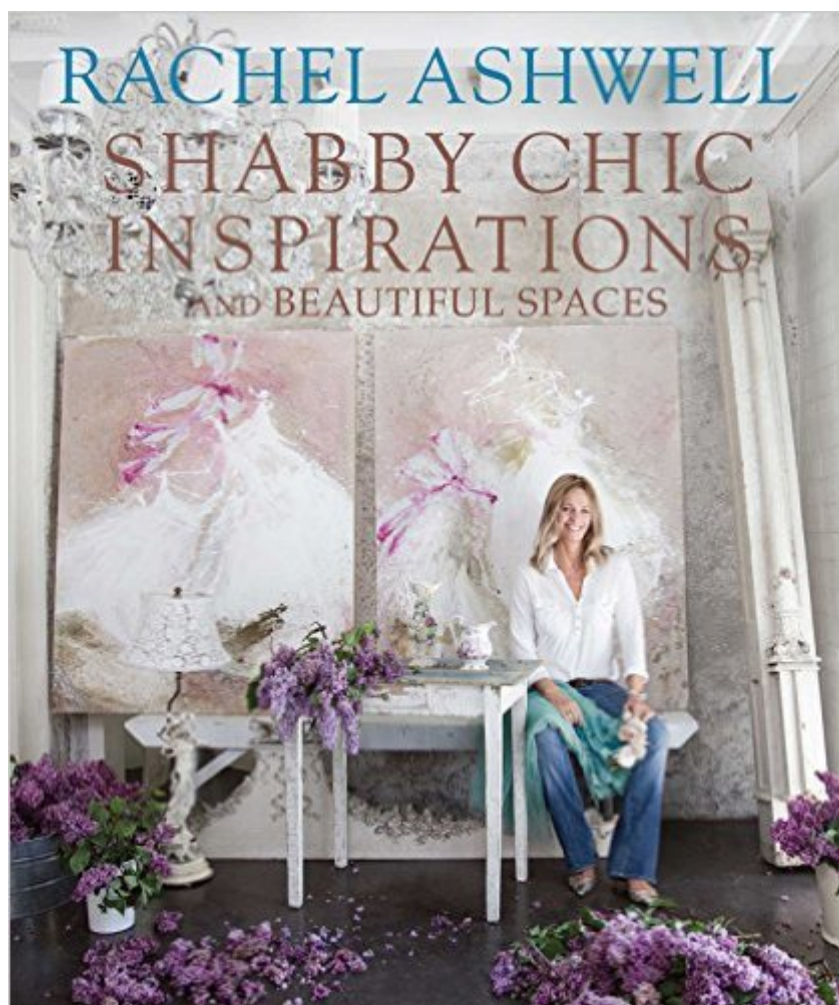


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# Rachel Ashwell's Shabby Chic Inspirations



## Synopsis

In this book, Rachel shares her inspirations and her humor, celebrates the charm of the old and battered, and demonstrates time and again how interiors touched with Rachel's magic transcend fashionable trends, extending a calming, personal welcome to all. In this new book, Rachel takes us to homes in the USA – from a shabby shack on Malibu's oceanfront to her new ranch on the wide, open spaces of Texas and to the wooded hills of the Catskills – and in the UK – from a houseboat and a city townhouse to a centuries-old manor house deep in the country, and Rachel's own London apartment. All the houses, regardless of their size or location, embody Rachel's ethos and share the same qualities: a respect for beautiful objects from the past, an extravagant sense of comfort, and an eye for the unexpected. All are inviting, artistic, soulful, inspired and inspiring, beautiful, gentle, considered and, in their own way, perfectly imperfect.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: CICO Books (September 30, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1907563598

ISBN-13: 978-1907563591

Product Dimensions: 11.5 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars – See all reviews (52 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #268,836 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #23 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > Decorating & Design > Floors #368 in Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Interior Design #508 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > Decorating & Design > Decorating

## Customer Reviews

Yes, it's still Rachel Ashwell and it's still Shabby Chic. I actually read most of the reviews here before going to preview the book. I've delayed my purchase but I will purchase the book eventually. Here is what I think has most hard-core Shabby Chic fans up in arms: 1. Amy Neunsinger, the photographer that illustrated all of Rachel's previous books, has only a small entry in this book and it's of Rachel's London Shabby Chic Couture store. Do not underestimate the power of her touch because it's her interpretation of those beautiful linen white walls and slipcovered furniture that

made Rachel's books so delicious. Actually there were a number of photographers who contributed to each chapter of the book and the result is a curious sense of disconnect not only from previous books but also within this book itself. I also noted a new publisher as well.<sup>2</sup> The chapters are really short which gave me the impression this book was culled together a little too quickly. It's not the unfolding of a single vision as with *Shabby Chic Home* but jets from here to there, place to place. Rachel mentions her 'discombobulated life' which is mirrored in this book and I wonder if it was intentional. Even if it was it makes for a read that isn't quite as luscious as previous works.<sup>3</sup> The first chapter of the book introduces The Prairie, her B&B in Texas, and this is probably what got those hard-core Shabby Chic folks upset. Some of the photos reminded me of the Texas Tumbleweed houses, a little too gritty Victorian for my taste. Walls here are not linen white or pale pastel but scrubbed and faded colors like turquoise, tan and gray. There is also a lot of stained wood instead of painted white. It's still Shabby Chic but it's definitely more shabby than chic.

I've always LOVED Rachel Ashwell, her show when it was on the Style network, and the Shabby Chic book series. But unfortunately, her style has been moving away from the original aesthetic of pretty painted vintage furniture, white and pale colors, flowery and gently shabby decorating. Rachel seems to feel obligated to embrace something strangely different to keep growing as a designer. Rather than build on her signature look with fresh ideas that are appealing, she's slowly abandoning it and digressing into a rather dismal and dated vision. Lovely patina has been replaced with dirty and trashy. Pale and pretty is now dark and dreary: black walls and stairway, torn and ripped furniture more suited for the dump, ugly mismatched furnishings, deteriorating and messy rooms is hardly stepping "outside the box". It's neither artistic nor an expression of someone with a sharp eye, as one reviewer stated. Rather, much of it is overly pretentious: buckets of flowers with petals strewn about the floor, badly-staged rooms of hodgepodge junk trying to pass as pretty and tasteful. An example is the Prairie House, a small B&B she purchased in Texas. With the exception of one bedroom which embraces her original aesthetic, it was more rundown rustic than shabby chic inspiring. A fabulous chandelier, cushy white sofas, floral bedding, posies and some vintage furniture doesn't transform a dumpy farmhouse into charmingly sweet lodgings for guests. The depressing walls of old dark teal wallpaper, mounted deer head, mattress laying on a cement floor, and rusty cheap tin lathe ceilings isn't very romantic, cheery or hospitable either. Even less is the horrid adjoining bathroom and mismatched paint-scarred plank walls throughout. This is taking the shabby aesthetic too far.

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