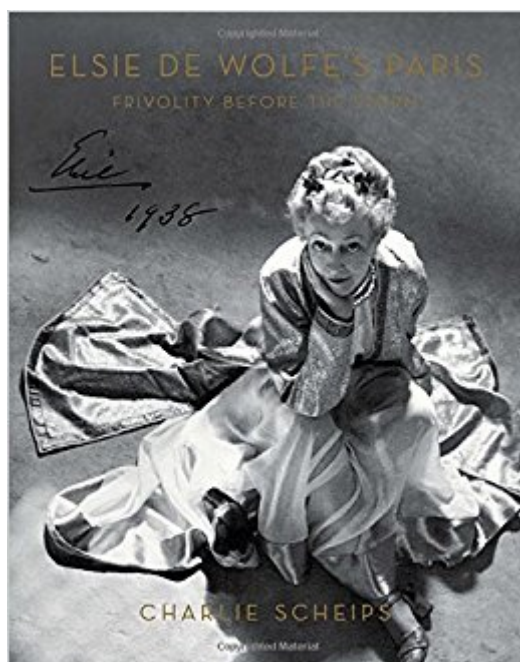


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# Elsie De Wolfe's Paris



## Synopsis

The American decorator Elsie de Wolfe (1858–1950) was the international set's preeminent hostess in Paris during the interwar years. She had a legendary villa in Versailles, where in the late 1930s she held two fabulous parties—her Circus Balls—that marked the end of the social scene that her friend Cole Porter perfectly captured in his songs, as the clouds of war swept through Europe. Charlie Scheips tells the story of these glamorous parties using a wealth of previously unpublished photographs and introducing a large cast of aristocrats, beauties, politicians, fashion designers, movie stars, moguls, artists, caterers, florists, party planners, and decorators. A landmark work of social history and a poignant vision of a vanished world, Scheips's book belongs on the shelf with Abrams's classics such as Slim Aarons: Once Upon A Time and Tony Duquette.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It won't do to describe Charlie Scheips, as his site does, as a decorator, art adviser, writer and cultural historian. He's all that, but in Manhattan, this description is close to generic. What distinguishes Charlie Scheips from the art mob is his range. He knows everyone—instead of a photograph, his book jacket image is his portrait, painted by David Hockney—and instead of serving up a smart spin on the latest trend, he scores actual scoops. Like, for instance, a treasure trove of close to 200 unpublished photographs of Elsie de Wolfe's 1939 "Circus Ball." He's used these as the centerpiece of a book like no other. On the surface, it's a voyeur's dream, a behind-the-scenes look at the high water mark of a kind of entertaining that went extinct

two months later, when Hitler invaded Poland. But more, itâ™s a deep dive, an X-ray of an elite Society that took dinner parties and balls as seriously as we take our work â” because it was their work. As Scheips writes: âœThis book is my search to bring back a lost moment in time, when men in white tie and women in elaborate evening dresses saw the occasion of a grand ball as an expression of sophistication and a means to confirm the existence of a civilized life â” and have fun.â •Ephemeral? Beyond. As a biographer of Proust has noted, âœEven the greatest hostess is forgotten when the last of her guests dies.â • But to Elsie and her crowd, an invitation to a great party was the equivalent of immortality. Now, in a book, they actually have it. When she hosted the last Circus Ball, Elsie was 81. Sheâ™d done it all: Sheâ™d been an actress, Americaâ™s first interior decorator, longtime companion of the very rich Bessie Marbury, and bestselling author.

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