

THE TUTORIAL

# Room With a Point of View

THE ECLECTIC LOOK IS EASY, AS LONG AS YOU KNOW THE RULES.

Mixing decorating styles for that special blend known as eclectic is a tricky endeavor. A few bad choices, and instead of a sophisticated pastiche, you have mish-mash. But in skilled hands, like those of Deborah Buck, eclectic is a triumphant melding of disparate parts. Buck was trained as a painter, which helps when she's decorating one of her own residences (she has two) or buying for Buck House, her Upper East Side antiques shop. "It's all the same thing," she says. "It's the same finding the

right magenta for a chair as it is finding the right color in a painting." For the living room of her country house, a three-story Dutch Colonial in Garrison, N.Y., she approached it as if she were putting together a guest list for a party. "You want to make sure that each piece has at least one other piece to relate to, and introduce objects that have something in common with one another," she says. "Once you get the right balance, you can just stand back and watch the fun ensue." **CAROLE NICKSIN**



**Contrast**

Arrange objects with an eye toward how they influence one another, Buck advises: "It's about the juxtaposition. The wood beam becomes more interesting next to the midcentury piece and vice versa. An object needs to be secure in and of itself, but it changes its properties because of what it's next to."

**Balance**

"A lot of the house is rough-and-ready, but touches of ornateness bring out the elegance and simplicity," Buck says, pointing to the gilded bronze candlesticks on the mantel and the graceful curve of the French chairs.

**Motifs**

Egg-shaped objects and birds hold a special attraction for Buck, and she repeats them to create a visual thread throughout the house. The ones on the mantel are lamp bases from Italy. "I love eggs. They represent fertility, but they're also about process, promise, metamorphosis." Meanwhile, two birds — one from Italy and the other from Africa — are perched on the Paul McCobb chest. They relate to each other, Buck says, because they're both quirky.

**Establish Relationships**

The sofa in Deborah Buck's living room sets the room's parameters. All the other objects have to relate to either its mid-20th-century lines or the rustic, early-19th-century aesthetic of the house itself. Some pieces, like the Scandinavian leather campaign chairs, echo both styles. "Those are great, modern-looking chairs, but they're also rough like the house," Buck says. "It's the saddle leather."

**The Bold Stroke**

From a painterly point of view, each stroke affects the one before and the one after. In this room, Buck's first was the sofa, a 1950's French-style piece upholstered in silk brocade with walnut trim. That purchase led to the happy discovery that "anything mod looked even sharper, hipper and groovier here than it did anywhere else."

**Color**

Buck's neutral palette melds the room's various elements. "The walls are a color called Cottonwood by Ralph Lauren Home. It's beige and neutral, but with a lot of grit. Wall color needs to be the patriarch, to step back and let the others play." Turquoise, her favorite color, is used for accents.

**Editing**

In the mix, what you eliminate can be just as important as what you add. "Sometimes you bring in a new object, and all the other objects start to argue. In that case, one of them has to leave — just like with people."

**Integrity**

"If each piece has its own integrity of design, and you're the connecting thread, then the room will have resonance. You don't need to have pieces from the same place or period. It's more important that they have shape and form in common."