



Unmistakably
FRENCH

Betty Lou Phillips



Lyrical motifs resound on an island reflecting the owner's interest in music. In France, a display, or *trophée*, if one will, of painted, carved, or inlaid symbols often has historic, political, or literary overtones, usually accompanied by florals and ribbons.

Opposite: A whirlwind makeover transformed this timeworn San Francisco kitchen into a bright, sumptuous space, with color-washed walls and hand-hewn timbers that hide the room's dismal past. The center island offers extra workspace for serious cooks who revel in serving classic French cuisine.

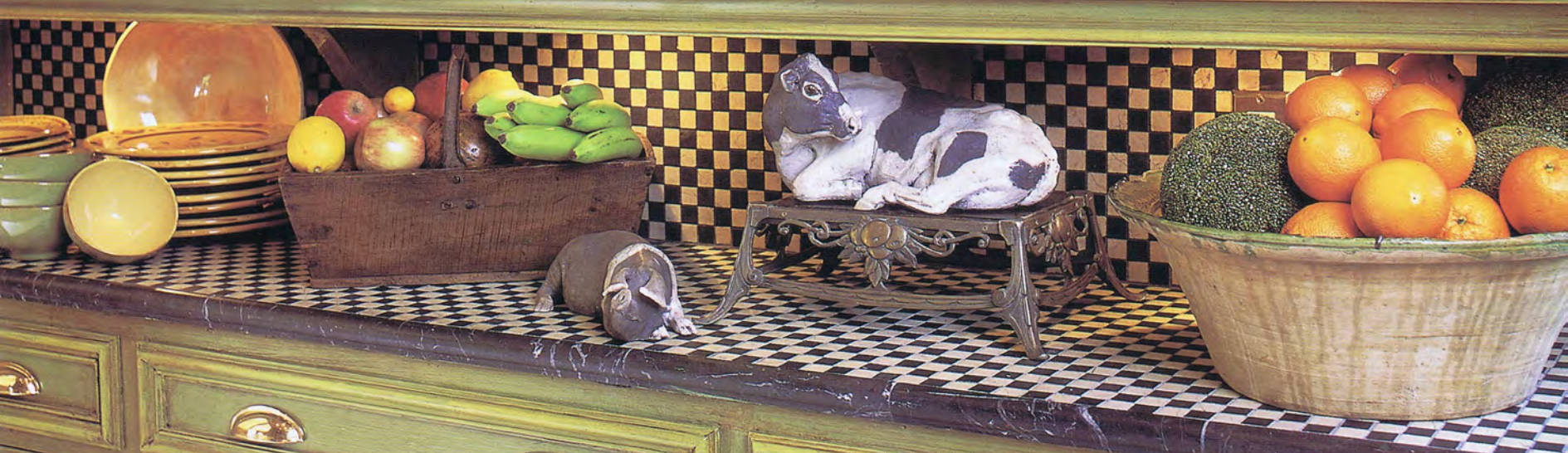






Reversible Nancy Corzine harlequin fabric used on one side and then the other turns a humble pantry into a glamorous space. Meanwhile, needlepoint roosters and hens perch in pillows, adding a personal touch. Trim is from Kenneth Meyer Company, San Francisco.

Opposite: In the orderly world of the French, glasses are generally within easy reach. Renovating an antiquated kitchen led to a mosaic of possibilities stateside as well, including cabinets with brass numerals that once opened doors to hotel rooms in France.





Reinforcing the room's strong architecture, Jacques Bouvet et Cie fabrics – available through McRae Hinkley, San Francisco – tumble effortlessly, thanks to the curtain's weighted edges.



Opposite: Marrying old-world architecture to twenty-first-century ease can be a challenge, but tradition reigns in a family room offering deep seating for everyday comfort. Fabric by Jacques Bouvet et Cie covers sofas; the coffee table is from Ironies in Berkeley, California. In the eighteenth century this armoire was built for nobility. Equally impressive is the massive seventeenth-century French limestone fireplace.





Cruiser enjoys his moments in the sun, not burdened by the fact that Louis XVI hated cats!



A detail of a window just steps away from a wine room.

Opposite: Shapely slipcovers skim upholstery, protecting dressmaker stitching – tucks, folds, and inverted pleats – from Cruiser, the much-loved family cat. Eighteenth-century aristocrats often retained attendants to oversee an array of responsibilities, from maintaining upholstery to giving furnishings a fresh look with coverings echoing the season.







Etched-glass panel – fitted into a door – dating back to 18th-century France opens into the dining room.



Sitting on a chair wearing Nomi fabric, a British-made textile boasts boundless creativity. Antique velvet boasts a sophisticated, topped with net.

In an artfully balanced dining room, brass with culture and a help from an eighteenth-century fireplace, searched in a French fashion. In France, copper makes the room.

practice of turning yesterday's armoires into dwellings for tidy entertainment centers inevitably leaves the French aghast. Forget sentimentalism or their penchant for hosting electronics in full view. When the ratio of eighteenth-century armoires to those vying for them is so awry, we are doing the unthinkable, critics say. That these pieces are as beloved by Americans as by the French seemingly offers little consolation.

Balance Is Key to Creating a Feeling of Well-Being

There is no denying that integrating boldly scaled, dignified, old wood pieces can be *très difficile*, even for the French. Unless those clamoring for the spotlight find their way to the right places, their presence can jarringly slant the visual weight to one side of a room.

It is not by accident, then, that ancestral portraits pose arrogantly on easels, taut tapestries look down from walls, and folding screens brushed with painted scenes help project an air of authority, say, across the room from statuary. Or that oils, gouaches, and prints swell into collections, stretching toward the horizon. Though none may tote equalizing weight, each helps view attention-grabbing furnishings in a more flattering light. Not that there **need** be something in every corner basking in an imperial mirror's reflected glow; but striking a proper balance is the secret behind settings with vitality of their own.