



A Perfectly Kept House is the Sign of A Misspent Life

Mary Randolph Carter

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How to live creatively with collections, clutter, work, kids, pets, art, etc... and stop worrying about everything being perfectly in its place.

For all those who choose to live "imperfectly" with the messy things they love, this book shows how to do so creatively, happily, and with considerable style ideas from leading designers. A beautiful and inspiring volume, *A Perfectly Kept House is the Sign of A Misspent Life* focuses on living well with everything that makes a house a home. If you have been influenced by the picturesquely cluttered studios of Pablo Picasso or Alexander Calder, or by the art- and book-filled house of Vanessa Bell, this unique style book will stimulate you with its creative ideas. This volume explores how real-life tastemakers (photographers, textile designers, fashion designers, writers, artists) integrate their life and interiors to live well with their passions, histories, conveniences, and inconveniences. In inspiring essays, Mary Randolph Carter muses on such key housekeeping concerns as clutter versus mess; open windows; and unmade beds. Combining practical tips with liberating philosophy—"Don't scrub the soul out of your home"; "Make room for what you love"—this volume celebrates living beautifully and happily, not messily. Lavishly illustrated with intimate photographs of different living spaces, Carter exalts in the beauty of imperfection and in living perfectly in our "imperfect" homes. Life isn't perfect—why should your house be?

A Perfectly Kept House is the Sign of A Misspent Life Details

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From Reader Review A Perfectly Kept House is the Sign of A Misspent Life for online ebook

Nancy says

This is better writing than other books of hers I have read. Though I was hoping it would be more of a helpful way to show our collections of stuff it seems more like case studies of more artists and their stuffed houses and studios. When you work with mixed media you have to have a massive amount of stuff stored around to use. So most of these came as no shock to be cluttered to the max. I agree that a magazine ad spotless house has no soul but I also think that when your clothes are piled on top of piles because you cannot even get into the room let alone the closet you have to declutter to have a liveable home. I think she misses that point a bit with at least 2 case studies. She talks about it. How a home that is "lived in" seems far more a home and comfortable than a pristine and spotless place you are afraid to relax in. I get that but she decries the extent of hoarding to be in the way of living but then gives a few examples of that very lifestyle and says they are ok. That is not what her into said. SO I found the double standard and mixed messages running through out a little disconcerting. I guess I am still on the hunt for a book that shows creative ways to live with clutter and collections while still being able to live in your house. This book is really not it.

Tracy says

Wow people. Such bitterness. I loved this book. I'm so tired of looking at glossy magazine photos of glossy over styled houses. The only house that was a bit much was her sister house with the marble kitchen counters. I've seen books with houses so pristine you can't imagine people living in them let alone children and pets. These houses look lived in.

I like this design aesthetic. I live in an oldish ~ house (100 years). While it isn't particularly cluttered (except with books, and paintings and teapots...) I'm not big on dusting or vacuuming. My hardwood in my living room and dining room is old, worn and paint-splattered. I had thought about getting it re-done but now I won't. My leather couches had been cat scratched. I'd thought about maybe new ones but now I'll keep them. This book has saved me about six thousand dollars (yay, I can buy more books!).

Kerfe says

I've always liked to look at decorating magazines. Even though much of what they show is staged, I enjoy the juxtaposition of things and furniture--or absence of them in some cases--that can conjure up a different life.

Mary Randolph Carter visits a number of houses and apartments around the world (including her own) to illustrate the different ways of living with things. In between she philosophizes about what makes a space feel lived in, comfortable, and welcoming.

While none of these residences comes from the Marie Kondo school, there is clutter and there is clutter. Some places have many things, but artfully arranged. The two that most appealed to me, those of Nathalie Lete and Natalie Gibson were apologetically overflowing with color and pattern. Both women are artists, with a love for quirky objects with personality, not just decorative statements. They don't overthink things;

their collections spring organically from who they are and what they love.

This is a fun book to look through, no matter what your decorating preferences. Imperfectly perfect or perfectly imperfect--there's room in these pages for all.

Brooke says

The title says it all - almost! This book is filled with warmth and regard for people and yes, things. It seems the author and her case studies enjoy their lives, enjoy their friends and family, enjoy their things, and don't feel guilty about it at all. I enjoy Carter's take on what makes a home. Here are some nuggets from the book: "Don't scrub the soul out of your home" (back cover); Clutter is a skillfully arranged state of spirit (p 48); A wall cluttered with images that personally appeal to us makes a blank surface a canvas of our imaginations (49); When people entered our home they became part of the family. They were invited to participate. . . to live! (14). . . I fell in love with lived-in, not perfectly kept, homes filled with collections, memories, children pets, clutter, work, and lots of creativity (11); "nothing beats a warm hug and a personal greeting from a friend . . . don't worry about the last-minute preparations . . . let them help. It's the best way to make your friends feel at home, not like guests." (127); the homes I love the most . . . are those that . . . share the personal history of the people who live there (251); creates . . . a new kind of hope chest - as in "hopefully I'll use this someday" (210).

Yes!

Lisa says

I really enjoyed this book and felt encouraged by it. It's a huge book filled with beautiful photography of real people's homes--real people living real lives. Some would call this clutter, but these people are making it work. As a result, I felt more freed to tread that ground between allowing my home to be what it is and to become what would best support my family's life instead of adhering to common "wisdom" about how a house should be arranged.

Sarah says

I liked this book, but I had higher expectations for it...

