

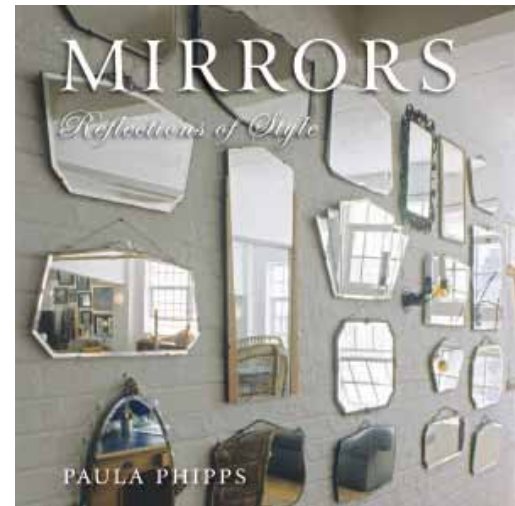
# home and garden

Photo-heavy, multipurpose books that cover both the indoors and out show us the inspiring history of style, the joys of region-specific plants, and the ease with which we can curb our carbon footprints.

Not just a book on how one of the most commonplace household items can make a room look pretty, *Mirrors: Reflections of Style*, by Paula Phipps, an independent researcher and historian, is a resource for professional and amateur designers interested in the history of style, in re-creating era-specific looks, and in using mirrors to their maximum decorative potential.

In the book's opening section, "Mirrors through the Ages," Phipps notes that archaeologists have traced what's believed to be the earliest mirrors to 6200 B.C., when obsidian slabs were used in Çatal Hüyük (present-day Turkey). "From that period on, the development and

**Mirrors: Reflections of Style,**  
by Paula Phipps, W. W. Norton & Company, hardcover, \$45



Courtesy W. W. Norton & Company





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Opposite, far left: A ca. 2009 art-deco-style dressing table offers a twist on a classic form. Opposite, left: A mirror becomes part of the furniture with this unusual art-nouveau settee. Left: Mirrors can make outdoor areas feel more spacious and enhance a natural setting.

“Cunningly placed, [mirrors] can transform limited space into impressive expanse, produce illusory halls, multiply doorways, even unfurl vistas outdoors.”

—Paula Phipps in *Mirrors: Reflections of Style*



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A mirrored ceiling adds a dramatic flair to this dining room, reflecting light and providing a unique view of the table.

refinement of mirrors have progressed in starts and stops around the world,” Phipps writes, pointing to the use of polished copper in Mesopotamia ca. 4000 B.C. and bronze mirrors in China around 2000 B.C. Often these ancient-world relics featured striking displays of artistry—from “a handle in the shape of a woman holding a duck” (Egypt, ca. 1570–1314 B.C.) to elaborate depictions of dragons on the back of a mirror (China, third century B.C.)—and ancient Egyptians and Chinese buried them with their dead for use in the afterlife. But it was the development of glass mirrors that changed everything. (Although the origin of glass-making is unknown, artisans in Sidon [present-day Lebanon] ca. the 12th century B.C. were known for their glass-making skills, and the Romans’ glass industry was flourishing by the first century B.C.) Because of glass, Phipps writes, “[m]irrors evolved from small handheld objects used in the rituals of beauty to objects large and small.” Today, she adds, “mirrors contribute beauty, light, space, illusion, and sometimes even a sense of history.”

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history-filled captions, *Mirrors* isn't a practical, hands-on guide for how to dress up a room with mirrors. Instead, Phipps documents the history of mirrors by illustrating how they've been used over the centuries for aesthetic reasons—to “[change] our perception of ourselves and our surroundings and [give] us surprising views of things we never noticed outside the looking glass”—as well as for practical purposes, whether as design elements, as part of furniture, or as a means for enhancing an outdoor space. Through the images Phipps provides—Empress Josephine's candle-armed bath mirrors, Marlene Dietrich's elaborate dressing table, Coco Chanel's mirror-lined staircase—it's easy to get lost in fantasy, but it's also possible to lay the groundwork for using mirrors to beautifully and powerfully transform your living space.—*Amy Hegarty*

Right: Dressing tables, like the one shown here in the 18th-century Mompesson House in Salisbury, England, “became a standard form of furniture in every home,” Phipps writes.

