

DESIGN | THE CRITICAL EYE

# So Weird it Works: A Posh Living Room With a Spider-Web Mural



We pit our appraisal of a New York living room with a seemingly creepy wall treatment against the designer's intent



**CRAWL SPACE** Curtains enclose a day bed in the living room of a New York pied-à-terre, with walls hand-painted by artist Chuck Hettinger; featured in 'Classical Principles for Modern Design,' by Thomas Jayne and Ted Loos (Monacelli Press). PHOTO: DON FREEMAN

By Catherine Romano

Nov. 10, 2017 2:11 p.m. ET

**Our Design Assessment:** When we first saw this image of a Manhattan apartment decorated by Thomas Jayne and William Cullum, the spider webs that adorn the walls caught more than our attention. They also caught us off guard, given the fairly safe traditionalism of the Dutch chair, Italian day bed and Agra rug, all from the 19th century. The choice of arachnid spinnings seemed marvelous but odd. Also a bit inexplicable: the presence of a curtained day bed in a living room—on a marble plinth, no less. Do the homeowners tend to develop a sudden need for privacy? We love the color play, however—the way the carpet's blue, pink and cream scheme recurs in the shawl on the bed and the matching brocade of the chair and pillow. Meanwhile, what looks like a fabric floor molding picks up the palette of a 19th-century French painting. But why do the drapes' rod and hooks resemble a shower curtain's? So many questions!

**The Designers' Response:** "This room has a back story," said Mr. Jayne. The hand-painted wall design, he said, was inspired by a fanciful 19th-century watercolor that hangs elsewhere in the room, in which a woman greets a tarantula. So not so random, after all. Mr. Cullum pointed out other modernizing touches we'd missed: The plain wool upholstery on the day bed, how the sheer curtains are equally spartan, how the faux-marble plinth is very simple. As for the mini-bedroom: "The clients have a little girl," said Mr. Jayne. The wall treatment "creates an environment," said Mr. Cullum, "and the bed curtains make a second interior" within it, conducive to sleep—and play.



## DESIGN &amp; DECORATING

## THE CRITICAL EYE

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## ST FIVE



◀ Jasper Morrison  
All Plastic Chair,  
\$290, [vitra.com](http://vitra.com)

▲ TT54 Chair  
by Richard  
Lampert, \$482,  
[stillfried.com](http://stillfried.com)

▶ Hoffmann  
Side Chair,  
\$350, [dwr.com](http://dwr.com)

## JUST ACT CASUAL

Pull up a set of our favorite new seats—ideal for a chic kitchen table or an unceremonious dining room



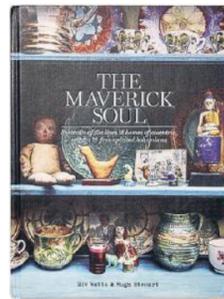
▲ Hem Udon Chair,  
\$359,  
[us.hem.com](http://us.hem.com)

▲ Beetle Lounge  
Chair, from  
\$1,629,  
[suiteny.com](http://suiteny.com)

## BOOKSHELF

## BOHO, SWEET BOHO

Three new titles with different takes on bohemian style: the worldly eclecticism that's persistently trending in interior design

**The Maverick Soul**

By Miv Watts & Hugh Stewart (Nov. 21, Hardie Grant, \$50)

**How It Interprets 'Bohemian'** As the inevitable décor extension of impossibly cool, unpredictable, creative people who imbue their dwellings with fascination. The book's subtitle, "Portraits of the Lives & Homes of Eccentric, Eclectic & Free Spirited Bohemians," hints at the voyeuristic delights that await.

**Practitioners** A-list artists, designers, authors. Alongside the figurines and genteel porcelain tea sets in her Montparnasse apartment, rock musician Marianne Faithfull displays a collage of press clippings promulgating a myth involving herself, former-paramour Mick Jagger and a Mars Bar. In his farm in Rhinebeck, N.Y., actor and filmmaker Griffin Dunne, son of journalist Dominick Dunne and nephew of writer Joan Didion, mingles first-edition books, an antique toy train, a battered valise and other dusty detritus of a rich and complicated life.

**Takeaways** Ignore Marie Kondo. Clutter is king. If your high school junior varsity trophy is important to you, it's an authentic artifact. Display it.

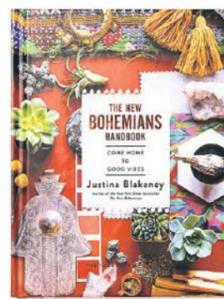
**Haute Bohemians**

By Miguel Flores-Vianna (Vendome, \$65)

**How It Interprets 'Bohemian'** As eclectic splendor. Mr. Flores-Vianna's luscious photos immerse the reader in unapologetically not-humble abodes, more well-heeled than hippie, ranging from an 18th-century villa in Versailles to a transmogrified church in Tangiers to a Kennedy-esque-compound of circa-1900 summer cottages in Montauk, N.Y.

**Practitioners** Blue bloods and those who dine with them. In their Milan home, furniture and jewelry designer Osanna Visconti Di Modrone and her husband, art dealer Giangaleazzo, hang their collection of contemporary art beneath ceilings last painted in the 18th century. British antiques dealer Christopher Gibbs displays stag antlers previously owned by Elizabeth Stuart, the Queen of Bohemia (the region, not the style), aka the Winter Queen.

**Takeaways** Rembrandts are not necessary: If lords and ladies can have their friend's gardener's artwork presiding over the living room, so can you. Don't have Egyptian porphyry sculptures for your mantel? Beach glass, driftwood or Uncle's Joey's marbles will do just fine.

**The New Bohemians Handbook**

By Justina Blakeney (Abrams, \$28)

**How It Interprets 'Bohemian'** As the sensibility of a millennial flower child. Topics include creating flow, harmony and zones—more practical than they sound—which contribute to "the totality of sensations and associations one encounters in a given space."

**Practitioners** Anyone and everyone. With Ms. Blakeney as guide, princes, plumbers and poets alike can readily replicate the charm and ease of these featured interiors—from tiny urban studios to suburban domiciles to rustic retreats.

**Takeaways** Adopt ideas from other cultures: Hang tassels from anywhere, display holy objects such as Buddhas or Ganeshas. Use plants, big or small, leafy or spindly, as everything from room dividers to bookends. Create zones without walls: Place a slim runner adjacent to a furnished space to create a "hallway" from a front door; drop a pendant light from a ceiling to demarcate a dining area within a larger, open space.

—*Elizabeth Anne Hartman*