I really enjoyed reading paragraphs here and there about how to find comfort in your home as well as making your home more welcoming and enjoying clutter and an unmade bed on occasion. I like how it declared we don't need to have a perfectly kept house to be happy and we can enjoy the personal clutter that makes our houses a home and how it personally represents our lives. I didn't like the authors taste on every persons clutter, but I enjoyed the general theme of the book.

Marianne says

So many pretty pictures. An antidote to all the minimalist books I've been reading.

Sarah says

Nope. This book is just justification for hoarders. I understand the value of not stressing about a clean house, but that is different than being a hoarder and living in filth and chaos.

Meleofa says

I really liked this book. It tells the stories of lots of folks and their lives and how they live with their things. I am not an excellent housekeeper. My house is lived in. And I love it that way. This book made my heart happy, because it reminded me that my house can be the way I love it. Even if that means piles of stuff, or if it means nothing but the necessities. Who cares what others think? And don't try to live up to someone else's standards. Just mine.

Less_cunning says

thought this was great. i have always been a huge fan of the American Junk-series & Mary Randolph Carter in general, her sensibility & ethos. this is all her.

i tend to pick up on the little things when i read her books. certain things & nuances stand out & i take notice...

houses should be lived in & imperfect & have character and not be like hygienic, fascist little hospitals.

it is 2016, and in a way, this book could be a perfect little antidote to the increasing zero-waste, de-cluttering, minimalist lifestyle brand trend that is currently sweeping the Nation. sorry. but back issues of "Vogue," old Pendleton throws & buying antiques on the weekend does NOT make one a Hoarder. if you want to be a Buddhist ascetic & live in a perfectly empty Zen house then of course by all means do so. I'm probably as anti-American Consumerism as the next man but...hmmm...

See you guys at the flea market ontheweekend; Happy Junkin'...

Relyn says

Hmmm... What can I say about this book? It's interesting, I want to finish it. But... BUT! The one thing every residence profiled has in common is that each picture gives me an overwhelming desire to go in and CLEAN IT UP!! The mess and the clutter wouldn't bother me so much if the title didn't seem to indicate that doing things differently was a mistake. PLEASE! The author looks at these pictures and sees life. I look at them and see MESS, delay, and aggravation. It's fine with me for people to live differently than the way I choose. And, I am glad that the world is full of wondrous variety. But my life is NOT misspent just because it is not a mess.

I was intrigued at first because I thought the title indicated that the book was going to be about letting go of

the paralyzing need for perfection. Nope. It's a justification of messiness and clutter. And, truly, I am fine if someone else wants to live with more clutter than I do. In fact, when I visit, I often find it very stimulating. But, I wonder. If you have to create an entire coffee table book to justify it, well... Methinks the lady doth protest too much.

Pam says

What a delightful book and finally a book that I agree with! The author's perspective is perfectly described in the title and I wholeheartedly agree. Despite two neatnik neighbors, I believe my house should be tidy which I define as relatively clean and picked up, but not cleaned to the point of enslaving me or my family, and eliminating the stamp of our personalities and hobbies. Like many of the photos in this book, the top of my bedroom dresser is obscured by piles of books, but it shows I love reading. My basement has been taken over by piles of wood, tools, and equipment, but my husband is perfectly happy turning out the most fanatastic things. It is good to see that there are many of us, who want to live our lives fully with "dirty" pets and hobbies. To tell you the truth, when I go into those "perfect" houses which all the other decorating books show, I feel sorry for the people who live there...

Maureen Flatley says

A wonderful style guide and memoir from my personal Style Icon, Mary Randolph Carter.

Jodie says

I like to keep this book prominently displayed among my interior design books because the title is so inspiring. Carter understands the pleasure that comes from arranging objects into a comfortable surrounding. Books fill the pages of the numerous color photographs as well as lots of other objects. Sometimes I think I have a lot of stuff in my house, but the homes in Carter's book have a lot more. How much time it must take to amass such huge collection? Or do they just go to estate sales and auctions and buy in bulk? Actually, at some point I wonder about these things. I love the photographs of children and dogs lollygagging around the houses like they actually live in these places. Yet even though I love so much of the lifestyles of these home designs, they still seem to reflect a certain upper class, richer-than-most-people aesthetic that sometimes annoys me. These are artsy types that are gusty enough and rich enough to buy a beautiful antique settee, have it re-upholstered in muslin, and then let their children and friends decorate it with markers. The effect is cool and perhaps the fabric will be replace in a few years. But part of me, just wonders if it was done by a different class of people whether we would look at this sofa in the same way. Would it be cool and beautiful or weird and slightly de-ranged? I don't know. Maybe cool is always cool. Mary Randolph Carter certainly has her pulse on an edgy, graceful, multi-faceted cool button.

Kristen says

My favorite parts of this book are the photos of all sorts of differently cluttered homes and all the reasons

they have for living the way they do. It is endlessly fascinating to me to learn about people who live in ways completely different from my own. It helps me relax and embrace whatever sort of home I choose to create - or even to accept what it is, even if it's not exactly what I want.

I also really loved the chapter on unmade beds. I hadn't thought about what an intimate portrait of our lives our beds convey, and how much of a refuge and retreat they provide for us. Plus I just love to sleep, no secret about that.

Love this quote:

"No matter where we live . . . we choose a place to call home and create in it a life that suits us and those we share it with. We fill it with memory and dreams, and possibly too many things, but whether cluttered or clean we do our best to be good housekeepers, making our homes the perfect place for living."

A home filled with memory and dreams. That's what I really want.
