



SHOWCASE
ALIGHT
A PRIMER ON MANTELS

TEXT BY SUZANNE WRIGHT

An impressive French Gothic mantelpiece (ORI 123R) from Origines was reclaimed from the hunting pavilion of a château property in the Loire Valley. Firebox built with antique reclaimed fire bricks. Wrought-iron andirons are 16th century.

Mantels, sometimes referred to as fireplace surrounds, are often the focal point of a room, so their artistry is critical. Mantels are created in one of three distinct methods: carving, casting or cutting. Carved mantels are fashioned from woods such as oak, cherry or walnut. Cast stone mantels are made of man-made composites derived from limestone or similar materials. Cut stone mantels are chiseled from solid stone, including marble, granite or limestone. A small percentage of mantels are made of other materials, such as mirror or wrought iron.

Rare indeed are mantels made of scagliola. The scagliola technique dates to the baroque period when seventeenth-century stonemasons devised a method for combining marble chips (*scaglia* in Italian) with stabilizing agents and pigments, forming a paste that could be molded, carved and finished. The technique was mostly forgotten until eight years ago when Thierry François of Stone Age Designs found a candlestick