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ROUGH LUXE DESIGN: THE NEW LOVE OF OLD (by Kahi Lee; Faramesh Media, rrp £80) You may not have heard of 'Rough Luxe' but if you have felt a recent yen for a pair of antlers, or it has suddenly occurred to you that it would be rather chic to display an Edwardian typewriter on a plant stand, or to put a pair of antique false teeth beneath a Victorian glass dome, or not to paint the old plaster wall you have just stripped back to its mottled skin, then you have already been seduced by it.

This heavy book, with its wood-effect slip-cover and ready-distressed jacket of dirty brown damask wallpaper and rubbed gilt type, is a manifesto for a style that has been creeping up on us for quite some time. 'Curated' by American interior designer Kahi Lee, the book shows mostly American interiors by a small group of Rough Luxe proponents including Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch (*Vol Aug 2008*) of Roman & Williams, who designed the hip Standard and Ace hotels. In the British corner are Mark and Sally Bailey, Rabih Hage (who is credited with christening the style), Michaelis Boyd and *World of Interiors* cover boys Les Trois Garçons (*Vol Dec 2011*).

Variouly defined as 'an act of rebellion against Modernism', 'dedicated to the authentic and unpretentious', a style that 'preserves rather than perfects' and 'reveres the past from the youthful perspective of the present', the defining features of the Rough Luxe look are weathered and battered surfaces, and recycled or 're-purposed' furnishings with a faintly industrial edge, whether old tractor seats as stools or army tent canvas as upholstery. Antlers are almost *de rigueur*, taxidermy and Victorian medical equipment are optional extras. The effect is masculine, textured, decorative and a relief after too many blank walls and blond floors.

Like all design movements that take themselves at all seriously, Rough Luxe comes with a philosophy, in this case an appealing and timely one with its emphasis on preservation and re-use, its potential for humour (sometimes gratingly misapplied, as in the *verre églomisé* mirror bearing the legend 'this is shit'), and its ability to make the old and clapped-out seem modern and covetable.

While the book is visually coherent and inspiring, the text, which mainly takes the form of questions and answers, is less so, and is marred by a surfeit of typos. This is a style still close to the cutting edge of interior design, and the majority of the interiors shown are commercial – hotels, cocktail bars, restaurants, barber shops and an acupuncture salon. A higher proportion of private homes, such as the stunning Amsterdam loft with interior design by Uxus, would have made a more balanced book ■ ROS BYAM SHAW is the author of *'Perfect English'* (Ryland Peters & Small) ▸

To order *Rough Luxe Design* for £72 (plus £10 UK p&p), ring the *World of Interiors* Bookshop on 0871 911 1747