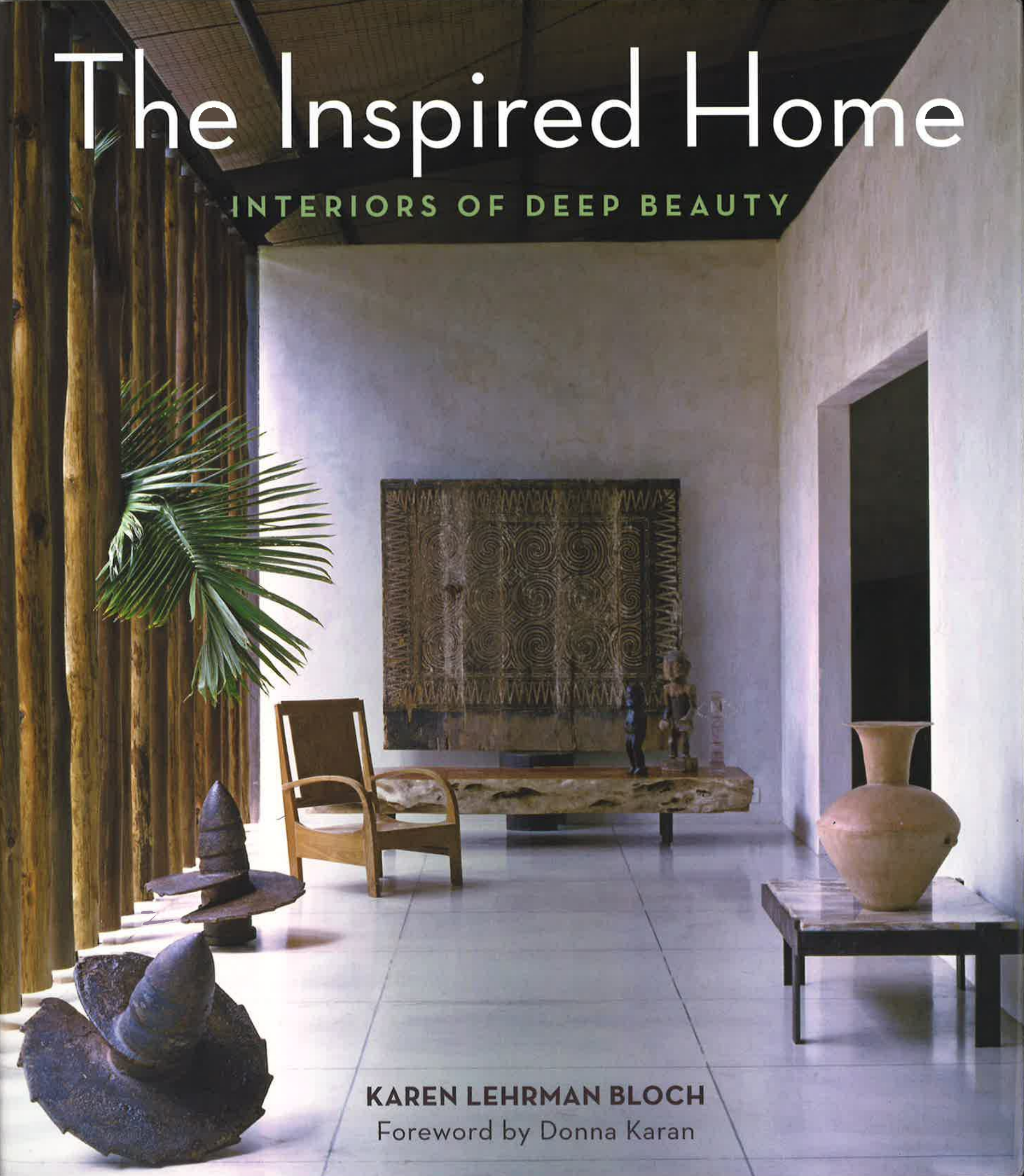


# The Inspired Home

INTERIORS OF DEEP BEAUTY



**KAREN LEHRMAN BLOCH**  
Foreword by Donna Karan

# SENSUALITY

Natural materials like wood, bronze, and stone and textiles like linen, silk, and velvet are inherently sensual and can be quite grounding. Used with subtlety, they can also feel quite luxurious.

Sensuality can also come from color. Natural colors have come to mean “neutrals.” But—is nature beige? The colors of nature are simultaneously pure and vibrant: amber, ochre, poppy, olive, mahogany, saffron, coral, ivory. While some homes make great use of a neutral palette, shots of bright, complex color can add not just surprise but a sense of optimism.

For years, Catherine Weyeneth Bezençon, an interior designer and owner of the Ars Vivendi boutique in Geneva, and her husband, Pierre, had searched for a home that had both space and “a soul.” One spring day in 1999, in the tiny village of Veigy-Foncenex just across the French border, Bezençon saw a barn that had been built in 1890 to store the harvest. “I did not design this building,” she says. “I met it.”

There was, to put it mildly, a lot to do. “One could almost feel the former presence of cattle,” says Bezençon. High piles of hay still filled what would become the upper floor. “But I could see that this massive, 2,000-foot ‘square’ was a witness of the past and had the simple but ample proportions of a future contemporary loft.”

Her objective was to “never lose the soul of the house,” to integrate her own personal style with as much of the existing structure as possible: the cathedral-like wooden roof, the rough-hewn stone walls, the embrasure-like openings—remnants of the feeding troughs—which now serve as light shafts and look out onto acres of lush farmland.



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She then began to integrate glass, iron, and mid-century Modern pieces by Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe with natural textures like linen, wool, leathers, and skins, and a trove of artifacts that the couple had collected from their travels: Han Dynasty terra-cotta warriors, bronze pieces from North Vietnam, primitive African statues, a Buddha made of alabaster from Burma. The long wooden dining room table comes from a flea market in Provence. "I will always prefer the sensuality of a table that has 'lived' to the practical side of a fake Louis XVI," she says.

**PAGE 43** Han Dynasty terra-cotta pieces in one of the living rooms; the small horse is a nineteenth-century bronze piece from Mali.

**RIGHT** Two chaise longues by Le Corbusier and calligraphic works on wood warm up the library, which is dominated by Jean-Baptiste Huynh photographs.

**PAGE 46** In the spacious living room, modern linen sofas and a painting by Jeff Bertoncino are balanced by ethnic art pieces and the original wood of the barn.

**PAGE 47** A view of one of the three living rooms under the original wooden structure built more than a century ago.

