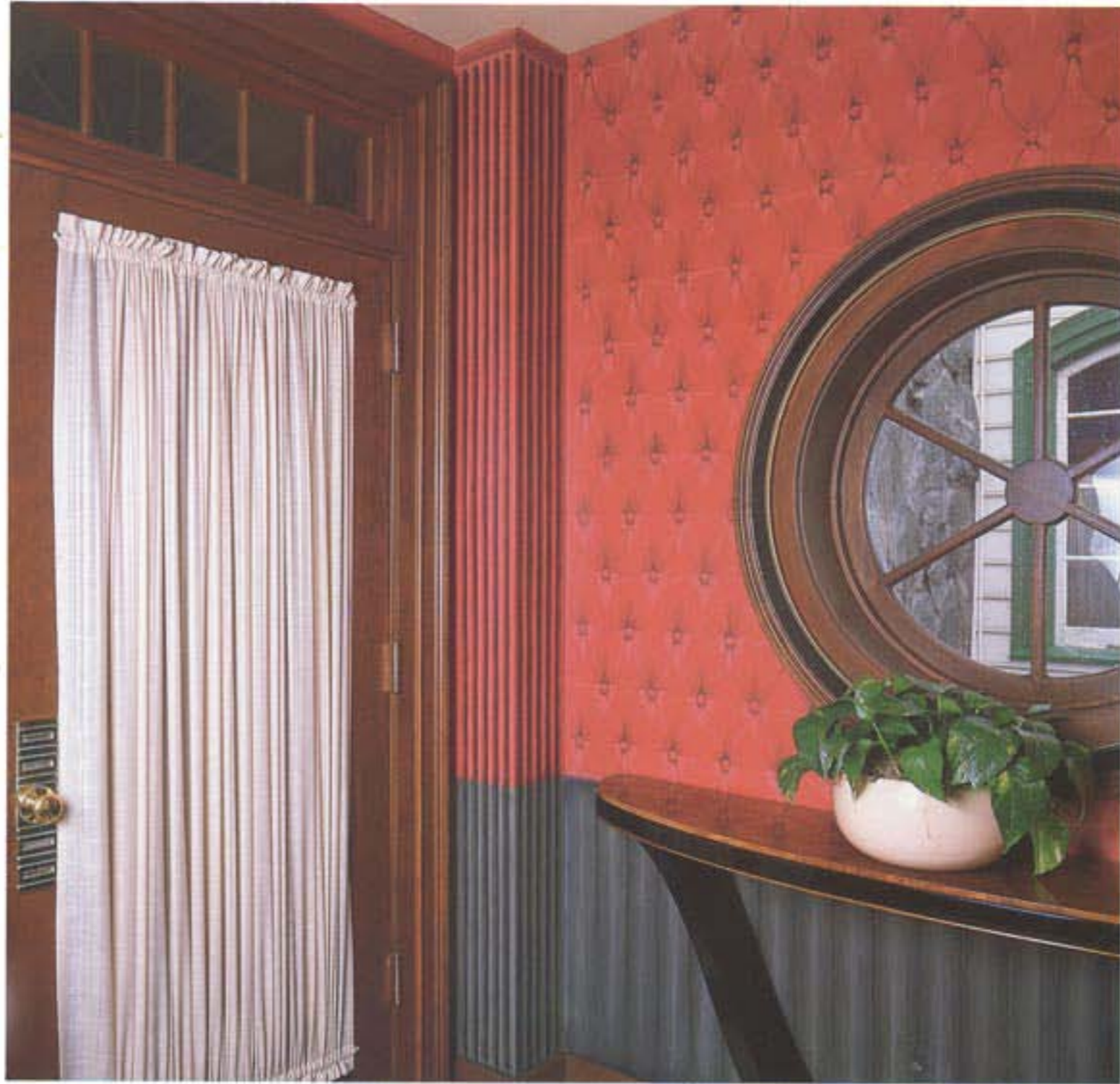
BANNERS AND BUNTING ARE MATERIALS OF THE MOMENT, NOT INTENDED TO OUTLAST THE CELEBRATION. BUT THE TROMPE-L'OEIL PAINTER CAN PROLONG THEIR LIVES INDEFINITELY. CREATING A HERALDIC SETTING, SCOTT WATERMAN HAS ADDED FLAGS, BANNERS, AND GRAPE BOUGHS OVER WINDOWS THAT OPEN ONTO "VIEWS" OF OVERGROWN GARDENS, ABOVE.

THE HOMEOWNER NEED NO LONGER BE CONDEMNED TO LIVING IN BLAND, FEATURELESS ROOMS. CLARENCE HOUSE OFFERS A FULL LINE OF WALLPAPER BORDERS THAT REALISTICALLY IMITATE THREE-DIMENSIONAL ARCHITECTURAL DETAILING, LEFT.

be painted over in a pattern that is at odds with it, making corners appear or disappear.

Sometimes the shell of the room is totally transformed. We have already seen how trompe-l'oeil painting can create illusions of grandeur in two dimensions. It also happens in three. Fashionable rooms in nineteenth-century France were draped and roped with hundreds of yards of fabric to evoke the romance of tents pitched in exotic locales. A domestic setting could be transformed into a scene of adventure—a Moorish garden pavilion, a sheik's desert home, or even Napoleon's camp on enemy turf. Today, the effect is just as intriguing, and many enterprising designers are transforming rooms by tenting ceilings, draping ordinary furniture with lavish fabric, and "fabricating" walls by applying textiles with appealing textures and patterns.

Draped effects were often



IN AN ENTRY HALL, DEEPLY TUFTED RICH RED FABRIC AND WOODEN WAINSCOTTING CREATE A DIGNIFIED FIRST IMPRESSION, ABOVE. ON SECOND GLANCE, THE VISITOR REALIZES THAT THE MATERIALS ARE ACTUALLY PAINTED SURFACES. CREATED BY ARTIST SCOTT WATERMAN, THESE EFFECTS WERE INSPIRED BY A LONGSTANDING TRADITION OF SIMULATING TEXTILES TO GIVE ROOMS A RICH LOOK.