

SPECIAL
FRENCH ISSUE

BLISS *Victoria*

DECORATING ~ ENTERPRISING WOMEN ~ TRAVELING ~ ENTERTAINING

The Charm of FRENCH STYLE

Romantic country traditions, royal icons of an empire, and postcards from Paris



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Ageless Beauty

Simple threads became enduring works of art in the hands of French artisans, whose centuries-old printed designs and needlework still find pride of place in today's décor.

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN O'HAGAN
STYLING MELISSA STURDIVANT SMITH

The beautifully monogrammed initials adorning this linen sheet were created using a bourdon stitch, which is tightly spaced to give a raised appearance. It was often used by French seamstresses for a decorative, three-dimensional effect.



From the rich hues of *Indiennes* and the pastoral scenes of *toile* to linens embroidered with elegant monograms, French textiles are beloved mainstays of the decorating world. Block-printed *Indiennes*, which were first manufactured in Marseilles in the seventeenth century, are so called because of their resemblance to similar fabrics made in India. *Toile* originated in Ireland, but when German-born Christophe-Phillipe Oberkampf established France's first factory in Jouy-en-Josas in 1760, the popularity of these enchanting patterns quickly spread across the country, and henceforth became known to all as *toile de Jouy*, which simply means "cloth from Jouy."

While living in London, avid collector-turned-entrepreneur Wendy Lewis made frequent visits to neighboring France. On one of her trips, she came across a length of eighteenth-century fabric that spoke straight to her heart and inspired a new passion. As she began amassing antique textiles, embroideries, and trims, she found that many of them were in remarkably good condition. "The French tradition of being very design and fashion conscious, mixed with a frugal nature, meant that bedding textiles were put in storage as soon as the style became outdated," Wendy explains. "They can still be found in cupboards today, having been tucked away for two hundred years!"

Wendy eventually turned her passion into a Vermont-based business known as Textile Trunk. With a carefully curated roster of sources, she continues to import beautiful pieces—such as the ones seen on these pages—which she offers for sale online and at the Brimfield Antique Flea Market in Massachusetts. For those fortunate enough to travel to France, each region of the country has any number of *brocantes*, brimming with antique textiles certain to make one's heart flutter, whether it's the Les Puces de Saint-Ouen in Paris, Les Puces du Canal in Lyon, or Brocante d'Arles in the Provence region.

Opposite: Among the pretty selections in the ever-revolving inventory of Wendy Lewis are these floral cotton fabrics and trims, all from France and dating to the late nineteenth century. This page: A vintage blue-and-white print pairs beautifully with a porcelain garden stool and other accessories.



This page and opposite: A medley of faded florals and toiles in shades of red and pink brings immeasurable charm to this bed, crowned with a canopy made of gracefully draped fabric.



