

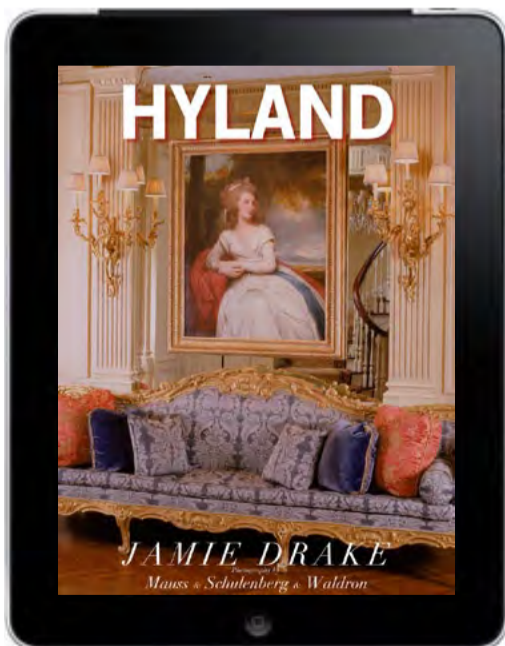
This article originally appeared in

HYLAND

M a g a z i n e



Click on the icon to purchase **HYLAND**,
available only for the Apple iPad.



Photography by Mauss, Schulenberg, Waldron, Garrido and Piasecki.

HYLAND

*GEOFFREY
BRADFIELD*

*Photography by
Sean Finnigan*



Fanciful Hardware Selections From

P.E. Guerin

P .E. Guerin boasts in its latest advertisement that the firm has not redecorated its showroom in generations. The firm has reason to boast, for Guerin is a purveyor of remarkably diverse iconic hardware for every room of the house, apartment, chalet, log cabin or palace. When a product is unapologetically great it and its surroundings need no revision.

I am particularly fascinated by one part of their oeuvre, their “Whimsy” collection comprising romantic representation of fauna. “Whimsy” items are bathroom fixtures mostly, knobs and levers, which celebrate the forms of birds, bees and beasts, the glory of Creation memorial-



HYLAND



ized in gilded and non-gilded brass, bronze and pewter for sheer pleasure as well as for use.

To open a bathroom door and come upon no mundane spout, but a magnificent, scaly tortoise with a pert frog on it back, flanked in turn by faucet handles in the form of starfish is to appreciate the plastic possibilities of fixture design and the beautiful, mellow patina of metal, cast and polished. In a dream house other bathrooms would include Guerin's plain faucet flanked by two minutely sculpted canaries that Redoute would cherish. For a fanciful guest bedroom, one that Diamond Joe Brady would exult in, the gilt mermaid basin set suits. And for sheer drama, the panther spout with basket weave knobs is slick: the shiny nose and lips of the panther are in stark contrast to the dark, rough finish of its head and face. By contrast, the pewter and gilded brass elongated swan's neck faucet and levers personifies grace and elegance.

My personal favorite, one that I could build a powder room, master bathroom or children's bathroom around, comprises a kneeling Guerin elephant with a monkey on its back as a spout, with faux ivory tusk handles. The whole is made that much more dramatic by gold highlights with the pair of cream ivory tusks set against metallic grey. In the same suite, gilt ram finials, lion hooks, crab knobs and horse and hoof levers would easily find a home.

A touch of the macabre and the sublime lurk in the Guerin collection. A face-mask of a man, handsomely grotesque, with lips formed by the scales of a shell awaits a spout. Small insects, generally delightful, abound. A gilt snake wrapped around a dark bronze finished lever in the form of a branch would comprise a wonderful pair of handles as a warning for all those who would open a liquor cabinet to imbibe imprudent pleasure for good spirit nigh bad. Or placed at the garden door, this Guerin snake



lever would memorialize both health and communication to the spirit world beneath. There beyond the door, the snail spout could find its home, peaceful and quiet.

If I were to give one Guerin trophy gift to a friend, it would be the thoroughly Renaissance gilt shell dish which rests on its own base. Conventionally applicable as the home of exquisite soaps, I see it, also, as a receptacle for everything from Stowaway Sweets, to loose change, to strawberries and cherries. This shell personifies in its fine detail and proportion the best representation of an object, which since antiquity has been synonymous with life, endurance and rebirth.



HYLAND



When these Guerin masterworks of hardware are placed as knobs, hooks, spouts, levers, tiebacks and finials among others, they repeatedly inform us of the natural world beyond our own precincts. In studying these objects a child would learn a great deal about nature; an adult would be reminded of the enduring artistic merit in figurative representation. These objects contribute to balancing domestic environments by necessity also occupied by remarkable technology.

The simplest of technology greets the visitor when they employ the Guerin gilt lion's head door-knocker, a sculptural masterpiece of the genre. In one glance this talisman conveys strength, stability and in the most benign way, warning.

The continuation of Guerin's long history is assured by this "Whimsy" collection, not to mention the dignity and artistic excellence found in all of this ancient firm's other diverse collections. **H**

By Christopher Hyland



P.E. Guerin

23 Jane St.

New York, NY 10014 USA

Phone: +1 (212) 243-5270

Fax: +1 (212) 727-2290

HYLAND