Fantastic Sublime Design

Christian Liaigres epoch-defining interiors include the Mercer Hotel in New York, offices for Valentino Couture in Paris, and Selfridges department store in London, as well as private residences for Calvin Klein, Karl Lagerfeld, and Kenzo. His luxurious dark-wood minimalism and masculine palette of creams, browns, and grays have redefined modernism, supplanting the Scandinavian blond timbers on white that just a few years ago were the sine qua non of the modern interior. Working in close collaboration with Liaigre, Herbert Ypma set out to capture and document eight recent and previously unpublished residential projects. They are incredibly diverse: a modernist retreat on the Galician coast belonging to the family of Spanish fashion designer Adolfo Dominguez; a former artists atelier in Montparnasse; Rupert Murdochs capacious SoHo loft; an eighteenth-century Bavarian timber farmhouse owned by the proprietor and designer of Germanys fashion label Strenesse; and Liaigres own fishermans cottage retreat on the Ile de Ré. The integrity and pervasive calm of Liaigres spaces reflect an instinctive aversion to the clamor of modern life. His materials are luxuriously authentic—exotic African timbers such as ebony; linen, silk, and wool; marble and natural stone; and his signature bronze hardware. And, as every project demonstrates, he makes deep connections with the tradition of each location, whether it be the industrial heritage of downtown Manhattan or the wild coastal landscape of Corsica. 500 color illustrations.

My Personal Review:
Christian Liaigre. If the name is unfamiliar, the French designers style—or at least a popularized version of it—is ubiquitous. His palette of warm browns, rich creams, and calmly varied neutrals is the color scheme of a thousand-and-one stylish hotel lobbies, and his sexy low-slung furnishings have been copied for mass consumption by furniture makers worldwide. Yet, if you think you know the man by the knock-offs, youve got another thought coming.
Herbert Ypma's sumptuous MAISON: CHRISTIAN LIAIGRE is here to set the record straight. Weighing in at 256 pages, and featuring 550 color and black & white illustrations, the book quite eloquently makes a case for Liaigre as possibly the most important—certainly the most copied—designer of our time.

Author Ypma—he of Thames & Hudson's stylish Hip Hotel and World Design series—co-designed the lavish volume with frequent collaborator, Maggi Smith, and the book features the pair's now signature blend of breathtaking one- and two-page spreads of interiors and landscapes, punctuated by checkerboard layouts of myriad architectural details and textures.

These design elements have never been employed more effectively as in this book, and they convey the quiet majestic sweep of a room or garden on one page, while focusing on the smallest of details on the next, all combining to present a vivid and comprehensive representation of each Liaigre's diverse residential projects.

Ypma, a worldly and witty writer, as well as a sensitive and skilled photographer, is responsible for all of the shots documenting eight of Liaigre's recent domestic design projects featured herein. This lends the book a pictorial consistency rare in design literature, and affords the author/photographer opportunity to focus on the formal integrity and quiet constancy of Liaigre's design ethos, as well as its diversity and adaptability. After reading this book, you'll never again think of Liaigre as a minimalist.

The photos, layout and text quietly conspire to transport the reader from a sunny beach house in Galicia, to a picturesque Bavarian retreat in Tegernsee, to an unconventional pied-a-terre in the quintessentially bohemian Montparnasse district of Paris, as well as to other intriguingly beautiful rooms in other intriguingly beautiful places.

The book is unconventional in many ways: it doesn't attempt a career-long survey of its subject's oeuvre, and neither does it focus on his celebrated commercial projects. It lists no honors, awards, timeline or bio. Moreover, it contains not a single photo of Liaigre. Yet, the book and its richly evocative photos and amusing and insightful text offer as sophisticated and sensitive a portrait as its subject could ever hope for.

In a neat twist on Matisse's aesthetic of luxe, calme, volupte, Ypma expresses the luxe, calme, moderne quality of the work of this quietest and most authoritative of contemporary designers.

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