



Author and interior designer Maureen Footer spent four years researching George Stacey to write her book.

PHOTO BY ZEV STARR-TAMBOUR

THE STORY OF CHIC

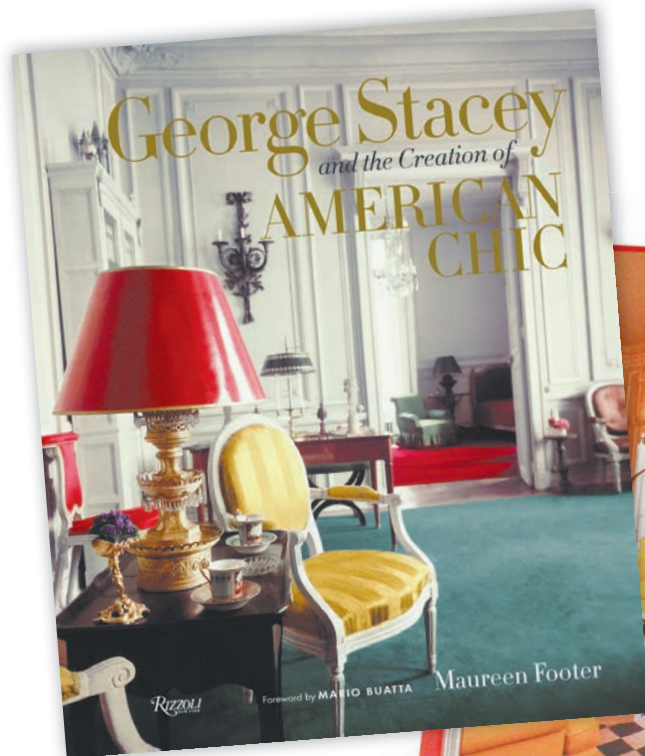
BY
MISSY
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In her new book, author **Maureen Footer** details a little-known **master of interior design**

STEP INTO AN ELEGANT GARDEN DISTRICT HOME and you'll likely see pale walls, French antiques, contemporary art and perhaps an unexpected accent piece: a Zulu mask or repurposed tavern bar. This eclectic mix is part of the American design tradition, according to interior designer and author Maureen Footer, but it didn't exist until the 1930s, when designer George Stacey pioneered the look Footer dubs "American Chic."

"He created such a strong template that you go down Magazine Street and look at Karla Katz Antiques or Bremermann Designs, and you see what Stacey was the first to do—Asian art, bare floors, antiques," says Footer, a New Yorker who signed copies of her new book *George Stacey and the Creation of American Chic* (Rizzoli,

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George Stacey and the Creation of American Chic, \$65 at Hazelnut.
PHOTO COURTESY RIZZOLI PRESS





A salon at the Chateau de Neuville in France shows Stacey's use of symmetry and gilt-wood architectural elements.
PHOTO COURTESY RIZZOLI PRESS

2014) at Hazelnut last month. "We take it for granted because it has been such a part of our approach to design. But Stacey broke the mold."

Though Stacey's influence is widespread, his name is less well known. Born in 1901 to a frequently unemployed lumberman in Stratford, Connecticut, Stacey attended Parsons The New School of Design, where he received a scholarship to study in Paris. He worked as a French antiques dealer prior to becoming a decorator, and his fondness for antiques would remain throughout his career. But 1920s Paris exposed Stacey to more than classical design.

"He was increasingly mixing in the world of the avant-garde, associating with a lot of people who were at the foreground of art," Footer says.

Stacey used his strong classical training as a departure point for modern design choices, Footer says. A pioneer in adaptive reuse, he converted a chicken coop and

a squash court into stylish personal residences in a way that foreshadowed the present-day love for loft living.

"We have to give Stacey credit for that American independent spirit of saying, 'I know this isn't a house, but I can make it a house,'" Footer says.

Stacey's experimental approach attracted a rarified client list, many of whom "passed him around through word of mouth": Ava Gardner, Diana Vreeland and Princess Grace of Monaco among them. Though the modest Stacey did little to promote himself, his work spoke for itself.

"He was heavily courted by the media," Footer says. "Harper's Bazaar, Vogue, House & Garden and Town & Country were all asking him to write articles."

Footer drew heavily from these sources while writing her book, a lavishly illustrated, gorgeously written and meticulously researched 224-page tome *Architectural*

Digest calls "enchanting." Footer chanced upon the subject when a client asked her to design an apartment for a modern Grace Kelly.

"I asked myself how Stacey would have done this if he were working in the 21st century," she says. "It was this blend of historicism, modernity and the unexpected, and it is still this incredible template for creating. It has become part of American design tradition. Stacey influenced my work before I knew him."

Stacey's influence is especially pervasive in New Orleans, Footer says.

"New Orleans is a city of great extremes and incredible style, with strong allegiance to its French heritage," Footer says. "I saw it in the Garden District and the Soniat Hotel. ... I felt there was this incredible sympathy between the New Orleans aesthetic and the Stacey aesthetic. I think he would have gravitated to New Orleans." 📷

HOW TO:

CREATE AN AMERICAN CHIC ROOM



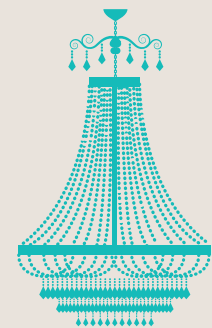
Arrange your furniture in a way that allows conversation and circulation.

Mix high and low. Stacey loved French antiques paired with humble pieces like terra cotta pots or rattan baskets.

Exert your **individual taste** in a relaxed, offhanded way.

Use a **neutral palette:** gray or taupe walls, pale upholstery.

Pull in **jewel-toned** fabric and artwork for accent pieces.



Add sparkle and glamour with mirrors, lacquered pieces, crystal chandeliers, glassware and metallics.