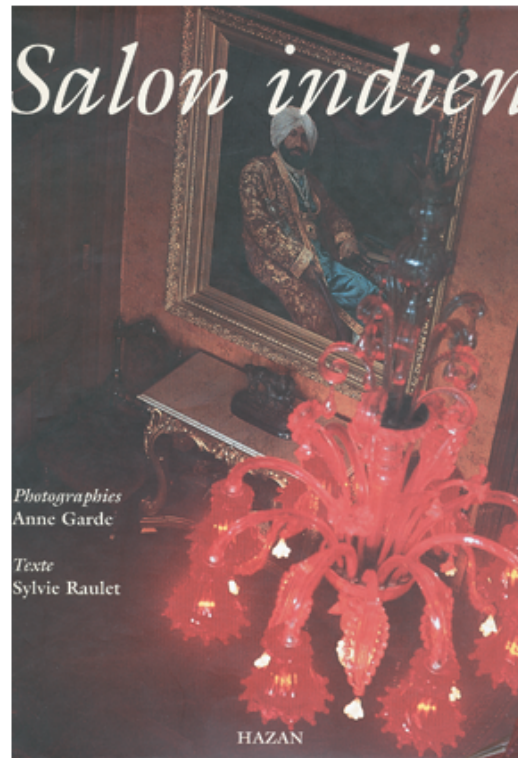


The New York Times

MAHARAJAHS' PALACES

European Style in Imperial India

by Sylvie Raulet. Photographs by Anne Garde Vendome Press



European Style in Imperial India. By Sylvie Raulet. Photographs by **Anne Garde**. (Vendome, \$85.) The trouble with exoticism in the Information Age is that we think we've seen it all. And yet, like latter-day Marco Polos, we still yearn for the thrill of discovering unimagined splendors, the more opulent and bizarre the better. That impulse can be sated by this haunting album memorializing the strange stylistic hybrids that grew out of the British domination of India until 1947.

The French architectural and travel photographer Anne Garde has a sure eye for the telling detail. In her elegiac images of princely and plutocratic dwellings -- from the Marble Palace, a Calcutta merchant's mansion mobbed with Victorian statuary, to the Art Deco extravaganzas of the rulers of Jodhpur and Morvi, the last word in international playboy swank -- these east-west meldings can seem more logical than outlandish. For example, at the Maharajah of Dholpur's palace, rooms tiled with intricate English Arts and Crafts patterns remind us how much William Morris and his followers owed to Islamic decorative traditions.

